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NINTH STANDING COMMITTEE ON TUNA AND BILLFISH

July 22-23, 1996

Noumea, New Caledonia

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NATIONAL REPORT OF TAIWAN/ROC

Oceanic Fisheries Programme (OFP)

South Pacific Commission

Noumea, New Caledonia

July 1996

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INTRODUCTION

The total catch of tunas, billfishes and sharks in the Pacific Ocean by the Republic of China (Taiwan) for 1995 was about 273 thousands mt, of which distant water fisheries accounted for 90 %, offshore fisheries and coastal fisheries for 10%. Among these fisheries, the distant-water tuna purse seine, distant-water tuna longline, and offshore tuna longline fisheries were the most important. They accounted for 90% of the total Taiwanese catch of tunas, billfishes and sharks in the Pacific Ocean in 1995.

DISTANT-WATER PURSE SEINE FISHERY

The operation of the distant-water tuna purse seine fishery in Taiwan could traced back to 1982, when it was first introduced. Since then development of this fishery has been very rapid, and presently the country has a fleet of 42 purse seiners, with 3 additional vessels operating in the form of locally based vessel out of Papua New Guinea. Reportedly the total production by the fleet in 1995 was 174,716 mt, with 142,604 mt of skipjack, 30,786 mt of yellowfin and 1,326 mt of others, which were transhipped at Guam and Chuuk to Thailand, the United States, and Japan for canning.

DISTANT-WATER ALBACORE TUNA LONGLINE FISHERY

Taiwan established its distant-water tuna longline fishery in the early 1960's. The fishery developed rapidly in Kouhsiung being its most important base port. At the outset, the fishing ground was limited to the South China Sea and gradually extended to the waters of the South Pacific Ocean from 1963. The vessels, mostly 150-250 GRT, presently fish in the South Pacific out of the base ports in American Samoa and Fiji, primarily targeting albacore for canning. The total albacore catch in 1995 was about 17 thousand mt, with an average of 50 vessels in operation 1995.

FRESH SASHIMI TUNA LONGLINE FISHERY

The beginning of fresh sashimi tuna longline fishery could be traced back to the early 1900s. It was in fact the pioneer of Taiwan tuna fisheries. The fleet consists of those longliners of under 100 GRT, the majority of them with fiberglass hull, using flake ice or more recently refrigerated sea water to chill the fish caught. At the outset of development, these boats (between 20 - 50 GRT) normally fished in the nearby seas for a short trip of 7-10 days, bringing back fresh tuna to their home ports (Tungkang and Kaohsiung in particular) for auction in the dock-side market and shipping by air to Japan.

As the resource in the nearby seas became exhausted, some of the larger boats proceeded to distant fishing grounds in the South Pacific Ocean seeking for better fishing. Some of them entered into fishing cooperation with coastal nations, and used their base ports for transshipment. Presently it is estimated that there are about 450 small tuna longliners (50 - 70 GRT) operating out of Indonesia, Philippine, Malaysia, Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, Palau, Solomon Islands, Marshall Islands and etc. Since the seasonal catch rates of these waters and the adjacent high seas vary, some of the tuna longliners will shift to other neighboring countries in South China Sea from time to time, depending on their respective catch information. As the fishing grounds are very new to us, we are not quite familiar with the status of stocks of their target species, yellowfin and bigeye tuna. Therefore, only the total catch for the Pacific Ocean area as a whole in 1995 was estimated at about 30,000 mt.

However, for further study on the status of stock, we would like to collect and exchange the catch with the coastal fisheries agencies concerned through the current fisheries cooperation channels or arrangement available.

PROSPECT OF THE FUTURE

With the global trend of conservation and protection of fishery resources by coastal nations and diminishing high seas fishing grounds due to their proclamation of EEZs, operators have to pay high fee and accept difficult terms in acquisition of fishing rights in the waters of the South Pacific nations. The terms of fishing agreements with resource owning countries in the South Pacific region are becoming tougher every year, making negotiations on fishing licenses increasingly difficult. Therefore, Taiwan tuna longline fleet in this area has probably reached its limit at this moment, in terms of catching tuna for the canners and sashimi markets concerned.

For distant-water purse seine fishery, the PNA countries have decided that foreign purse seine fishery in the region should gradually be replaced by local vessels of PIN or foreign vessels based in local ports. By 1997 all foreign fishing licenses will be reduced by 10% and it would be the major constraint for the development of our distant-water purse seine fishery, unless a better fishing arrangement with FFA member countries are reached.

The ROC is not a member of UN nor FAO and unable to be a signing party to the agreement of UN Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks nor a party to most subregional or regional fisheries management organizations under the framework of FAO. Realizing the importance of fisheries management and conservation on the highly migratory species, it has been very cooperative in the provision of catch data to the regional or international organizations involving in tuna management, and sending scientists and government officers to participate in scientific workshops and meetings on fisheries management. We would like to express our sincere desire to seek opportunities for joining such international bodies and arrangements including those existing or upcoming ones in the South Pacific Ocean for further cooperation in many aspects.