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**JOINT CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS (CSO) STATEMENT TO THE 16TH  
REGULAR SESSION OF THE COMMISSION FOR THE CONSERVATION AND  
MANAGEMENT OF HIGHLY MIGRATORY FISH STOCKS IN THE WESTERN AND  
CENTRAL PACIFIC OCEAN (WCPFC).**

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**Submitted by  
WWF**



## JOINT CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS (CSO) STATEMENT TO THE 16<sup>TH</sup> REGULAR SESSION OF THE COMMISSION FOR THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF HIGHLY MIGRATORY FISH STOCKS IN THE WESTERN AND CENTRAL PACIFIC OCEAN (WCPFC).

### Background

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The decisions made by the 16<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the Commission for the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPFC16) will not only influence the future of tuna and other highly migratory fish stocks and associated species in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO) but will directly shape the future of people and communities working in and derive their livelihood from the fishery.

The outcomes of the WCPFC16 deliberations must continue progress toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in particular SDG 14 – “*Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources*” and its specific targets including, but not limited to: marine pollution; regulating harvesting; ending overfishing, Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing (IUU), and destructive fishing practices; implementing science-based management plans; prohibiting certain forms of fisheries subsidies which contribute to overcapacity and overfishing; eliminating subsidies that contribute to IUU fishing; and increasing the economic benefits to Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs) from the sustainable use of marine resources.

In addition, the WCPFC16 must also progress the goals of the Pacific Regional Roadmap for Sustainable Pacific Fisheries including improving overall sustainability for the four key tuna species, safeguarding food security, value, employment opportunities, and safety of those working in the fishery and associated industries. A resilient and sustainable tuna fishery also contributes to safeguarding and enhancing the resilience of the Pacific Islands region to the impacts of climate change.

WWF submits this joint position statement on behalf of the undersigned CSOs that participate in the WCPFC consultation process, or may seek to participate in future. The legitimacy and importance of public participation in multilateral environmental agreements including fisheries is broadly recognised as international best practice and mandated for in a range of international instruments and agreements. In relation to fisheries, this participation has been codified in the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement (UNFSA).

Representatives of Pacific-based CSOs were consulted on upcoming issues at WCPFC16. CSOs representatives included the Pacific Islands Association of Non-Government Organisation (PIANGO), Pacific Dialogue Limited (PDL), Pacific Island Tuna Industry Association (PITIA), Pacific Network on Globalisation (PANG) and World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF).

The safety and basic human rights of fishing crew, marine pollution, transparency, and accountability of the Commission were highlighted as concerns by the CSO representatives, without losing sight of the importance of the sustainability of the WCPO's tuna resource.

The sustainability and economic viability of this fishery is of particular importance for those Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS) members of the Commission that depend on the fishery for their livelihoods and economic opportunities.

## ISSUES & RECOMMENDATIONS

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CSO representatives agreed that some of their concerns raised at previous sessions of the Commission have not been sufficiently addressed. As such, the following issues have been identified as of primary importance to be considered by WCPFC16:

1. We note with concern that the adoption of harvest strategy work plans for the key species has continuously been delayed which may impact PSIDS that have invested in eco-labelling certification. We support and reiterate calls from fisheries industry participants with eco-labelling certification, sustainable conscious actors and consumers along the tuna supply chain to support harvest strategy development and adoption. We believe this step should be taken while these stocks are in a

generally healthy biological state. The lack of effective management in the WCPO, and in particular the high seas, is threatening the long term sustainability of key tuna stocks.

**Recommendation:**

**Urgently establish Harvest Strategies for all tuna species since the agreed timeframe according to the Harvest Strategy workplan (CMM2014-06) has lapsed. In particular, establish target reference points (TRPs) for Yellowfin and Bigeye tunas that will accomplish objectives to ensure the long-term sustainability, productivity and social benefits of the fishery.**

2. Limited WCPFC Observer participation and the need for greater transparency in all related Commission meetings including all related sessions to ensure accountability and openness in the management of our tuna resource. We acknowledge the work that has been taken to develop guidelines for participation of Observers in closed meetings of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies which consider the compliance monitoring report but note the lack of agreement over its adoption.

**Recommendation:**

**Improve transparency of the WCPFC proceedings to ensure consistency with Article 21 of the WCPF Convention. The Commission should consider the following:**

- a. **Allow WCPFC Observers access to all sessions of the WCPFC including matters relating to Compliance and urge members to adopt the draft guidelines allowing for the participation of Observers in closed meetings of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies which consider the compliance monitoring report;**
- b. **Review participation fees for WCPFC Observers. Fees should be set at a level to encourage participation of CSOs from WCPFC SIDS members.**

3. The need for greater observer coverage in the longline fishery to ensure the accuracy and adequacy of data enhances the Commission's ability to effectively manage the tuna fishery sustainably. Limited observer coverage limits the ability to monitor compliance with conservation and management measures.

