



***Statement of Outcomes from the Eighteenth Annual Session of the
Forum Fisheries Committee Ministers Meeting (FFC Min18)***

1. Ministers representing Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tokelau, Tuvalu and Vanuatu held a virtual meeting on 4-5 August 2021 as the 18th annual Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Committee Ministers Meeting.
2. Samoa was represented at senior official level.
3. Ministers welcomed the participation of partner and observer organisations including CROP partners the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) and Pacific Community (SPC). Ministers particularly welcomed the attendance of PIFS Secretary General Henry Puna, Office of the Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNAO) Chief Executive Officer, Dr Sangaa Clark, and Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) Executive Director, Feleti Teo.

Ministerial Chair

4. Ministers thanked outgoing Chair, FSM, for its commitment in Chairing FFC for two consecutive years and observed a moment of silence in honour of the late FSM Secretary for the Department of Resources and Development, Hon. Marion Henry, Chair of the FFC Ministerial meeting until his passing in late 2020.
5. Ministers welcomed the Fiji Minister for Fisheries, Honourable Semi Koroilavesau, as Chair of the 18th FFA Ministerial meeting.

Annual Report

6. Ministers thanked FFA Director-General Dr. Manumatavai Tupou-Roosen for the Agency's Annual Report Executive Summary for the 2020-21 year, and congratulated her on the achievements of the Agency over the past year, especially in light of the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

7. Ministers welcomed the key highlights in the report including: work to address the impact of COVID-19 on the tuna fishery including the FFA COVID-19 Protocols for the Fishing Sector in the Pacific; ensuring observer safety and livelihoods; enhancing MCS tools and investing in new technology; pursuit of the establishment of zone-based limits for longline fisheries within EEZs and the high seas; responding to climate change impacts on offshore fisheries; and progress in implementation of the FFA Strategic Plan 2020-25.
8. Recognising the importance of the Annual Report as a key part of the Agency's governance and accountability to Members, Ministers endorsed the Executive Summary of the FFA Annual Report for 2020-21, noting that the full Report will be forwarded to Forum Leaders in accordance with the FFA Convention.

Fisheries Roadmap: Offshore Fisheries Report Card

9. Ministers welcomed the report on the Tuna Fisheries Report Card recognising that it is intended to provide a snapshot of trends with specific sustainability, economic and social outcomes and targets for regional tuna fisheries. Ministers expressed support for future reporting to provide additional strategic analysis on drivers of the economic performance of the fishery and the associated investment environment, including in relation to longline fisheries.

Impact of COVID-19 on the Tuna Fishery

10. Ministers reiterated their concern with respect to the significant social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic that have been far-reaching and its particularly severe impacts on domestic and locally based tuna longline fleets and support businesses. Ministers commended their officials and the FFA Secretariat for their work to respond to the challenges presented by the pandemic including through the adoption of new technology and the move to virtual platforms.
11. Ministers urged their Officials and the Secretariat to stay abreast of the evolving COVID-19 landscape to help with forward planning and noted the ongoing mechanisms to assist Members to respond and build resilience.
12. Recognising the potential risk of COVID-19 being transmitted by crew on fishing vessels, and the potentially disastrous impact this could have on the fishery, fuel distribution, national revenues and on island health services, Ministers strongly supported the guidance from the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), as already endorsed by PNA plus Tokelau Fisheries Ministers, that all Governments, including flag States operating fishing vessels in the region, should prioritise the vaccination of fishing crew and seafarers. In doing so, Ministers congratulated the Republic of Marshall Islands on

the steps it has already taken to vaccinate crew on fishing vessels in Majuro, including foreign crew.

13. Given the urgent nature of this issue, and the need for all seafarers to be considered a priority for vaccination, Ministers called for this issue to also be raised at other relevant Ministerial meetings (including Health and Finance Ministers) and for it to be considered by Forum Leaders.

