



Statement of Outcomes from the Fourteenth Annual Session of Pacific Fisheries Ministers

1. Ministers representing Australia, Fiji, Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Solomon Islands, Tokelau and Tuvalu met in Mooloolaba, Australia on 5 and 6 July 2017 as the fourteenth annual meeting of the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Committee (FFC) Ministers.
2. Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu were represented by diplomats and senior officials.

Ministerial Chair

3. Ministers **welcomed** the Honourable Anne Ruston (Australia) to assume the Chair for Fisheries Ministers for 2017/18. Ministers **expressed deep gratitude** to the outgoing Chair, Honourable Matai Seremiah Nawalu (Vanuatu) for his stewardship and proactive leadership over the last 12 months in driving a number of important bodies of work, including presentation of fisheries issues to the 47th Leaders Forum and active participation as FFC Chair at the UN Oceans Conference co-hosted by Fiji.
4. Ministers **paid tribute** to their late colleagues Honourable Elisala Pita (Tuvalu) and Honourable Valdón Dowiyogo (Nauru) who had been active members of many previous fisheries Ministers meetings. Ministers **expressed their gratitude and condolences** to the late Ministers' families and colleagues.

Annual Report

5. Ministers **approved** the FFA annual report for 2015/16 and **agreed** to forward it to Forum Leaders in accordance with the FFA Convention.
6. Ministers endorsed the Secretariat's efforts to identify and respond to key priorities and to secure and effectively manage the resources needed to deliver this program of work.
7. Ministers **commended** the enhanced collaboration and cooperation with key partners as evidenced in the Agency's successful support to members at the UN Oceans Conference in New York which highlighted the region as a world-leader in key aspects of fisheries management. They **welcomed** efforts to further promote such collaboration between the FFA and its regional partners.

FFA Performance

8. Ministers **concurred** with the overall positive findings of the independent review of FFA's performance, noting it also highlighted areas for continuous improvement. Ministers **agreed** that FFA is performing well and delivering high value services and advice to members on a wide range of fisheries management, development and enforcement issues.
9. Ministers **agreed** with the need to ensure that the core functions of the agency are well aligned with member priorities and remain **committed** to enhancing their governance oversight to ensure that FFA continues to be driven by, and responsive to member needs. Ministers **instructed** the Secretariat to progress the planned review of the FFA's 2014-2020 Strategic Plan and to report progress with actions required, including timelines, for Ministerial attention in July 2018.
10. Ministers **endorsed** the concept of a Donor symposium to be held in late 2017 as a way of coordinating donor efforts and engaging key donors as a group to explain FFA's overall workplan, and the robust planning, reporting and monitoring and evaluation framework that is in place.
11. Ministers **noted** the success of formal colloquiums between FFA and SPC in strengthening the relationship and collaboration between these agencies and **supported** the call for similar annual colloquiums between FFA, PNAO and SPC to discuss tuna fisheries related work programs and activities with a view to strengthen the relationship, improve coordination and reduce duplication in their programmes.

Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission

12. Ministers **endorsed** the priorities for negotiation at the WCPFC in 2017 and confirmed that development of suitable zone based management arrangements to ensure sustainability and profitability of key target fisheries (tropical tunas and south Pacific albacore) remain the most urgent priorities. As per the future of fisheries Roadmap, the ongoing development of formal harvest strategies also continues to hold importance.
13. In pursuing these priorities, Ministers **called on** all WCPFC members to ensure full implementation of the conservation and management measures on disproportionate burden and the special requirements of small island developing States (CMMs 2013-06 and 2013-07 respectively).
14. Ministers noted an update provided by Marshall Islands in their capacity as PNA Chair on priorities and ongoing work in relation to WCPFC. Ministers also noted a report from Niue on the proposed "South Pacific Purse Seine Strategy" and the interests of FFA island members not involved in the vessel days scheme to be included in the tropical tuna measure.

15. Ministers **reaffirmed their unwavering commitment** to ensuring the safety of fisheries observers and expressed their deep condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of another young observer recently lost at sea. Ministers **directed** that officials and the secretariat continue to work together and with other WCPFC members to improve working conditions, safeguard health and respond adequately to critical incidents.

Pacific Maritime Security Program (PSMP)

16. Members **expressed overwhelming appreciation** to the Government of Australia for the support and assistance provided through the Pacific Patrol Boat program over the last 30 years and expressed keen anticipation for the enhancement of this excellent support through the PMSP. Ministers **reflected** on the significant ability the replacement patrol vessels would provide to address illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing and the wider security concerns in the region.
17. Ministers **agreed** that the aerial surveillance component of the PMSP will significantly enhance the area of possible surveillance coverage and increase the efficiency of national patrol efforts and **agreed** to work closely with FFA to ensure effective planning and deployment of that capability, including coordination with surface assets.
18. Ministers **committed** to work with their responsible government authorities to facilitate aerial surveillance operations in their national areas including through facilitation of air space access and landing rights including reduction of government fees.

