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8-12 December 2008

Busan, Korea

FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA – OPENING STATEMENT

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Mr Chairman, I would like to add my thanks to our host Government, echoing what other speakers have said before me. I also want to add my support to the Chairman of the FFC in his statement on behalf of the FFA member countries.

Mr Chairman, I know that this Commission Plenary will be a very busy and intense meeting as we focus to ensure that we emerge with a comprehensive Conservation and Management Measure for Bigeye and Yellowfin tuna by the end of the week.

I do not want to take time with platitudes Mr Chairman but I do need to make a very special plea and a point of principle to the Commission. The basic point of principle for the Government of the Federated States of Micronesia (and I believe for many of our Pacific Island neighbors) is that the role and purpose of this Commission is not only to conserve and manage our regional tuna fisheries resources, but also to do so in a manner that preserves the heritage and fulfills the legitimate development aspirations and rights.

Mr Chairman, the Government of the Federated States of Micronesia has joined with our Pacific friends in the Forum Fisheries Agency and in the Parties to the Nauru Agreement to bring forward to this meeting a package of bold, balanced and effective measures, some of which you have seen fit to use within your proposed draft measure on Bigeye and Yellowfin tuna. We have looked hard to ensure that we can support the other elements of the inter-linked package that you have so masterfully crafted to address the different perspectives in this Commission and we will continue to work with you on that throughout this week.

In this context Mr Chairman, the Federated States of Micronesia is mindful that the pursuit of development aspirations within our sovereign rights cannot be limitless or irresponsible. In the adoption of the PNA Third Implementing Arrangement and in our approach to your draft

measure, we have agreed to take actions in the purse seine fishery that will constrain our own national fleet to some extent. More generally we have also committed to an Effort based limitation on overall purse seine catches in our Zone through the PNA VDS Scheme.

We will also continue to nurture and expand our existing investments and development in the tuna longline fishery in a responsible manner. We do not intend that exemptions provided to the small island developing states to pursue our development aspirations and needs in the longline fishery, should be undertaken irresponsibly so as to threaten the sustainability of the tuna stocks or to undermine the integrity of this Commission. Our national aspirations and plans will be premised on the fishery that has and continues to exist in our Exclusive Economic Zone, within the overall sustainability limits set for the Commission Area as a whole.

While conservation measures for the longline fishery will hopefully commence in 2009, we will also join with our Pacific Island neighbors and with this Commission to work toward a Zone based management regime for the longline fishery as alluded to earlier by you Mr Chairman. The resources of our EEZ must be accessible to our own national efforts to the fullest extent of our capability and sovereign rights and we will, as provided for in the 1982 Law of the Sea Convention, be happy to share the surplus fish stocks of our EEZ with Distant Water Fishing Nations that have not been able to join with us in our shore-side and other national fisheries development efforts.

Mr Chairman, I am moved to speak here now about our sovereign rights and our legitimate and responsible development aspirations because my Government is seriously embarked on a process of commercial tuna industry revival and expansion of financial benefits from access to the resources in our Zone.

Finally, as host for the Tuna Commission headquarters, I would like to thank you Mr Chairman for your leadership and Mr Wright and the staff of the Secretariat, as well as all members of the Commission, for your hard and support.

Thank you.

Honorable Lorin Robert
Secretary for Foreign Affairs
Government of the Federated States of Micronesia