



KIRITIMATI COMMUNIQUE

Charting The Course:

ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE THROUGH COLLABORATION IN SUSTAINABLE TUNA FISHERIES

Leaders and Heads of Delegations from the Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Republic of Palau, Independent State of Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu met on Kiritimati, Kiribati on 26 October 2023.

LEADERS,

Reaffirming our commitment as Parties to the Nauru Agreement to co-ordinate and harmonise the management of fisheries with regard to common stocks within our Fisheries Zone to maximise the sustainable economic benefits from our tuna fisheries for the benefit of our peoples;

Noting the Federated States of Micronesia Arrangement for Regional Access and the Palau Arrangement for the Management of the Western and Central Pacific Tuna Fishery;

Recalling the *Koror Declaration Committing Parties to the Nauru Agreement to Joint efforts to increase the Economic Value and derive greater benefits from the tuna resource* adopted by PNA Leaders on 25 February 2010 confirming the establishment of the PNA Office in Majuro and the implementation of the purse seine Vessel Day Scheme;

Further recalling the *Delap Commitment to reshaping the future to take control of the fisheries: Securing Our Common Wealth Of Oceans* adopted by PNA Leaders on 2 March 2018 committing the Parties to strengthening measures for the conservation of PNA tuna resources and the management of PNA tuna fisheries including the strengthening the governance of PNA and the PNA Office;

Encouraged by the scientific advice from the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission, that all three major tropical tuna stocks in the region (bigeye, skipjack and yellowfin) are healthy and the fisheries on those stocks are assessed as being sustainable;

Encouraged also that the measures adopted by the Parties contribute substantially to the health status of the regional tuna stocks and to the sustainability of regional tuna fisheries with most of the catches of these stocks being made in PNA waters under PNA controls;

Welcoming the continuing success of the Purse Seine Vessel Day Scheme in controlling fishing effort, conserving tuna stocks and increasing the economic value of the tuna fishery to the Parties and the huge progress of the PNA in the past twelve years;

Welcoming also the success of PNA commercial programmes including the purchase of and investment in FIMS, the successful operation by the PNA Observer Agency of one of the largest fisheries observer programmes in the world; and the extension of the Marine Stewardship Council certification of the sustainability of the PNA purse seine fishery;

Recognising that further progress in sustainable tuna fisheries development is a critical element of the path to economic independence for all Parties and for many provides the primary opportunity for progress in that direction;

Noting that tightening global supplies of tuna are expected to increase the value of tuna products and empower PNA as major tuna resource-owners to leverage an increased stake and increased benefits from downstream processing and other tuna-related commercial activities;

Considering closer collaboration between us as a key element in having more of our tuna catch processed in our region instead of creating economic opportunities elsewhere;

Recognising also that maintaining healthy marine ecosystems and a healthy marine environment are essential elements for sustainable tuna fisheries;

Expressing deep concern, as people who have suffered greatly from mismanaged nuclear activities in the past, at the potential impacts from the pumping of large volumes of radioactive water into the ocean and other nuclear operations in the ocean;

Expressing deep concern also about the various effects of climate change that are the biggest threat to the contributions to food security and economic gains for PNA from their tuna fisheries;

Noting the scientific advice that large scale Marine Protected Areas in tuna-rich areas of PNA national Exclusive Economic Zones do not effectively contribute to the conservation of highly migratory tuna stocks and may be very costly in terms of economic benefits;

Committing to implement the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent and addressing the priorities for oceanic fisheries by Forum Leaders at their 51st Forum as expanding climate change impact adaptation and mitigation support, including securing and defining offshore fisheries rights, enhancing evidence-based planning, harvest strategies, policy and management strategies, and climate smart initiatives for more economically resilient tuna fisheries;

Expressing their warm appreciation and gratitude to the Government and People of the Republic of Kiribati for their timely initiative, warm welcome and generous hospitality in hosting the third PNA Leaders' Summit;

HAVE AGREED:

1. To reaffirm the fundamental importance of PNA collaboration in the management and development of our tuna fisheries.
2. To ensure that the PNA and the PNA Office remain self-reliant in the management and development of our tuna industries, welcoming the support of others while ensuring that PNA keep ownership and leadership in the management and development of our tuna resources so that our resources are used sustainably for the benefit of our people.
3. To collectively secure more beneficial arrangements with the fishing partners and their respective governments involved in fishing in PNA waters, for trade, and investments in capacities, infrastructures and port services associated with the tuna supply chain that contributes to the sustainable blue economy of the PNA.
4. To prioritise the development of programmes to build the capacity of PNA people and businesses to own, control and provide the skills for our tuna fishing and processing industries.
5. To ensure that the PNA continues to manage sustainably the world's largest tuna fishery, and care for the regional marine ecosystems and the marine environment.
6. To prioritise the development and implementation of Electronic Monitoring (EM) in the longline fisheries to supplement human observer programmes and to ensure continuous and independent monitoring of the fishery is maintained even in the absence of human observers as experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic.
7. To maintain the PNA relationship with the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) and consider developing a broader set of standards for our tuna fisheries including standards related to human rights, crew welfare and transparency.
8. To build on the success of PNA in managing stocks, increasing revenue and promoting domestic tuna industry development by increasing our collaboration in catching, processing and marketing our own fish and to become self-reliant in these areas as well so that our people secure the maximum benefits from our tuna resources.
9. To welcome and support the East New Britain Initiative including development of the hubs and spokes strategy and sourcing development funding.

10. To welcome and support also the Pacific Islands Tuna (PIT) initiative with Walmart to source and supply sustainably caught catch from PNA tuna fisheries.
11. To prepare for the actions necessary to adapt to climate change and to seek climate justice for the damage done to PNA tuna fisheries by climate change, including through access to high seas fisheries.
12. To express deep concern, as people who have suffered greatly from previous mismanaged nuclear activities, at release of treated radioactive water into the Pacific Ocean, and other nuclear operations in the ocean, because of potential impacts on the marine environment, the health of our people and the market for tuna products from the region.
13. To convene PNA Leaders' Summit meetings on a biennial basis, and hold the next meeting in Tuvalu in 2025.