



SECOND CONFERENCE OF THE POLYNESIAN PARLIAMENTS PRESIDENTS

- CONCEPT NOTE -

THEME 2

FISHING, KEY SECTOR OF THE BLUE ECONOMY

The people of the Pacific Islands developed a symbiotic relationship with the marine environment which enabled them to dwell and sustain in the thousands of islands of the Blue Pacific continent¹.

Fishing is at the heart of this relationship. It represents both a cultural and identity practice necessary to ensure food security and the economic development of an entire region. In order to continue providing all of its benefits, fishing management must be rooted into equity, respect for the environment and its ecosystems, and based on inclusive and genuine regional cooperation. When driven by these principles, fishing can help promote the blue economy or blue growth defined as a strategy to support the sustainable development of the marine and maritime sectors².

Fishing contributes between 0.2% and 14% of the gross domestic product of island countries in the region³. However, there is still much room for the sector to grow and realize its potential⁴. In addition, fisheries are also facing growing global challenges. Collective, urgent and responsible action is therefore needed to ensure that this vital sector can grow sustainably and continue to benefit the region and its inhabitants.

¹ The Pacific Blue or Blue Pacific is a concept adopted by the leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum in 2017 which serves to contextualize the regionalism they defend

² To date, there is no universal definition of the blue economy or blue growth. This is the definition of the European Commission. It would be appropriate to include the definition of French Polynesia

³ This is the reason why Pacific delegations have successfully advocated for the designation of May 2 as world tuna day through UNGA resolution 71/124 of 7 December 2016

⁴ PIFS (2018). Our People, Our Environment, Our Ocean: First Quadrennial Pacific Sustainable Development report. ISBN: 978-982-202-053-3

This is the underlying idea of the Future of Fisheries: a regional roadmap for Pacific sustainable fisheries adopted by the Pacific Islands forum leaders in 2015. This roadmap is intended to be implemented until 2024, with monitoring being entrusted to the Pacific Community (for coastal fisheries) and the Forum Fisheries Agency (for tuna and off-shore fishing)⁵.

TUNA AND OFFSHORE FISHING

1

Increase the regional share in consumption of regional catches

Catches of tunas in the West and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission area (WCPFC) are estimated to account for nearly 58% of world supply. Yet 90% of these catches are exported outside the region. With a growing regional population and dwindling coastal resources that are subject to increasing pressure, Pacific leaders aspire the offshore fisheries sector to play a larger role in the supply of fish protein to the inhabitants of the region: they pledged to increase regional tuna consumption to 40,000 tons by 2024⁶.

Conference participants could share their respective national experience in applying regulatory and legislative measures to increase the share of catches of tuna consumed domestically, including measures related to small scale fishers. How can such incentives also promote sustainable fishing consumption?

2

Increase the value of fish caught in the region and income from fishing

In 2016, regional fleets caught 1.1 billion dollars compared to 2 billion from long-distance fishing fleets. A redistribution of fishing shares to benefit regional domestic fleets would help create jobs⁷.

The increase in fishing effort by PICT implies the provision of adequate fishing means. To date, there are still island countries with no domestic fleet and cannot directly engage in fishing⁸.

The tuna industry supports nearly 23,000 jobs in the region, 53% of which from tuna processing plants in Papua New Guinea. A significant proportion of the catches are processed in factories outside the region. An opportunity is to be seized in the retention of a greater part of the regional catches by investing in the development of regional companies⁹.

Pacific islands forum leaders have committed to creating 18,000 new jobs by 2024 in the tuna industry, including through processing plants, fishing crews, observers on board, etc¹⁰. This objective could be supported by enabling regulatory and legislative measures.

Participants could share lessons learned from developing relevant measures, in particular the regulatory and legislative levers at their disposal to encourage and promote job creation in the sector as well as increase the value of the resource?

3

Fight against illegal, unregulated, and unreported fishing

Another shortfall for regional fisheries results from illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing. While IUU is less than previously estimated¹¹, it could represent a volume of 306,440t, or about \$600m¹². It is not only an economic issue but also a security one and thus remains a regional priority as reiterated by the leaders at their last forum. In 2018, Australia committed to regional surveillance by

⁵ FFA, SPC (2015). Future of Fisheries: A Regional Roadmap for Sustainable Pacific Fisheries

⁶ FFA, SPC (2015). Future of Fisheries: A Regional Roadmap for Sustainable Pacific Fisheries: Objective 4

⁷ PIFS, 2018. First quadrennial Pacific report for sustainable development.

⁸ PIFS, 2018. First quadrennial Pacific report for sustainable development.

⁹ PIFS, 2018. First quadrennial Pacific report for sustainable development.

¹⁰ FFA, SPC (2015). Future of Fisheries : A Regional Roadmap for Sustainable Pacific Fisheries: Objective

¹¹ MRAG, 2016 Towards the quantification of IUU fishing in the Pacific Islands Region, FFA

<https://www.ffa.int/files/FFA%20Quantifying%20IUU%20Report%20-%20Final.pdf>

¹² MRAG, 2016.

deploying two aircrafts for maritime surveillance of the Pacific area, as well as the provision of patrol boats in 12 island countries. This commitment complements and strengthens existing regional cooperation programmes such as those conducted by Australia, New Zealand and France.

