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**The Pew Charitable Trusts
Statement to the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission
9th Regular Session of the Scientific Committee
6-14 August 2013, Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia**

The Pew Charitable Trusts would like to thank the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) for the opportunity to participate in the 9th Regular Session of the Scientific Committee (SC9) as an observer. Pew looks forward to learning more about the progress that has been made with reference to the following key areas of work:

- Recommendations for urgent action to conserve Pacific bluefin tuna following the release of the 2012 Pacific bluefin tuna assessment;
- The development of target and limit reference points for WCPFC fisheries;
- The response to last year's peer review of the bigeye tuna assessment; and the associated provision of clear management advice on tropical tunas for managers to consider at the upcoming Working Group on Tropical Tunas; and
- The provision of concrete precautionary management advice based on the results of the blue and silky shark stock assessments.

Pacific Bluefin Tuna

The International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species in the North Pacific Ocean (ISC) will present the results of the 2012 Pacific bluefin tuna (PBT) assessment at SC9. The results suggest a severely depleted stock at less than 4% of original biomass, with continued overfishing at all age classes, including alarmingly high fishing mortality on juveniles. While the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) has adopted a catch limit for the eastern Pacific, the WCPFC, which accounts for the vast majority of PBT landings in most years, has so far failed to implement a region-wide PBT catch limit. The SC is in the position to evaluate the ISC's assessment and management advice and provide input and recommendations on appropriate candidate PBT reference points and precautionary catch limits for the WCPFC convention area. SC advice on a coordinated basin-wide recovery program for PBT would be a valuable contribution to the Northern Committee's session in early September.

We also understand that an analysis of the impacts of various PBT minimum size limits on biomass and yield will be presented, and Pew strongly urges the SC to carefully consider the results. With current levels of juvenile mortality exceeding 90%, size limits and catch limits will likely be necessary to rebuild this severely depleted species and ensure a future for this fishery.

Tropical Tunas

The Working Group on Tropical Tunas will meet later this month to consider revisions to CMM-2012-01. We strongly urge the SC to provide concrete recommendations to managers on bigeye,

yellowfin, and skipjack, taking into account any new information from the peer review of the 2011 bigeye tuna assessment and the 2013 skipjack tuna stock indicator analysis.

Specifically, the SC should provide clear recommendations on: necessary mortality reductions to end the overfishing of bigeye tuna (*e.g.*, FAD set limits, longline catch reductions, actions for other gears), additional measures to enhance management of FAD fisheries, and interim target and limit reference points in line with the Convention Text.

Pew remains very supportive of the continued work on target and limit reference points, and encourages all WCPFC parties to work toward common objectives, performance indicators, and reference points for the WCPFC fisheries, as discussed at the first Management Objectives Workshop in 2012.

Sharks

SC9 will also consider a wide range of papers, stock assessments and other scientific documents on shark conservation and management. We would like to highlight the particular importance of the stock assessments of blue and silky sharks, as well as continuing research on mitigation measures to reduce shark bycatch.

It is clear that particular priority must be given to the analysis of the updated stock assessment for silky sharks, due to the extremely concerning conclusion that the stock of this low productivity species is in an overfished state in the WCPFC Convention Area, and that overfishing is continuing to occur. We strongly urge the SC to develop strong recommendations to managers on how best to protect and rebuild the population of this depleted shark species.

The range of work to be discussed at SC9 assessing the state of the North Pacific blue shark stock is also extremely important, given the high level of catch in the WCPFC Convention Area - around 40,000 MT annually over the last decade. All of the stock assessment work on this species notes high uncertainty in the status of the stock, with several models indicating that this heavily exploited stock could be in an overfished state. We urge the SC to provide strong, concrete and precautionary management advice on how to properly conserve and sustainably manage this stock, while collecting improved catch and effort data.

Conclusion

In closing, we wish the SC the best for a productive meeting. We anticipate that the SC will deliver clear science-based advice to the Commission on how to manage the many stocks under its purview. Of particular importance this year is guidance on how CMM 12-01 should be revised to end overfishing of bigeye tuna, recommendations to the Northern Committee based on the results of the 2012 PBT stock assessment, and recommendations based on this year's stock assessments on the management of silky and blue sharks.