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**PREPARATORY CONFERENCE FOR THE COMMISSION FOR  
THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF HIGHLY  
MIGRATORY FISH STOCKS IN THE WESTERN AND  
CENTRAL PACIFIC**

Fifth session  
Rarotonga, Cook Islands  
29 September – 3 October 2003

WCPFC/PrepCon/30  
29 September 2003

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**OPENING REMARKS BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PREPARATORY  
CONFERENCE AT ITS FIFTH SESSION**

I would like to get straight into the business of the meeting.

First, I would like to go over with you the key points in the document dated 15 September, WCPFC/PrepCon/29, Review of Progress in the Preparatory Conference and Identification of Priority Issues Prior to Entry into Force of the Convention – Note of the Chairman.

Essentially this document takes stock of where we've got to, recommends what our priorities should be for this session, and recommends appropriate further sessions of the Preparatory Conference on the basis that the Convention is likely to enter into force next year.

The Chair's Note sets out the terms of Resolution I of the Final Act of the Conference by which we were set up. We need all to be aware of the terms of that Resolution, particularly as the life of the preparatory process draws to a close. The Note goes on to review the progress made at our several Preparatory Conferences to date and the work programme it recommends follows from that.

**I. PRIORITIES FOR PREPCON V**

Now I would like to turn to the recommended priorities for this session of the Preparatory Conference. What I will say is a shortened version of what you will find in the Chair's Note to which I've referred and also in the more detailed Information Note on PrepCon V that was issued in August.

I suggest we need to keep in the forefront of our minds that the ultimate objective of the Preparatory Conference is not to reach final decisions on all matters, but rather to lay the groundwork for the entry into force of the Convention and a smooth transition to the Convention regime. It follows that our priority focus needs to be on the organizational and administrative matters necessary to allow the Commission to come into being next year. If necessary, to achieve this, we will have to leave more substantive and difficult issues to be discussed in more detail within the Commission itself.

On this basis, I suggest that our priorities for this session need to be:

**Informal Plenary:**

- Conclusion of our consideration of outstanding issues with respect to the draft rules of procedure, so that they can be adopted at the first session of the Commission itself

**Working Group I:**

- The revised draft scheme of contributions to the budget of the Commission;
- The draft financial regulations; and
- If time allows, the provisional draft budget for the early years of operation of the Commission.

Assuming that WG.I can reach substantial agreement on a scheme of contributions to the budget and on the draft financial regulations during this session, matters relating to the structure of the Commission secretariat and the provisional budget could be addressed in detail at the next session of the PrepCon, in light of recommendations regarding the science structure of the Commission which emerge from its deliberations this week.

**Working Group II:**

- The scientific structure of the Commission – in many ways definitely the most urgent task for Working Group II at this session;
- The role of existing regional organisations in obtaining information;
- The special requirements of developing States and territories with respect to data requirements and technical capacities; and
- Approaches to ecosystem and bycatch issues.

**Working Group III:**

- Elaboration of a draft scheme for boarding and inspection;
- Proposed guidelines for the rights, duties and responsibilities for observers, captains and crew;
- Proposed scheme for vessel and gear markings.

In relation to the indicative schedule of meetings, there are two points I would like to make:

First, the delegation of Japan has asked for time for further discussion of the capacity issue and, as you are aware, has tabled a proposal for a resolution on this subject. I understand that Japan will be tabling a revised version of the proposed resolution. I suggest that they might introduce their revised proposal first thing on the Wednesday morning in the informal plenary meeting scheduled for then. There would then be further discussion as appropriate at our final plenary on Friday.

The second point I would make regarding the schedule of meetings relates to the outstanding complex issues we have, such as the Northern Committee question. I urge delegations to consult together, particularly perhaps while the science working group is meeting, to seek agreement on such issues.

## II. FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

On the assumption that entry into force will be around mid-2004, the Chair's Note on Progress and Priority Issues proposes that two further sessions of the Conference be held:

PrepCon VI, to be held in March or April 2004, would *inter alia*:

- Finalise recommendations relating to the organizational structure of the Commission Secretariat;
- Finalise the budget for the early years of the Commission and the way in which it will be financed;

- Draw up the agenda for the first session of the Commission; and
- Make recommendations on the procedure for selection of an Executive Director.

In all likelihood, the work of Working Group I will require priority over that of the other Working Groups at PrepCon VI.

PrepCon VII, the final session of the Preparatory Conference, would probably be a short two-day meeting, held back to back with the inaugural session of the Commission as soon as practicable after entry into force. The main purpose of PrepCon VII would be to:

- Formally adopt the final report and recommendations of the Preparatory Conference;
- Conclude the business of the Conference; and
- Deal with any unfinished business.

I would urge delegations to cooperate in trying to keep to a timetable along these lines for the future work of the Preparatory Conference not least because this timetable is consistent with the views expressed at the first session of the Preparatory Conference, in April 2001, when the Conference agreed that its objective should be to complete the work of the Preparatory Conference within an overall time-frame of three years; that is, by early 2004.

For us to adhere to this timetable there are two requirements that will have to be met. First we will need to be in a position to take a decision this week on the venue and timing of PrepCon VI. And secondly, we will need assurance that the voluntary fund will have sufficient resources to cover the cost. I will have more to say on this last point when we consider the status of the fund later this morning.

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