



FIFTH REGULAR SESSION

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KIRIBATI – OPENING STATEMENT

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Chairman, please allow me to join the other delegations in expressing our sincere thanks to the Korean Government and people of Korea for hosting this important meeting and the very warm welcome we have been accorded since our arrival in Korea and this beautiful city of Bussan.

Chairman, On behalf of my delegation I would like to raise certain issues which we believe are of crucial importance to Kiribati and this meeting. I know some of these have been alluded to in previous meetings of the Commission and preparatory meetings and will again be explored at this meeting.

Kiribati has signed up to the PNA Third Implementation Arrangements on the Conservation and Management of the Bigeye and Yellowfin and we are proud to be associated with this initiative. The measures to be undertaken under this initiative although could be painful for us smaller island developing states who depend very much for revenue and economic development on the harvest of these tuna species, this is the sacrifice that we have taken to ensure the long term security of the species and future of the industry. We encourage members of the Commission to consider and endorse compatible measures for the high seas. The burden of conservation measures should be shared in an equitable manner in order to work.

Kiribati maintains the belief of coastal states' sovereign right over their 200 miles EEZ and we believe that the Commission's responsibility on matters of conservation and management of any species, should be for the high seas and that such measures should be no less stringent or effective as those measures that are in place in-zone.

As we expressed in the last meeting of the Commission and related meetings, Kiribati associates itself with other Pacific island states in the application of the Vessel Days Scheme for the conservation, management and control of efforts in our EEZ. We still hold firm to limit fisheries access in our EEZ according to that principle. After all it is our moral responsibility to the people of Kiribati and Pacific nations to sustain the tuna resource which has carried us well in the past and hopefully into the future.

Kiribati unlike most members of the Commission, depends very much on fisheries access revenue to deliver basic services for its people and therefore sustainability of the tuna resource is of primary concern to us. Therefore any decision taken on the issue of access, we would always consider in relation to its implications on our revenue source.

I know that had been controversies before on account of allowing new entrants into our waters, and we would like to thank members of the Commission for their understanding and positive support in this regard. This demonstrated your practical commitment in part to the principle of supporting the development aspirations of small islands developing states.

We would like to inform members of the Commission of Kiribati's intention to operate more tuna boats in Commission's area in the future and we hope that in the spirit of promoting the development aspirations of small island developing states that you will give this your blessing in due course. I would like to assure members that this will be done without undermining established processes of the WCPFC and without prejudice to the conservation and management efforts.

We would also like to inform members that as part of our in-zone conservation effort, Kiribati is implementing the Phoenix Island Protected area which closes a large portion of the Kiribati EEZ and one of the richest fishing and spawning ground for the tuna especially, bigeye and yellowfin. We hope our sacrifice will contribute towards more sustainable resource management in the region.

With your indulgence Mr Chairman, and given our close interest in the outcome of any decision that may be made in relation to Ecuador's application to be a co-operating non-member of the Commission that Kiribati participate in the working group to assess the eligibility of the applicants.

Lastly, Mr. Chairman, we pledge to you the Kiribati delegation's support in your conduct of the meeting and we look forward to the successful and favorable outcomes of the meeting.

Thank you.