**Recommendation:**

**Increase the number of fisheries observers onboard longline fishing vessels operating within the Commission's jurisdiction to ensure improved catch data, reporting and compliance with regulations. Furthermore, CCMs must continue to facilitate the uptake of Electronic Monitoring Systems (EMS), along with standards that are consistent and compatible in use and practice particularly on the high seas, to complement the work of fisheries observers as a means to ensure full observer coverage on all longline fishing vessels is achieved.**

4. Controlling high seas catch, effort, capacity and associated activities in particular at-sea transhipments.

**Recommendation:**

**We recommend prohibiting at-sea transhipments particularly on the high seas given the challenges of effectively monitoring transhipments on the high seas and recommend that transhipments take place in port. CCMs must also take the necessary steps to implement *CMM 2017/02 Conservation and Management Measure on Minimum Standards for Port State Measures* in order to strengthen efforts to combat IUU fishing. We encourage CCMs to conduct more port inspections, particularly on vessels suspected of being involved in IUU fishing activities.**

5. The use of FADs and the impacts to coastal communities and small-scale fisheries and fishers is not fully known.

**Recommendation:**

**We recommend that impacts of FADs to coastal communities and small scale fisheries and fishers must be taken into consideration in deliberations on FAD management.**

6. We acknowledge the adoption of the *Resolution 2018-01 on Labour Standards for Crew on Fishing Vessels* however we note that the Resolution is non-binding. We also note that certain markets are moving towards ensuring that social accountability standards in fisheries supply chains are met. Eco-labelling certification entities are now requiring social accountability standards to complement environmental standards in response to market demands. The safe working conditions and well-being of fishing crew and of fisheries observers is paramount.

**Recommendation:**

**Implement binding measures that ensures safe and decent working conditions of fishing crew on fishing vessels operating in the Convention Area in line with FFA's *Harmonised Minimum Terms and Conditions on Human Rights and Labour Conditions for Crew* that will come into effect on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020; IMO's *Cape Town Agreement on Fishing Vessels Safety*; and ILO's *Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (C188)*.**

7. Although *CMM 2017-03 Conservation and Management Measure for the protection of WCPFC Regional Observer Programme Observers* has been adopted, the challenge lies in its implementation. The mandatory documentation and reporting of incidences concerning observer safety and well-being is non-existent which undermines the Commission's ability to effectively address the issue.

**Recommendation:**

**Improve requirements and avenues for reporting of incidents involving crew and observer safety and well-being to ensure accountability, transparency and to inform future management of this issue.**

8. Impacts on the wider oceanic environment of marine pollution from fishing vessels in particular discarded and abandoned fishing gear, disposal of plastic waste and oil pollution into the ocean. The current measure in place does not effectively address compulsory compliance by CCMs.

**Recommendation:**

**CCMs should take the necessary steps to implement *CMM 2017/04 Conservation and Management Measure on Marine Pollution* in particular prohibiting the discharging of any plastics and we call for further action to prohibit the deliberate abandonment of fishing gear currently not covered under CMM 2017/04.**

Although mindful that trade matters are not the mandate of the Commission we call on World Trade Organization (WTO) Members of the WCPFC to ensure that any outcome on fisheries subsidies negotiations deliver on adequate and effective 'special and differential treatment' as per SDG 14.6. This is in recognition of the need for disproportionate burden upon those WTO members whose subsidised fleets have historically over-fished waters and as such must undertake the highest level of commitments. Disciplining subsidies for large-scale vessels fishing outside of the subsidising nation's jurisdiction will mean that those most responsible for overcapacity will be targeted first.

The sovereignty of all coastal nations, especially small island developing states, as currently enshrined in UNCLOS must not be weakened by proposed WTO disciplines. Any outcome within the WTO must not undermine the processes, competencies, or jurisdiction of national authorities and RFMOs such as the WCPFC when it comes to making determinations regarding IUU fishing or assessing stock levels.

The special requirements of developing countries as enshrined in legally and non-legally binding international fisheries agreements, including UNFSA must be reflected in any outcome. Further the provision of adequate technical and financial assistance for the implementation of any commitments must be conditioned upon the level of disciplines undertaken by WTO members. Any agreed disciplines should not create disguised restrictions to trade for developing countries.

## Conclusion

We wish to emphasize that the concern about the sustainability of the fishery and the safety and security of fishing crew and observers is shared by the undersigned in solidarity. We are hopeful that the outcomes of the WCPFC16 will take these recommendations into consideration.

The following organisations hereby endorse this joint statement.



## Abbreviations

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CCMs	-	Cooperating Commission Members
CSO	-	Civil Society Organisation
EEZ	-	Exclusive Economic Zone
FAD	-	Fish Aggregation Device
FFA	-	Forum Fisheries Agency
ILO	-	International Labour Organisation
IUU	-	Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing
LDC's	-	Least Developed Countries
NGO	-	Non-Governmental Organisations
PDL	-	Pacific Dialogue Limited
PANG	-	Pacific Network on Globalisation
PIANGO	-	Pacific Islands Association of Non-Government Organisation
PITIA	-	Pacific Island Tuna Industry Association
PSIDS	-	Pacific Small Island Developing States
SDG	-	Sustainable Development Goals
TRP	-	Target Reference Point
UNFSA	-	United Nations Fish Stock Agreement
WCPFC	-	Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission
WCPFC16	-	16 <sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the Commission
WCPO	-	Western and Central Pacific Ocean
WTO	-	World Trade Organisation
WWF	-	World Wide Fund for Nature

Disclaimer: This joint CSO Position Statement is produced with the assistance of the Pacific European Union Marine Partnership Programme (PEUMP) through the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA). The contents are the sole responsibility of the undersigned Civil Society Organisations and can in no way be reflected to be the view of PEUMP or FFA.