Illegal Fishing Vessels

19. Ministers **agreed** that incursions of foreign fishing vessels into EEZs, Territorial Seas and Archipelagic Waters for the purposes of illegal fishing represent an affront to sovereignty as well as a risk to fish stocks and an avenue for a range of other transnational criminal risks.
20. Ministers **noted** that the region continues to face risk of small scale vessels undertaking such activities, particularly the so called “blue boats” originating from Viet Nam, but also other fishing vessel types such as “pump boats” originating from Philippines.
21. Ministers **agreed** that FFA will continue to refine surveillance capabilities to effectively monitor these small vessels and **committed** to the ongoing development and implementation of a regional strategy to address the risks they pose. Ministers **welcomed** the in depth cooperation between FFA and SPC leveraging off each other’s respective strengths to comprehensively address this issue.
22. Ministers **noted with appreciation** the recent positive developments in regards to cooperation with Viet Nam, including successful bilateral discussions with several members and the official order recently issued by the Vietnamese Prime Minister. Ministers **recommended** that Forum Foreign Ministers consider this issue in their upcoming meeting, and that Leaders also consider the matter at their retreat in September.

23. Ministers **urged** cooperation amongst regional and national law enforcement agencies to enhance overall maritime domain awareness in support of member law enforcement needs.

Niue Treaty on Cooperation in Fisheries Surveillance and Law Enforcement (NTSA)

24. Ministers warmly welcomed Australia's ratification of the NTSA, noting that the Republic of the Marshall Islands also recently ratified and that this brings the number of Parties to ten. Ministers also appreciated advice from several other members that their ratification processes are almost complete.
25. Ministers **renewed** their strong commitment to the NTSA and its implementation as a powerful avenue for cooperation in fisheries monitoring, control and surveillance, but also in its scope for broader law enforcement cooperation.
26. Ministers **supported** the ongoing work under the NTSA to develop a strategy and procedures, including an analysis of national laws on the protection of the rights of individuals and their data, to identify and track "persons of interest" who are judged to be at high risk of being involved in the perpetration of illegal activities.

Tokelau Arrangement for the Management of South Pacific Albacore

27. Ministers **agreed** that urgent action was needed to reform the management of the southern longline fishery targeting South Pacific albacore.
28. Ministers **noted** the progress made towards finalising the text of the albacore Catch Management Agreement (CMA) at the 5th Tokelau Arrangement Meeting in May and the Allocation Workshop July, and **agreed** that FFA Secretariat support should continue to work on the CMA, including with individual members to seek a finalised CMA text to be delivered in October.

Reporting to Forum Leaders

29. Ministers **endorsed and supported** the draft Report Cards on offshore and coastal fisheries under the Future of Fisheries Roadmap, noting that both will be updated prior to presentation to Leaders. Ministers **highlighted** the critical importance of fisheries resources to food security and community wellbeing and **reflected** on the substantial differences in the resources that are provided at the national and regional level to offshore fisheries compared to coastal fisheries. Noting this disparity, Ministers **encouraged** all members to invest adequately in the management and development of coastal fisheries resources.
30. Ministers **reiterated** the importance of fisheries to the region and the need for many fisheries related issues to be considered at a whole-of-government level. Ministers therefore **welcomed** the fact that fisheries is on the Leaders' agenda for 2017, but also **recommended** that it be treated as a standing item and afforded sufficient space on the Forum Leaders' agenda to allow detailed discussion amongst leaders and with relevant regional agencies.

31. Ministers **agreed** to promote the use of opportunities such as the Forum Leaders meeting to raise issues of regional significance with development and fishing partners, including to promote areas of achievement and seek to resolve disagreement.

International Processes

32. Ministers **noted** that there are different views within and outside the region about the FAO Port State Measures Agreement and encouraged officials and the secretariat to ensure consistency of messaging and to develop, as far as possible, a single policy position in this regard.

Executive Recruitment

33. Ministers **noted** that both the Director-General and Deputy-Director General will be leaving the agency within the next 18 months. Given the timeframes and processes stipulated in the FFC rules of procedure, Ministers **initiated** recruitment for both positions in accordance with the recommendations from officials.
34. In respect of the Deputy Director-General, Ministers agreed that Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Nauru, New Zealand, Samoa would form the selection sub-committee to provide advice to the Director-General. Ministers noted that appointment will be made by the Director General in November 2017.
35. In respect of the Director-General position, Ministers approved the Terms of Reference for the position and selected Employment Office, Brisbane as the independent recruitment firm to assist FFC officials in shortlisting and screening. Ministers noted that they will appoint the new Director General at their fifteenth meeting in July 2018, based on a recommendation from officials.