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WORKSHOP ON PACIFIC INSHORE FISHERY RESOURCES
(Noumea, New Caledonia, 14-25 March 1988)

COUNTRY STATEMENT -- REPUBLIC OF NAURU

by

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NAURU

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COUNTRY STATEMENT - REPUBLIC OF NAURU

INTRODUCTION

An island republic in the central Pacific, Nauru lies at 166.56 degrees east longitude and 0032 deg. south latitude. Nauru lies by itself 42 kilometres south of the equator, the nearest neighbouring island being Ocean Island 300 km to the east. The Republic of Nauru is an oval shaped island about 20 km in circumference and covers 21 sq. km. Nauru's total sea area is 32,000 sq. km.

The island is a raised atoll, surrounded by a coral reef which is exposed at low tide. The ground rises gradually from the sandy beach to form a fairly fertile belt, between 150 and 300 yards (137 and 274 m.) wide, encircling the island. Inland, coral cliffs rise to a central plateau with the highest point at 213 feet (65 m) above sea level. The plateau is largely composed of phosphate-bearing rock, which covers more than three fifths of Nauru's entire area.

Because of the generally poor, highly porous soil and irregular rainfall, cultivation is restricted to the coastal belt where coconut palms and pandanus grow, and to the fringe of land surrounding the shallow Buada Lagoon, where bananas, pineapples and some vegetables are grown. Almost all Nauruan villages are located on the coastal belt. There is very little indigenous animal or bird life.

SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES AND RESOURCES

Surface and deep bottom fishes are fished at various times of the year. During favourable weather conditions, fishing is limited to the 12-mile territorial sea limit. Such fishing is undertaken for recreation and subsistence consumption mainly by the expatriate Pacific Island communities on the island. Fishing techniques involve trolling for surface tuna, wahoo and mackerel whilst drop handlining at mid-water depths are usually done around mooring buoys off the boat harbour area. The single manned canoes are often used by the predominantly I-Kiribati and Tuvaluan contract workers on the island who catch mostly mackerel scad, rainbow runner, yellowfin and bigeye tuna. The Nauruans and a few

other expatriates use power boats to troll the surface schools. Deeper yet are the red snapper, grouper and oilfish caught occasionally from reef slopes. Other fishing techniques include skin diving or use of scuba gear and speargun along the reef edge and the night time flyfish fishing at certain months of the year.

Other than the boat harbour which was built for small barge transport of cargoes, are two excavated channels on the eastern and western sides of the island which provide easy access to sea for canoes and powerboats from the ramps. Each channel is of particular importance to fishermen when the seas are unsettled on the other side of the island.

Ice and refrigerated storage for fresh fish are available on the island, although catches are usually consumed or sold almost immediately upon being landed. Very little is frozen for later sales.

INDUSTRIAL FISHERIES

Nauru has not entered into any bilateral fishing agreements with the distant water fishing nations (DWFN's), although Japanese, Korean and United States fishing vessels were allowed access during late 1970's to conduct pole-and-line, longline and purse seine trials. There is evidence that foreign vessels enter the zone without licenses.

Nauru's 200-mile EEZ shares common boundaries with Kiribati to the east and the Marshall Islands to the north whilst the remainder borders with the waters of the main central western Pacific high seas enclave. The zones and high seas of the western Pacific are the richest tuna fishing grounds in the world.

Nauru's 200-mile EEZ lies between these major fishing areas of purse seine activity of the DWFN's thus providing suitable conditions for purse seining in Nauruan waters. The post-phosphate economy of Nauru is in the sea, so that the commercial exploitation of these highly migratory species places this renewable natural resource a significant economic substitute to provide against eventual exhaustion of income from phosphate sales.

Nauru purchased two purse seiners in 1980 in order to enter into this fishery. The first and only export of tuna consisted of 224 tonnes of skipjack and yellowfin were shipped to the cannery in American Samoa in 1981. Administrative as well as management problems coupled with the loss of one vessel, resulted in loss of revenue from the venture.

The fishing venture with scope for shore based support presently contemplated by the government has potential to service large scale future tuna fishing ventures. Through adequate planning and sufficient government support, the Fishing Corporation is capable of supporting a viable fishing industry providing a major source of revenue.