In addition to improving the means of surveillance, the importance of adequately regulating, monitoring and controlling trans-shipment at sea would contribute to combating IUU fishing activities. A wider reflection on strengthening legislation and improving legal capacity of Pacific Island to prevent IUU related activities would be relevant. Participants could discuss legislative and regulatory tools to reaffirm intransigence against and support efforts to fight IUU fishing related activities

4

Developing a responsible sector

Regional ambitions for the development of the sector is confronted to acute challenges, in particular climate change, ocean acidification, overfishing, bycatch, and pollution.

Improving the accountability of the industry through ambitious commitments could contribute to increasing the value of the resource, such as through a certification scheme. In addition to sharing experiences, conference participants could discuss tools available to support regional efforts and further promote responsible, cleaner and less impactful fisheries. Their discussions could address the following elements.

First, bycatch caused by certain fishing techniques is a global problem. While regional tuna stocks are generally in good condition¹³, reports are much more alarming with respect to bycatch especially as regards sharks whose populations are declining fast, in particular silky sharks and white-tipped oceanic whitetip sharks¹⁴. Sharks play a critical role in the ecosystem and their decline is preoccupying for the balance of the entire food chain. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has developed an International Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks (IPOA-SHARKS)¹⁵. One of its objectives is to minimize unwanted bycatch of sharks. This is why IPOA developed under the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries¹⁶ relies on the voluntary implementation by states. In the Pacific, through a joint initiative of the FFA, SPREP, SPC and WCPFC, a regional plan of action for sharks was developed¹⁷. WCPFC has also adopted shark conservation and management measures and is considering a new measure. Conference participants could discuss the deployment of measures to minimize bycatch.

Marine pollution is another major challenge for a sector that is both victim and contributor. Marine pollution from fishing takes many forms. First, greenhouse gases emissions from aging fleets is one such issue. Multilateral protocols within the framework of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) as well as the FAO are providing both legally-binding measures as well as voluntary guidelines¹⁸, which contribute to diminishing the sector's carbon footprint.

Second, underwater noise from ships is also a growing problem. Discussions at the international level have led to the development of guidelines¹⁹.

The third type of pollution which is well known is marine debris. They take several forms (plastic pollution with plastic bags, straws, disposable utensils, or cigarette butts, etc.). For fishing, however, it is mostly plastic pollution and ghost gear in particular. Ghost gears are abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded equipment lost at sea (voluntarily or not). They can include pieces of nets, fishing lines, etc. They represent a growing problem that international and regional and sectoral organizations are trying to solve because they inflict substantial harm to species trapped in them or that ingest them. They

¹³ FFA, Tuna Fishery Report Card, 2018.

¹⁴ FFA, Tuna Fishery Report Card, 2018.

¹⁵ FAO, IPOA- SHARKS, 1999. <http://www.fao.org/ipoa-sharks/en>

¹⁶ FAO, Code of conduct for responsible fisheries, 1995. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-v9878f.pdf>

¹⁷ FFA, SPC, SPREP, Regional Plan of Action for Sharks: Guidance of Pacific Island Countries and Territories on the Conservation and Management of Sharks, 2009.

¹⁸ See for instance International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973 and its relevant protocols

¹⁹ One can cite: IMO, "Guidelines for the Reduction of Underwater Noise from Commercial Shipping to Address Adverse Impacts on Marine Life" (2014) MEPC.1/Circ.833; FAO, "Recreational Fisheries", FAO Technical Guidelines for Responsible Fisheries no.13 (2012)

contribute to the decline of the health of marine species and ecosystems, reducing their ability to cope with global pressures related to climate change or ocean acidification. The participants of the conference could share experiences on taking legislative or regulatory measures to tackle the problem of pollution related to fisheries.

A particular example of ghost gear is the case of fishing aggregating devices (FADs). FADs used by industrial fisheries can improve tuna catch rates especially for purse seine vessels. This non-selective fishing method can have a negative impact on resources, especially when poorly managed and abandoned. They contribute to increasing bycatches, such as juvenile bigeye tuna and other species. It is important to better regulate these practices, for instance by considering seasonal closures around FADs or promoting FAD-less industrial fishing. What are the challenges linked with attempts to eliminate FADs and what tools are available to parliaments to address them?

Lastly, another negative impact from fishing operations is damage to ocean buoys. A network of moored ocean data buoys that collect data to improve weather and marine forecasts (including tsunami), fisheries management and climate change predictions, is deployed in the Pacific. Pacific Islands' safety relies on this network that provide invaluable data and information to support natural disasters prevention in the region. However, some fishing operations inflict damages to these buoys making them inoperative. Some actions by States and regional fisheries organizations have been implemented to protect them. Further efforts could be considered by participants, including types of tools to support such efforts.