Observer Safety and Livelihoods

14. Ministers recalled their decision for greater attention to be given to the issue of observer safety given the ongoing risks faced by observers in their work, which has been compounded during this pandemic.
15. Ministers also recognised the impacts on the livelihoods of observers and their families due to the intersessional decision to suspend the requirement for 100% observer coverage on purse seine fishing vessels. They noted with concern that this could result in a high number of observers leaving the programme and finding alternate job opportunities.
16. Ministers welcomed the completion of the Observer Safety and Livelihoods Study to address their concerns and strongly supported the implementation of its recommendations. They also welcomed the progress on development of the Observer Redeployment Plan and the recently approved Regional Observer Insurance Compensation Scheme.

Impacts of Climate Change on Oceanic Fisheries

17. Recognising adaptive management as a foundation of climate resilient fisheries, Ministers noted the need to further progress work to support a transition to adaptive fisheries management regimes and reaffirmed their commitment to reaching agreement on effective zone-based regional and sub-regional management arrangements covering the key tuna stocks in the region. Fisheries are a critical element of Pacific Island countries' economies, communities, and culture, and Ministers noted the impact of climate change on this valuable resource will have disproportionate consequences on the region.
18. Ministers strongly supported the ongoing work to advance Leaders' commitment to secure maritime zones so that these cannot be challenged in the face of sea level rise, including through the draft Normative Declaration. Ministers also supported Members'

efforts to delimit maritime boundaries and maritime zones in accordance with the UNCLOS, noting the fundamental importance of this work for effective fisheries management. Ministers acknowledged that the FFA has a valuable role to play in this work in supporting effective fisheries management including through adaptive management regimes.

19. Ministers supported the work of the FFA Secretariat, in collaboration with relevant CROP Partners, to: (a) ensure increased contribution of tuna to food security; and (b) analyse how potential changes in tuna stock levels and their distribution may impact on the fishery at national levels, including on the economic benefits Members obtain from their tuna fisheries.
20. Recalling their decision for closer CROP collaboration to firmly place fisheries issues onto the wider climate change agenda, including in the context of the Pacific's engagement in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Ministers strongly supported the Secretariat's work, in collaboration with CROP Partners, to ensure greater advocacy for the recognition and inclusion of fisheries in the preparation for the twenty-sixth Conference of the Parties of the UNFCCC (COP26).

Priorities for WCPFC

21. Ministers acknowledged the challenges imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on progressing key issues at the WCPFC and recognised the need to progress a number of priority measures. Ministers agreed to a number of priorities to be progressed by FFA at WCPFC for 2021 including: agreement of a new Tropical Tuna Measure; enhancing the Compliance Monitoring Scheme; improved management of longline fisheries; progressing management of the South Pacific albacore fishery; and improved management of South West Pacific swordfish.
22. Ministers, further, agreed to a number of priorities to progress through 2021 to support 2022 outcomes including progressing the Harvest Strategy Workplan; management of transshipment activities; electronic reporting and electronic monitoring; observer safety and labour standards for fishing crew.
23. Ministers highlighted their commitment to establishment of catch and/or effort limits within EEZs and the need for Members to work together to take forward the zone-based management approach within WCPFC, including to establish binding limits that provide fair access to SIDS on the high seas.

Implementation of Zone-Based Limits and Management (Longline Fishery)

24. Ministers commended the work to improve management of longline fisheries, including through establishment of zone-based limits, as captured in the Regional Longline Strategy that was agreed by Ministers in 2019. They noted the Action Plan for the implementation of the Regional Longline Strategy was agreed in October 2020 by Fisheries Officials.
25. Recognising that the management of the South Pacific Longline fishery is at a crucial stage, with progress now heavily dependent on FFA members' reaching internal agreement to zone-based limits and associated management arrangements for the South Pacific Albacore (SPA) stock within their waters, Ministers urged officials to pursue a binding agreement on zone-based limits as a matter of urgency.

Crew Labour Standards

26. Ministers acknowledged the importance of protecting the human rights of crew on fishing vessels and ensuring that crew labour conditions are appropriate, as well as the need for a binding measure in the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission, and, to that end, agreed on the decision set out in Attachment A.