AQUACULTURE

Aquaculture development is limited by the very scarce land space available for this practice. The culture of milkfish Chanos chanos has been a social fishing activity known to Nauruans for a long time. Until recently, milkfish fry was collected along the shores and reared in smaller ponds for release afterwards into the Buada Lagoon. Milkfish harvesting took place 8-9 months later and had a special place in their social customs as a delicacy.

The introduction of tilapia Oreochromis mossambicus some twenty years ago has resulted in a halt to this social practice. Tilapia spawn in the lagoons and through their superior fecundity have proliferated to such an extent that regular introduction of milkfish fry with any hope of raising them to an edible size is now not possible.

FISHERIES LEGISLATION AND ACCESS AGREEMENT

The legislation governing Nauru's declaration of a 200-mile EEZ and the effects of this on prospective DWFN's is given in the Marine Resources Act (1978).

Nauru is a participant in discussions concerning a collective approach to the licensing of Japanese fishing vessels under the Parties to the Nauru Agreement pact which was first set up in 1981.

Nauru is a signatory to both the Internal Agreement and Treaty on Fisheries between the Governments of Certain Pacific Island states and the Government of the United States of America. The Treaty when enforced allows access for US purse seiners to fish in Nauruan waters. Relevant amendments to the Marine Resources Act (1978) and other applicable laws are necessary in order to facilitate this multilateral treaty adoptable by Nauru's internal laws.

Existing legislation relating to the relevant sections of the Act are applicable in situations which warrant their enforcements. The prohibition of fishing by unlicensed craft; calculation of total allowable catch; apportionment of allowable catch; grant of licenses; fishing for research, experimental and sporting purposes; fisheries regulations; general regulations; are relevant sections of the Act which concern management of Nauru's fisheries resources.

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Aquaculture

Present effort to contain the tilapia problem in brackish water lagoons and ponds is being implemented through a government initiative with some outside assistance. The eradication of tilapia is high on the government priority list, so that milkfish culture practice can return once again to the Nauruan society. A project is in operation in con-

junction with a donor agency which is looking at future culture of milkfish and possibly other palatable species following eradication of the tilapia.

Small-Scale Fisheries

Nauru is interested in the regional giant clam re-seeding program as part of its long term objective toward replenishing local reef stocks where future population pressure is expected on the reef resources around the island.

As yet no direct efforts have been made in the area of inshore fisheries development to assist small-scale fishermen nor through the provision of shore based infrastructure, vessels or equipment. As with all small-scale fishermen anywhere, there is the common problem of sufficient capital funding to enable them to make the leap from small subsistence providers to small commercial operators in the cash economy. Assuming of course, the above is given sufficient attention by government and the much sought after technical assistance in this area, any effort by Nauruans and expatriate residents to enter into small-scale fishing more formally may continue to be hampered by insufficient capital.

Nauru recognizes the need to develop its inshore fisheries and hence places high priority on seeking technical assistance toward the development of a fishery around FAD's as well as appropriately scaled fishing methodologies and gear development.

