

Third Quarter 2009

The Executive Director commenced the quarter at the second meeting of the tuna-RFMOs at San Sebastian, Spain. The first meeting was held at Kobe, Japan in January 2007. The Spain meeting reviewed progress with implementation of the Kobe Course of Actions, revised and updated those for the next 2-year period and agreed to convene four international workshops before September 2010. One will focus on tuna resource management with some attention to the issue of capacity and providing for the development aspirations of coastal States while supporting sustainable fisheries. Other workshops will focus on by-catch, MCS and the role of science and management advice.

Very few CCMs met the 1 July deadline for provision to the Secretariat by CCMs of lists of those fishing vessels that “fished” or “did not fish” in the Convention Area in the preceding year. By the end of the quarter only 13 CCMs of the 20 CCM fishing States had submitted such lists.

On 1 July the Executive Director distributed the draft WCPFC IUU Vessel List to all CCMs, as well as to non-CCMs with vessels on the list. There are 15 vessels on this list, including one vessel that was included in two separate submissions from CCMs. On 17 September, two weeks prior to the TCC5 meeting, the Executive Director re-circulated the draft WCPFC IUU Vessel List to all CCMs, as well as to non-CCMs with vessels on the list.

In early July the meeting information and a provisional agenda for the Fifth Regular Session of the Technical and Compliance Committee (TCC5) were posted on the WCPFC website. TCC5 will be held at Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia 1-6 October 2009, preceded by the second meeting of the Ad Hoc Task Group [Data] on 28-29 September at the same venue

In early July 2009, An Inception Workshop for the West Pacific East Asia Oceanic Fisheries Management Project was conducted at Cebu, Philippines involving officials from the Indonesia, Philippines, Vietnam and the Secretariat. The objectives of the Inception Workshop were to start the process of establishing administrative arrangements for the Project in each country and detail annual work plans.

In mid July the ninth meeting of the International Scientific Committee on Tuna and Tuna-like Species in the North Pacific Ocean (ISC) was held at Kaohsiung, Chinese Taipei. The Science Manager represented the Commission Secretariat as an Observer. Key outcomes of the meeting include a review of recommendations from north Pacific albacore and Pacific bluefin tuna working groups, endorsement of a new stock assessment for swordfish, a special seminar on reference points, and review of the WCPFC Secretariat’s proposals on Independent Review of the Commission’s transitional science structure and functions.

During July the Regional Observer Programme (ROP) Coordinator assisted with the organization of available observers for the FAD closure period from August 1st September 30th. During the July period leading up to the FAD closure, applications for interim authorisation were received from the FFA sub regional programme, Korea, Palau, Philippines, Tuvalu and Vanuatu, which were authorised on an interim basis to allow observers from those programmes to be available for ROP duties. On the 1st August, the 100% observer coverage required by CMM 2008-01 commenced, with most DWFNs organising observers bilaterally with observer providers responsible for programmes that had received interim authorisation. Approximately 180 observers were placed on purse seine vessels in August and September. During late September applications for interim authorisation were received from Australia and Nauru.

In early August the Executive Director represented the Commission as an observer to the 40th Pacific Islands Forum at Cairns, Australia. In late August he travelled to Port Moresby to participate in the Second Pacific Tuna Forum, 2-3 September. The meeting, which was organized by the PNG National Fisheries Authority and INFOFISH, covered a broad range of issues including resource sustainability concerns, certification options, tuna market trends, market access issues, developments in Pacific Island countries and among distant water fishing fleets.

The fifth session of the WCPFC Scientific Committee was held at Port Vila, Vanuatu, 10-21 August and was chaired by Mr N. Miyabe (Japan). Over 110 scientists, fishery officials and industry representatives attended from 26 members and ten IGOs and NGOs. Key issues discussed include a review of stock status of yellowfin, bigeye and South Pacific albacore tuna and an appraisal of Conservation and Management Measure 2008-01. The report of the Committee is available at the 'Meetings' page on the Commission's website.

From 27-29 August 2009, the 11th Philippine Tuna Congress was held at General Santos City, Philippines. The theme of the Congress 2009 was "Changing Mindsets toward Sustainable Fisheries". Over two hundred participants from various sectors attended. The Commission's Science Manager provided a presentation on the outcomes from the fifth Scientific Committee meeting with a focus on the implementation of the Conservation and Management Measure (CMM) 2008-01 (Bigeye and Yellowfin Tuna Measure).

By late August a secure section for CCM Official Contacts was operational on the website and helped streamline the distribution of large, members-only documentation to members.

From 7-11 September, the Executive Director represented the Secretariat at the 5th Regular Session of the Northern Committee at Nagasaki, Japan. The Committee reviewed the status of stocks of Pacific bluefin, albacore and swordfish found in the North Pacific Ocean. Conservation and management considerations were based on the work of the ISC which had met for its 10th session at Kaohsiung, Chinese Taipei in July 2009. Before returning to Pohnpei, the Executive Director met with Korean government officials and industry representatives in Seoul on Friday 11 September.

During the third quarter the WCPFC Record of Fishing Vessels (RFV) was re-developed with emphasis on data quality assurance and security. CCMs will be able to enter details of their flag vessels to the RFV system using a web facility while the Secretariat's role will be to cross-check these entries for data integrity and accuracy, before posting them for public viewing. A "read-only" version of the draft amended RFV was made available on the WCPFC website in late-September for CCMs' assessment. The Secretariat will further amend the system based on CCMs' comments received prior to, and during, the TCC5 meeting in early October 2009.

The number of authorized fishing vessels being monitored by the Commission VMS has continued to increase from the original 280 being monitored on the system activation date of 1 April 2009. By the end of the third quarter there were 2,016 authorized fishing vessels being monitored by the Commission VMS.

Unfortunately during the FAD closure period there was a bereavement of a Kiribati national observer carrying out duties for the ROP. At the time of his passing away the observer, Mr. Tekaie Tabuia, was carrying out duties on board a Korean purse-seine vessel. Condolences to the family of the observer were sent by the Executive Director on behalf of the Commission.

During the quarter the Commission recruited a second VMS Operations Officer, Julio Mendez. Ms Shelyane Lohn the temporary Secretary Receptionist took maternity leave. Shelyane has now given birth to a lovely new daughter. A new outrider building was completed in September. This building is designed to provide a multipurpose facility previously lacking and is expected to host training, small meetings, seminars and various official functions enabling the security and operational integrity of the main office areas to be preserved. As part of an ongoing duty of care and provision of reasonable health and medical arrangements an expert review of Pohnpei medical facilities and services as well as regional medivac options was undertaken to provide the Executive Director with a basis to develop medical and emergency policies and practices. An Administrative Procedures Manual was drafted and made available to staff.