



## **PARTIES TO THE NAURU AGREEMENT**

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

**15-16 June 2023**

#### **Communique**

Ministers from Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Tuvalu, Tokelau, and Solomon Islands met in Honiara from 15-16 June 2023 for their 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting, with the theme *“Sustainable Tuna Fisheries for our Economic Growth & Development*. The Federated States of Micronesia was represented by a Senior Official. The meeting was chaired by Hon. Nestor Giro, Minister of Fisheries and Marine Resources for Solomon Islands.

The eight countries that are Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA) and Tokelau control the world's largest sustainable tuna purse seine fishery.

Ministers had the opportunity to travel to Noro before their meeting to visit the centre of Solomon Islands tuna industry, including the Soltuna processing facility, on the occasion of the celebration of 50 years of the operation of the tuna industry in Solomon Islands.

In a powerful opening address, the Prime Minister of Solomon Islands Hon. Manasseh Sogavare highly commended the Parties for their tremendous leadership in ensuring the region's tuna stocks are managed and sustainably harvested and for providing economic and social benefits to its people since the Organization's inception. The Prime Minister encouraged the Ministers, as custodians of the world's largest sustainable tuna fisheries, to remain vigilant and innovative in view of threats transpiring from Climate Change and other external events. He also called on the Ministers to show that PNA know how to catch, process and market their own fish and to become self-reliant in those areas in the same way that PNA has shown how to manage tuna fisheries to generate revenue and conserve stocks.

The key outcomes from the meeting of Ministers included the following:

Ministers **appreciated** the continuing achievements of PNA in 2022 and 2023 to date, Ministers **were thankful** that the PNA Vessel Day Scheme and other management arrangements had generally proven resilient to some major impacts. The purse seine fishery and the VDS revenue from that fishery had been stable through the COVID pandemic and a very strong La Nina period.

These achievements were built on close collaboration among the Parties to ensure that PNA tuna management and development arrangements were successful.

### ***Observers***

Ministers were **pleased to hear** that the pay rates of the PNA Observer Agency for observers would be substantially increased from the start of the 2024 fishing year. Observers and their families had endured particular suffering during the COVID period. The increase was recognition of the importance, quality and increasing complexity of the work of observers and that the observer payrate had not been increased for some time.

### ***PNA Headquarters Building***

Ministers **warmly recalled** their gathering in Majuro in February to celebrate the new PNA Headquarters Building. Ministers saw the Building, fully funded by the Parties, as a clear symbol of the confidence and success of the PNA. They appreciated that the Majuro Office of the PNA Observer Agency and the CEO of FIMS Inc were already located in the Building along with the PNA Office. Ministers were informed that the Building had been enriched with the artifacts representing PNA communities and cultures that had been provided during and after their meeting to open the Building. Ministers also expressed their appreciation to the host government for the welcome they received and their continued support to the PNA Office.

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

Ministers **commended** Officials and the Office for the quality of the PNA Office reporting and financial and business management processes. These were particularly important because of the critical role of the PNA Office in administering the VDS, managing funds held on behalf of the Parties, and supporting the efforts of Parties more broadly to maximize the individual and collective economic returns from their tuna fisheries.

### ***Healthy Stocks***

Ministers **welcomed** the updated scientific advice from the Secretariat of the Pacific Community that the four major tuna stocks in PNA waters continue to be reported as healthy and none are assessed as overfished or subject to overfishing. They **saw** the stability of catches, effort and catch rates in the purse seine fishery as a good sign of the health of the tuna fisheries in PNA waters. They **noted** that the Western and Central Pacific remains the only oceanic region in the world where the tropical tuna resources are being fished sustainably and expressed their appreciation to all those participating in these fisheries for contributing to this shared outcome through the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC).

Ministers **reiterated their commitment** to ensuring the sustainability of the regional tuna resources and the valuable fisheries for those resources on which PNA and Tokelau communities heavily depend.

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

Ministers **recognised the importance** of the Marine Stewardship Council as a partner with PNA in conveying the message of the sustainability of PNA tuna fisheries to seafood consumers globally. Ministers **supported** the PNA Office maintaining the MSC certification in support of PNA Party based initiatives and looked forward to the recertification by the MSC of the PNA purse seine fishery.

### ***Pacific Islands Tuna Provision***

Ministers **welcomed** the development of the Pacific Islands Tuna Provision Initiative as an innovative and mutually beneficial approach to collaboration between Walmart and PNA tuna resource-owning Countries and thanked the Marshall Islands and The Nature Conservancy for leading this initiative.

### ***WCPFC Approach***

Ministers **affirmed their strong continuing support** for the WCPFC in its work on the conservation of regional tuna resources and management of regional tuna fisheries. They **welcomed** the adoption by the Commission of the skipjack management procedure and looked forward to similar progress for other key tuna stocks. They also **encouraged** the Commission to focus on continuing to strengthen the control of longline fishing in the high seas, including recognition of the PNA longline VDS.

### ***Domestic Tuna Development***

Ministers **appreciated** the growth in employment, onshore operations and exports from domestic tuna industries as they had seen in Noro. Ministers **agreed** that it was time to build on the achievements in managing PNA tuna fisheries to generate revenue and conserve stocks and show that PNA can catch, process and market their own fish to become self-reliant in these areas as well.

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

Ministers **confirmed the importance** of the Federated States of Micronesia Arrangement to provide preferential access to each other's vessels as a central element in their strategies for domestic tuna development. They **encouraged** Officials to continue their review of the

Arrangement to ensure that it remains effective and fair in facilitating and supporting Parties' development aspirations.

### ***Climate Change***

Ministers **expressed support** for the development of a climate change strategy for the PNA to respond to the challenges posed by the effects of climate change on their shared tuna fisheries, including a focus on climate justice. Ministers **affirmed** the approach taken to understand the equity aspects of climate change action that recognizes the shared values and strengths of the PNA. This will provide the appropriate platform for the PNA to take action to address the challenges posed by the impacts on PNA tuna fisheries of climate change caused by the actions of others.

### ***Tuna Treaty with the US***

Ministers **welcomed** the enhanced commitment by the Government of the United States to the Fisheries Treaty with Pacific Island States. The large increase in the value of the United States Government contribution to the Treaty recognised the value of the tuna fisheries resources of Pacific Island States and would benefit all Pacific Island Parties to the Treaty. Ministers **looked forward** to further development of the arrangements in the Treaty for broader cooperation for the mutual benefit of the Pacific Island Parties and the United States.

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

Ministers **agreed** to appoint Mr. Eugene Pangelinan as the Independent Chair of the PNA Compliance Committee (PCC), replacing Ms. Rhea Moss-Christian who had stepped down from the chairpersonship after being appointed as the Executive Director of the WCPFC. Ministers expressed appreciation to Rhea for her work as the inaugural PCC Chair and wished her well in her very important new role, as the Executive Director of the WCPFC.

### ***FIMS***

Ministers **welcomed** the presentation of the research and development plans by FIMS Inc, to ensure that it continues to be a world leading information management platform for fisheries management.

### ***Report to Leaders***

Ministers **recognized** the need for PNA Leaders to convene more regular meetings to keep them informed of strategic tuna fisheries issues of importance to the PNA.