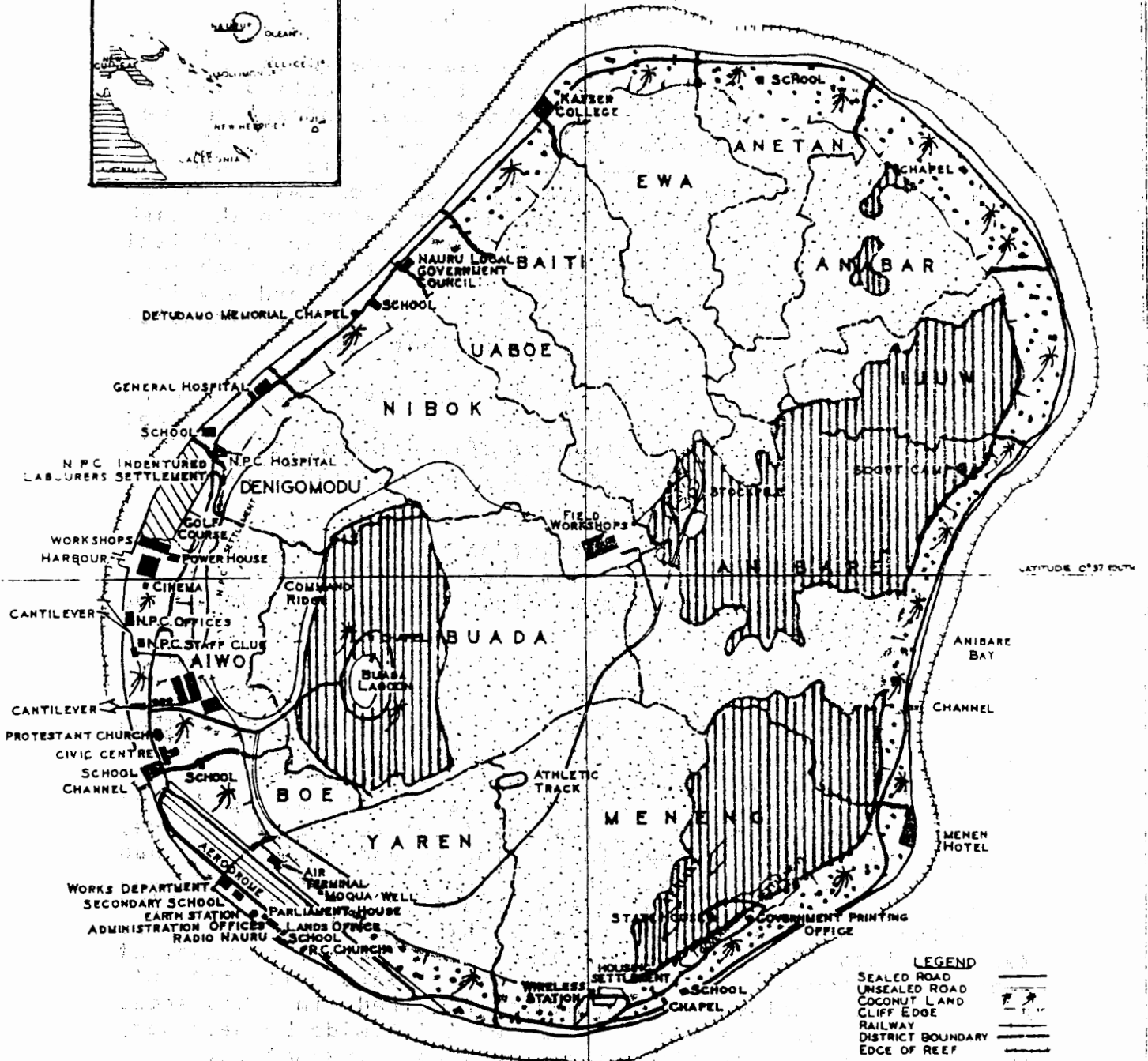
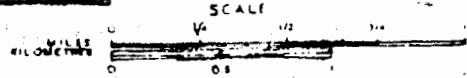
A proposal for the construction of a relatively simple fish processing, preserving and market facility for fishermen is being considered for forwarding to a donor agency for possible funding.

Fisheries Research Requirements

Fisheries research or rather a survey of the deep bottom resources of reef slopes and pelagic species of surface waters is an integral part of the effort toward the development of an inshore fisheries for Nauru. Deployment of rafts in the past whilst the Nauru fishing fleet were still active, exposed the local fishermen to fishing around FAD's which had generated tremendous enthusiasm for their continual presence. Further work toward the re-introduction of this fishing technology will be a welcome sight for the fishermen. Research into FAD fishing and especially their deployment at probable seamount sites around the island will certainly provide the further developments required in this area. Improvements of fishing skills will likewise be necessary toward increasing the fish catch for local consumption.

Experience with deep bottom fisheries; inshore reef resources; FAD fishing; is common amongst fishermen on the island. Future research substantiating these resources and assistance required for their eventual development are Nauru's call at this point in time.

REPUBLIC OF NAURU



LATITUDE 0°37' SOUTH

LONGITUDE 168°05' EAST

LEGEND

- SEALED ROAD
- UNSEALED ROAD
- COCONUT LAND
- CLIFF EDGE
- RAILWAY
- DISTRICT BOUNDARY
- EDGE OF REEF
- REEF
- PHOSPHATE LAND
- COCONUT LAND
- MINED OUT PHOSPHATE LAND

SOUTH PACIFIC OCEAN

MADE BY THE DIRECTORATE OF LANDS AND SURVEY, REPUBLIC OF NAURU