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

First session
Christchurch, New Zealand
23 – 28 April, 2001

WCPFC/PrepCon/9
28 April 2001

**STATEMENT OF THE CHAIRMAN ON THE WORK OF THE PREPARATORY
CONFERENCE DURING ITS FIRST SESSION**

1. The first session of the Preparatory Conference for the Establishment of the Commission on the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean took place at Christchurch, New Zealand, from 23 to 28 April 2001. The Conference was attended by representatives from Australia, Canada, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, France, French Polynesia, Indonesia, Kiribati, Republic of Korea, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Chinese Taipei, Tonga, Tuvalu, United States of America, Vanuatu, and Wallis and Futuna. Observers from the European Commission (EC), the South Pacific Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), the Forum Secretariat, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Organisation (IATTC), OLDEPESCA, the Pacific Community (PC), the South Pacific Regional Environmental Programme (SPREP), and the University of the South Pacific (USP) attended the Conference.

2. The Director of the Pacific Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of New Zealand, Mr John Larkindale, called the Conference to order as Chairman, pro tem. The session was opened by a traditional karakia. The Chief Executive of the New Zealand Ministry of Fisheries, Mr Warwick Tuck, then welcomed participants to the Conference and encouraged them in their work as they charted the course towards the establishment of the Commission. The Conference elected Ambassador Michael Powles (New Zealand) as Chairman, by acclamation.

3. In his opening remarks, the Chairman recalled that the Conference represented the culmination of many years of negotiation to establish an international body for the conservation and management of highly migratory fish stocks, whose membership should include all coastal States of the South Pacific region as well as those fishing in the region. He reminded participants that the mandate for the Conference was contained in Resolution I adopted by the Multilateral High-Level Conference in Honolulu in September 2000. The Chairman emphasized that the task for the Conference was to reach agreement on the process to be adopted to bring the Convention into force effectively and efficiently. He noted that the first session of the Conference should focus on establishing a working method to enable the Conference to address issues in detail as the preparatory process progressed. The first session should decide upon arrangements for future sessions of the Conference and an interim Secretariat, taking account of the emphasis in the Convention on cost-effectiveness and an evolutionary approach to the establishment of the institutions envisaged by the Convention. The opening remarks of the Chairman are contained in document WCPFC/PrepCon/1.

4. Statements of a general nature were made by the Hon. Ron Ganarafa, Minister of Fisheries and Marine Resources of Papua New Guinea, and the representatives of Canada, China, France, French Polynesia, Republic of Korea, New Caledonia, New Zealand (including Tokelau),

Chinese Taipei, and the United States of America. Statements were also made by the observers from the EC, OLDEPESCA, and FAO.

Adoption of the agenda

5. The Conference adopted its agenda (WCPFC/PrepCon/2), which it noted would continue to serve as the basis of its work in future sessions, subject to such amendments as may be necessary as the Conference progressed. The Conference agreed to add an additional item to the agenda entitled “Mechanisms to promote participation”. Under this agenda item, delegations to the first session agreed to convene an informal two-day meeting prior to discuss issues to promote participation. The meeting will be held prior to the next session of the Conference at a date and place to be determined by the participants to allow interested delegations to raise and discuss issues of concern. The members of the Forum Fisheries Committee delivered a statement relating to the additional agenda item and the proposed informal meeting (WCPFC/PrepCon/7).

Establishment of working groups

6. To facilitate its work, the Conference established two open-ended working groups to consider matters related to organizational and budget matters and the provision of scientific advice to the Commission. The terms of reference of the working groups are contained in documents WCPFC/PrepCon/3 and WCPFC/PrepCon/4 respectively. Ambassador Lucy Bogari (Papua New Guinea) was appointed to chair Working Group I (WGI) on issues relating to the organizational structure of the Commission, its budget and financial contributions. Peter Ward (Australia) was appointed as the chairman of Working Group II (WGII) on the scientific structure of the Commission and the provision of interim scientific advice. Liu Xiaobing (China) was appointed as vice-chairman of the working group.

