



FIFTH REGULAR SESSION

8-12 December 2008

Busan, Korea

BELIZE – OPENING STATEMENT

WCPFC5-2008/DP27

8 December 2008



**OPENING STATEMENT BY BELIZE AT THE
FIFTH REGULAR SESSION OF THE WESTERN AND CENTRAL PACIFIC
FISHERIES COMMISSION (WCPFC) IN BUSAN, KOREA,
8TH-12TH DECEMBER 2008**

As you will have observed from our Application for renewal of our Cooperating non-Member Status dated 5th September 2008, we continue to make progress in attaining our objective of becoming a Contracting Party of all RFMOs in whose Convention area we have an operational presence. Currently, we are a Contracting Party of ICCAT and IOTC. We are Cooperating non-Contracting Party of IATTC and will become a Contracting Party thereof when the “Antigua Convention” to which we have acceded on 12th June 2007 comes into force, which is expected in 2010. We are a Cooperating non-Contracting Party of NEAFC and as you are aware, we are a Cooperating non-Member of WCPFC. We are also engaged in the negotiations for the formation of SPRFMO.

You will also have observed that we have made our detailed submissions in accordance with Article 24 of WCPFC’s Convention and have responded to the Commission’s requests for data. Our submissions and our actions are evidence of our expressed commitment to cooperate fully in the implementation of conservation and management measures adopted by the Commission and to ensure that our fishing vessels which operate in the Convention area comply with the provisions of the Convention and the conservation and management measures adopted under it. This is part of an overall policy of compliance in all RFMOs which, inter alia, is reflected in the fact that Belize has no fishing vessels on any RFMO IUU Lists.

Belize has ratified/accepted the FAO Compliance Agreement, the UN Fish Stocks Agreement as well as the IPOA IUU. Our Ship Registry re-qualified for the third year in succession for the U.S. Coast Guard’s Quality Shipping for the 21st Century (QUALSHIP 21) Program. Furthermore, our Quality Management System which encompasses Ship Registration, Certification of Seafarers, Statutory Certification and Fishing Vessel Administration is certified in accordance with the latest Quality System Standard ISO 9001-2000 and is audited annually by external auditors.

It is important to note that Belize has had and continues to have a real interest in the WCPFC Convention area and the presence of its fishing vessels in this area pre-dates the formation of this Commission. Back in 2001, we had 44 longliners operating in this area and in 2004 we had 24 longliners. Currently, we have 6 longliners operating exclusively in the WCPFC Convention area. However, due to the high cost of fuel earlier in 2008, 4 of

these vessels have been laid up for over 6 months in 2008 and the remaining 2 vessels have only recently commenced fishing operations. We have submitted our Catch and Effort data for all our fishing vessels for 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007 together with a Summary of our historical fisheries in the WCPO and details of all fishing vessels operating in the area since 2001. All our vessels which operated in WCPFC area in 2007 have fished within the catch limits set by the Commission for Belize at the 4th Regular Session of WCPFC. These limits are as follows:

- **Under CMM 2006-01:** You will recall that we voluntarily waived our right to 2000 tons of bigeye and agreed to a limit of 803 tons based on our average catches for 2001-2004. As for yellowfin tuna, our limit is 2000 tons.
- **Under CMM 2006-04 for striped marlin in the South West Pacific** south of 15 degrees South, we are limited to 2 longliners.
- **Under CMM 2005-02 for South Pacific Albacore** in accordance with Para 1, in the Convention area south of 20 degrees South, we are limited to our historical catch level for 2004 of 2 longliners.
- **Under CMM 2005-03 for North Pacific Albacore** in the Convention area north of the equator, in accordance with Paragraph 1, we are limited to our 2005 level of 5 longliners.
- **Under CMM 2006-03** we have had no vessels which fished for swordfish during the years 2003-2005 in this Convention area south of 20 degrees South.

We kindly request the Commission to set the same limits for 2009.

Belize wishes to play a constructive role in the work of the Commission and to contribute financially thereto, commensurate with its small participation and allocation in its resources. At the same time, we require the security of Contracting Party Status and the right to draft proposals/Conservation and Management Measures/Resolutions and/or to assist other States in the promulgation thereof, thus ensuring a meaningful participation. Therefore, on 15th August 2008, pursuant to Article 35(2) of the WCPFC Convention, the Government of Belize applied to all Contracting Parties for an invitation to become a Party to the Convention through accession thereto. Upon being invited, we will proceed to accede to the Convention, a process which should be completed within 3 months. In the interim, we believe that our submissions to the Secretariat have addressed all the issues required in support of our Application for Renewal of our Cooperating non-Member Status.

Belize is a small developing nation which wishes to maintain a meaningful participation in this important industry. In so doing, you may rest assured that we are totally committed to ensuring the effectiveness of WCPFC's Conservation and Management Measures and maintaining excellent cooperation with all its Members.