US Tuna Treaty Renegotiation

27. Ministers discussed the performance of the Multilateral Treaty on Fisheries between the Governments of Certain Pacific Island States and the Government of the United States of America and its benefit to the Pacific region. Ministers agreed the relationship with the United States of America is important, but recognised that the decline in US fishing effort in the region, and other economic factors, presented economic challenges to the region which must be addressed in any future negotiation of treaty terms.
28. Ministers authorised Officials to continue constructive engagement with the United States, as per instructions in Attachment B, without prejudice to any final decisions which may be nationally or collectively made on the future of the Treaty, its terms, or access to any individual FFA Member's EEZ.

Independent Review of increasing sustainable economic returns from fisheries

29. Ministers considered the findings and recommendations of the Independent Review report and endorsed the feedback provided by FFC and PNA Officials, PNA Ministers, and

the Inter Agency Working Group (IAWG), noting that the Review will be forwarded to Forum Leaders under the cover of a paper to be developed by the IAWG. In particular, Ministers welcomed the report and will evaluate strategies against the review findings. Ministers noted that enhancements to the annual reporting provided to Ministers will provide more in-depth analysis of industry issues, market dynamics and economic conditions in the different fisheries, but agreed that such reporting should be met by enhancements to the work of existing regional organisations - particularly FFA itself - rather than through the creation of new mechanisms.

Director General's Reappointment

30. Noting that Director General Dr Manumatavai Tupou-Roosen's first term will end in November, Ministers expressed their sincere appreciation for her work leading the FFA over the past 2 years and 9 months, and endorsed the renewal of her contract for a second 3-year term commencing on 9 November 2021.

FFA Governance

31. FFC Ministers tasked the Secretariat to facilitate an independent review of the FFC governance and rules of procedure, with outcomes to be reported to FFCMIN19.

5 August 2021

ATTACHMENT A:

FFC MINISTERS' DECISION - CREW LABOUR STANDARDS

Forum Fisheries Committee Ministers

Acknowledging the importance of protecting the human rights of crew on fishing vessels and ensuring that crew labour conditions are appropriate,

Recalling their decision in 2019 regarding minimum terms and conditions to protect human rights and safeguard the labour conditions of crew on fishing vessels,

Conscious of the need to ensure that such minimum labour standards for crew on fishing vessels are accommodated in the development of similar standards in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean,

Resolved that the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission is empowered under its constituent instrument to 'adopt generally recommended international minimum standards for the responsible conduct of fishing operations',

Decide as follows:

1. FFA is to pursue the development of a binding measure on crew labour standards within the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission, advocating for compatibility with the agreed minimum terms, and promoting a level playing field across fleets fishing in the region.
2. Fisheries Officials and the Secretariat are to provide the necessary support to this end, including as appropriate, facilitating the participation of relevant international organisations.

ATTACHMENT B:

FFC MINISTERS' INSTRUCTIONS ON THE UNITED STATES TUNA TREATY RENEGOTIATIONS

Ministers instructed Officials to pursue the following goals in negotiations:

- The Treaty must maintain benefits to all PIPs.
- The Treaty must provide more stability and predictability going forward vis-a-vis days purchased to enable PIPs to make business decisions with other partners.
- Ensure the United States is committed to a mutually supportive, respectful partnership in this, and related fisheries forums, including through:
 - o improved development assistance to provide stability and reduce vulnerability to economic shocks to strengthen the region's capacity to meet future challenges and improve regional security, without detracting from existing aid funding to the region overall, and at national levels;
 - o Ensuring FFA's efforts to cement zone-based management regimes in the region are not undermined; and
 - o Ensuring existing zone-based limits are respected.
- Ensure the United States is committed to respecting, and fully adhering to, WCPFC CMMs and national laws.
- Ensure negotiated outcomes fully mitigate any risks of non-payment.
- Ensure even terms of access between United States vessels and vessels flagged to other States, particularly with respect to the Vessel Day Scheme established under the Palau Arrangement.

Ministers requested Officials to report on the progress of its negotiations routinely.