7. As a result of its meetings, WG.I identified an open-ended list of the possible needs of the Commission and agreed that working papers should be developed, in advance of the next meeting of WG.I, that would provide information on appropriate options for delivering the identified service needs of the Commission. The summary report of the chair of WG.I is contained in document WCPFC/PrepCon/5.

8. WG.II concentrated its discussions on designing a work plan to obtain all necessary information to enable later decisions on the development of recommendations for the implementation of articles 12 and 13 of the Convention and paragraph 10 of resolution I. The group recommended that a number of working papers be prepared in advance of the next session that would seek to gather information regarding science needs, existing providers of regional science and their activities, and any existing information on the status of tuna stocks in the Convention Area. The summary report of the chairman of WG.II is contained in document WCPFC/PrepCon/6.

Draft rules of procedure for the Commission

9. The Conference met in informal session to review the Draft Rules of Procedure for the Commission prepared by the secretariat (WCPFC/PrepCon/WP.1). A number of proposals for revisions emerged from the discussion of the draft and written suggestions were circulated by the delegation of the United States. It was noted that further detailed discussion of the draft rules would be necessary. The delegation of New Zealand submitted a paper relating to rules of procedure for the participation of territories (WCPFC/PrepCon/DP.5). The informal session

agreed that the paper submitted by New Zealand formed a useful basis for further discussion of the issue of participation by territories and that the matter would be taken up at future sessions of the Conference. With respect to the rules of procedure for the Preparatory Conference itself, it was noted that the rules of procedure used during MHLC offered an informal basis for proceeding until such time as the Preparatory Conference decided otherwise.

Draft Financial Regulations

10. A working paper containing Draft Financial Regulations (WCPFC/PrepCon/WP.2) was issued by the secretariat. It was noted that the paper would be taken up for consideration by the Conference at an appropriate time.

Location of the headquarters of the Commission

11. The Conference agreed to defer the issue of the location of the headquarters of the Commission to a later session. In relation to this agenda item, the Forum Fisheries Committee stated that a single candidate from the region would be selected through an evaluation process with a view to submitting a proposal to a later session of the Conference.

Draft agenda for the first session of the Commission

12. In respect of the draft provisional agenda for the first meeting of the Commission, it was noted that a background paper had been prepared (WCPFC/PrepCon/BP.9). It was agreed, however, to defer discussion of this item until a later session of the Preparatory Conference.

Requests for participation

13. The Conference noted the request submitted by the EC concerning its participation in the Conference. It was noted that communications had also been received from the Governments of Mexico and Peru. Informal consultations in relation to the request by the EC took place during the session and will be continued.

Future sessions of the Conference

14. In order to facilitate the work of the Preparatory Conference, the participants agreed to establish a Preparatory Conference Organizational Fund, to be financed through voluntary contributions or funding in kind, to offset the costs of future sessions of the Conference as well as the costs associated with an interim secretariat. The Conference agreed that a Preparatory Conference Secretariat would be established to service future meetings of the Conference. The Secretariat would consist of a Head and such technical advisers as the Chairman considers necessary, having due regard to the need for economy and efficiency.

15. The Conference accepted the offer of the Government of Papua New Guinea to host the second session of the Preparatory Conference in early 2002. Subject to the availability of financial resources, it was agreed that sessions will be held at intervals of approximately six to nine months, unless the Preparatory Conference decides otherwise, with a view to completing the work of the Conference within an overall time frame of three years. The decision of the Conference on arrangements for future sessions of the Preparatory Conference and for an Preparatory Conference Secretariat is contained in document WCPFC/PrepCon/8.

16. The Chairman delivered a closing statement outlining the progress that had been made during the session and noting the issues that might be considered during the next session of the Conference.

17. The first session of the Preparatory Conference was adjourned on 28 April 2001.

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