5

Developing the resilience of the sector to global changes

Climate change will have an impact on tuna habitats and affect their distribution and biomass²⁰. This reality must be accounted for when planning to enable the sector to be as resilient as possible. Indeed, regardless of mitigation actions implemented, climate change is already happening, and its effects will be felt. Mitigation actions can only lessen the amplitude of effects.

Regional leaders are banking on the development of offshore fisheries to counter the decline of the inshore sector. However, if no adaptation measures are adopted, this sector will also be threatened. This could lead to a significant reduction in national incomes for countries with small and not diversified economy²¹.

To do this, it is important to reduce the pressures facing the sector and tuna. Examples of measures to consider include more robust conservation and management measures in consultation with other sectoral bodies, stopping or reducing destructive fishing techniques, or promoting the use of less impacting techniques. Participants could discuss their experiences and tools available to implement effective measures and support the objectives.

One of the most significant pressures facing marine species and resources is pollution (from land and sea). Pollution weakens species by impacting their habitats, breeding areas, but also the food chain on which they depend. Thus weakened, species have a harder time coping with the diverse impacts of climate change, such as increasing average temperature, deoxygenation, and so on.

Furthermore, pollution can weaken the fisheries sector by decreasing the value of the resource. Indeed, studies that show traces of plastics found in fish are multiplying. This is, thus, both an economic as well as sanitary challenge²² that runs the risk of contributing to the collapse of the sector, especially in the absence of preventive or reactive measures. Participants could share their experience in implementing relevant measures and discuss the issues, obstacles and opportunities associated with such measures.

²⁰ Senina, et al.(2018) Impacts of climate change on tropical tuna species and tuna fisheries in Pacific Island waters and high seas areas: Modelling the effects of climate change on tuna abundance in areas beyond national jurisdiction. Final Report (CI-3) for SAN 6003922. Developed for Conservation International (CI) as part of the GEF-funded, World Bank implemented Ocean Partnerships for sustainable fisheries and biodiversity conservation (OPP), a sub-project of the Common Oceans ABNJ Program led by UN-FAO.

²¹ https://www.ffa.int/system/files/OFMP%20Climate%20Change%20fact%20sheet_0.pdf

²² Pacific Regional Action Plan: Marine Debris: p.6. ; United Nations (2015), First Global Integrated Marine Assessment, Chap. 6

The opportunities and challenges for offshore fishing are enormous. They require collective action at all levels and from all stakeholders. The role of parliaments is critical through the implementation and enforcement of regulations to support ambitious regional and international commitments and regulations, as well as the implementation of inclusive, accountable, and equitable management measures. What tools are available to Parliaments to promote inclusive, accountable, equitable management?

COASTAL FISHING

6

Restore coastal fisheries through inclusive, collective and respectful management

Pacific people consume about 3 to 5 times more fish than the global average. Most of it is from coastal fisheries, the bedrock of food security for Pacific Islanders. Coastal fisheries are critical for the regional fight against malnutrition and noncommunicable diseases and is estimated to represent about 49% of the all fisheries contribution to GDP in the region²³.

However, coastal fisheries face many challenges, including climate change, ocean acidification, population growth, overfishing, destructive fishing practices, pollution, and so on.

To respond to the degradation of coastal fishery resources and coastal ecosystems, regional leaders have taken a series of commitments to be implemented through partnerships and concerted actions.

Coastal fisheries management requires integrated, collective and inclusive management as well as adequate and sustained means of implementation. Unlike offshore fisheries, there is no one size fits all in coastal fisheries and management measures adapt to the local context and involvement the relevant communities.

For instance, inclusive management measures can build on the traditional knowledge of local communities. Their inclusion can indeed help to gain the support of local populations but also complement scientific information. In addition, the promotion and enhancement of the role of women in resource management measures and fishing methods also supports the effective implementation of inclusive management.

The Nouméa Strategy and the Future of Fisheries aim to address these challenges and improve the management and conservation of coastal fisheries. They articulate objectives and actions and thereby contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development and the achievement of its relevant SDGs, in particular SDG 14. An annual follow-up report to these two regional documents allows national and regional authorities, as well as relevant and interested stakeholders, to monitor progress in the implementation of these commitments.

The implementation of legislative or regulatory measures to support inclusive management, sustainable use and conservation of coastal fish, including the recognition of traditional knowledge of local communities, is important and critical. Participants could share lessons learned from implementing legislative and regulatory measures to improve management and restore coastal ecosystems. They could further discuss tools and levers to promote the consideration of traditional knowledge in management measures as well as the role of women in this sector.

²³ SPC (2015): A New Song for Coastal Fisheries – Pathway to Change: The Noumea Strategy. The Noumea Strategy: document prepared at the end of the regional workshop on the future of coastal fisheries management held from March 3 to 6, 2015 in Nouméa. Adopted by the 9th Conference of SPC Fisheries Directors in Noumea in March 2015.

With the participation of:

