



## **PARTIES TO THE NAURU AGREEMENT**

### **19<sup>th</sup> Annual PNA Ministerial Meeting**

**17-18 September 2024**

#### **Communique**

Ministers from the Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Palau, Tuvalu, Tokelau, and Solomon Islands met in Kolonia from 17-18 September 2024 for their 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting. Kiribati, Nauru and Papua New Guinea were represented by Senior Officials. The meeting was chaired by Hon. Elina P. Akinaga, Secretary of the Department of Resources and Development of FSM.

The eight countries that are Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA) and Tokelau control the world's largest sustainable tuna purse seine fishery and also manage valuable tuna longline fisheries in their waters.

Expressing their appreciation to the Government and people of FSM, and of Pohnpei State in particular, and respecting the traditional leaders on whose land the meeting was being held, Ministers agreed:

#### ***Taskings by the PNA Leaders***

Ministers **recalled** the Taskings for PNA Ministers agreed by the PNA Leaders when they met at Kiritimati Island in 2023 towards achieving Economic Independence Through Collaboration in Sustainable Tuna Fisheries.

#### ***Positive Progress for PNA***

Ministers **appreciated** the continuing achievements of PNA in 2023 and 2024 to date in the management and development of tuna fisheries. These achievements were based on the strength of cooperation by the Parties through PNA in standing steadfastly together to maintain their collective control over their tuna resources and the tuna fisheries in their waters.

#### ***Vanuatu Participation in the PNA Longline Vessel Day Scheme***

Ministers **welcomed** the delegation from Vanuatu and **signed with Vanuatu** the *Arrangement for the Participation of Vanuatu in the Palau Arrangement Longline Vessel Day Scheme*. Ministers **noted** that this new partnership with Vanuatu was a very important step in strengthening

collaboration on tuna management in the region. The Arrangement showed the great importance to PNA and Vanuatu of strengthening the management of the regional longline fishery.

### ***FIMS Inc***

Ministers **welcomed** the news that FIMS Inc. has successfully retired all debts incurred during its acquisition and defined its future corporate structure and strategic focus on growth and shareholder value creation, and initiated the transition to its new Board. Ministers **thanked and congratulated** the current Board and FIMS Inc management for a job well done in the successful transition of FIMS Inc. to being a wholly PNA-owned venture. Ministers further **agreed**, as FIMS Inc. Shareholders, to convene a special meeting to discuss concerns raised during their retreat. Ministers **tasked** the PNA Office to compile a resolution to be sent to FIMS Inc., accordingly.

### ***PNA Office Performance***

Ministers **commended** Officials, the Office, and Marshall Islands as the PNA Office host country for the continued effectiveness of the PNA Office. Effective management of the Office is critically important to the Parties because of the role of the PNA Office in administering the VDS, managing funds held on behalf of the Parties, and supporting the Parties more broadly in their efforts to maximize the socio-economic value of tuna fisheries to the people of PNA and Tokelau.

### ***Status of Stocks***

Ministers **welcomed** the updated scientific advice from the Secretariat of the Pacific Community that all four tropical tuna stocks in PNA waters continue to be assessed as healthy. Ministers were **encouraged** to see stable tuna catches and effort in the main tuna fisheries in the region which indicated the effectiveness of regional tuna fisheries management, especially through the PNA Vessel Day Schemes (VDS). Ministers **noted** that the Western and Central Pacific is still the only oceanic region in the world where the tropical tuna resources are being fished sustainably. While the major target stocks are healthy, Ministers **recognised** the continuing need for further efforts to address the impacts of commercial tuna fisheries on bycatches, ecosystems and the marine environment. Ministers **expressed concern** over the increasingly unpredictable weather patterns and **encouraged** stock assessments to routinely capture the impacts of climate change.

### ***The Tuna Commission***

Ministers **noted the importance** of Kolonia as the location of the Headquarters of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC). In this 20<sup>th</sup> year of the operations of the Commission, Ministers expressed their warm appreciation to the Government of FSM for the quality of the support and commitment made by FSM to hosting the Commission Headquarters, Ministers also thanked the WCPFC Executive Director and her staff and all those who had participated in the Tuna Commission for successful collaboration in the Commission's work. Ministers **noted** that the PNA have been a driving force behind some of the recent successes of the WCPFC, including the adoption of the management procedure for skipjack tuna, delivering a

balanced tropical tuna measure and the restructuring of the compliance scheme to ensure equitable representativeness across the obligations of the conservation and management measures for different fisheries. The PNA engagement at the WCPFC continues to deliver value to the PNA Parties and Ministers **endorsed** the proposed approaches to address and drive, where necessary, the issues identified that are arising through the various discussions at the WCPFC.

### ***Marine Stewardship Council***

Ministers **welcomed** the advice that yet another spurious NGO Objection to the recertification of the PNA Purse seine Fishery by the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) had been dismissed by the MSC Independent Adjudicator. The outcome of the Adjudication was a result of the continuous improvements that PNA were making to ensure sustainability of tuna fisheries in PNA waters. The recertification of the Purse seine Fishery for the next 5 years would enable high quality, affordable tuna products from sustainable tuna fisheries in PNA waters to continue to be supplied to consumers globally.

### ***Wealth Creation from Tuna Value Chain Participation***

Ministers **emphasized the priority** that they attached to implementing the East New Britain Initiative and supporting the Pacific Islands Tuna Initiative. Through these Initiatives, PNA Members will build on the achievements in managing PNA tuna fisheries to generate revenue and conserve stocks to secure a much greater share of the wealth created throughout the tuna value chain. Ministers **welcomed the progress** being made in promoting increased Pacific Islands participation and collaboration in onshore tuna activities through the East New Britain Initiative Working Group. Ministers **encouraged** PNA Officials and the Office to identify ways in which PNA arrangements could be reframed and strengthened to serve the Parties' aspirations.

### ***Observers***

Ministers **congratulated** PNA national observer programmes and the PNA Observer Programme for the successful move to place observers back on all purse seine vessels in 2023 after the disruption to observer programmes caused by COVID. Ministers **were advised** that the increase in pay rates for observers that they had agreed at their last meeting in recognition of the importance, quality and increasing complexity of the work of observers had been applied in 2024 and was deeply appreciated by observers. Ministers **welcomed** the advice that the PNA Observer Agency would continue to provide observers for vessels operating under the Fisheries Treaty with the United States of America.

### ***Electronic Monitoring and Electronic Reporting***

Ministers **recalled** the adoption of the PNA Electronic Monitoring Program and noted the progress being made at the WCPFC on EM/ER. Ministers **also recognized** that EM can play a transformative role in monitoring longline fishing activities in the EEZ and on the high seas and supporting sustainable fishing practices in the WCPFC. Noting improved technology to support implementation of EM and ER, Ministers **urged** the PNA Office to play a more active role in the

development of EM in the WCPFC, and to support PNA members' efforts to roll out EM in their EEZs and to scale up EM to reduce costs.

### ***Review of the FSM Arrangement***

Ministers **confirmed the importance** of the Federated States of Micronesia Arrangement (FSMA) as a centrally important instrument in their path to enhanced benefits from domestic tuna development. At the same time, Ministers are **concerned to ensure** that the FSMA works well with the purse seine VDS. Ministers **encouraged** Officials to continue their review of the Arrangement to ensure that it continues to effectively support Parties' development aspirations and achieve the objectives of the VDS.

### ***Climate Change***

Ministers **recalled** the Commitment of PNA Leaders in 2018 in their 2nd Leaders' Summit, to preserve their rights irrespective of the effects of climate change. Ministers **noted** the participation of the PNA Office in the proceedings of the International Court of Justice on State Obligations in Respect of Climate Change. Ministers **continued to affirm** that climate justice is an essential element of the PNA work with respect to climate change.

### ***PNA Compliance Committee***

Ministers **agreed** to appoint Ms. Suzanne Lowe Gallen as the Independent Chair of the PNA Compliance Committee (PCC), replacing Mr. Eugene Pangelinan who had stepped down from the chairpersonship after being appointed to continue his work at the FSM National Oceanic Resources Management Authority. Ministers **wished** Ms. Gallen well in her new role.

### ***Tokelau Participation in the Palau Arrangement***

Ministers **noted with concern** that the ability of Tokelau to fully participate in the PNA Vessel Day Scheme may be limited by changes in arrangements for offshore fisheries management in Tokelau. Ministers **valued participation** by Tokelau in the Vessel Day Scheme and **supported** Tokelau's efforts to ensure that it could continue to fully participate in the Vessel Day Scheme in accordance with the MOU between the PNA and Tokelau.

### ***Leaders' Summit***

Ministers **welcomed** the invitation from Tuvalu for PNA Leaders to meet at their two-yearly summit in Funafuti in September 2025.