



PAPUA NEW GUINEA COUNTRY STATEMENT

**PRESENTED BY MR SAKIAS TAMEO, ACTING HIGH
COMMISSIONER IN CANBERRA, AUSTRALIA**

AT THE 102ND ANNUAL SESSION OF THE

FORUM FISHERIES COMMITTEE SENIOR OFFICIALS MEETING

IN CANBERRA, AUSTRALIA

ON 8 MAY, 2017

Mr. Chairman;

Director General;

Excellences;

Distinguished Delegates;

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The Papua New Guinea Delegation would like to pay its respects, and acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander on which we are meeting today.

On behalf of the Government and people of Papua New Guinea, I wish to convey our profound appreciation to the Government and people of Australia for hosting the 102nd Meeting of the Forum Fisheries Committee here in Canberra.

Mr Chairman, under your able leadership of this important meeting, the Papua New Guinea delegation is confident that the 102nd FFC meeting will be a success.

I would also like to thank the Director General of FFA, Mr James Movick for his leadership of the Organization and his Secretariat for facilitating the excellent preparations for this important meeting.

I further take this opportunity to thank Vanuatu, our previous chair for the successful stewardship of our work since appointment last year and giving the appropriate focus that was needed for the Committee to pursue important issues pertaining to our single most valuable resource in this region.

Mr Chairman, there are many important issues before the Committee for deliberation. However, I wish draw the attention of delegates to three important points as follows:

Firstly, tuna is the only single most important resource we have in the Pacific Region that sustains the livelihoods of our people and our small economies.

We depend on the revenue from tuna to support our small budgets to address our employment issues, eradicate poverty, achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals; and to deliver health, education and other vital services in our island communities.

Secondly, tuna is everything to the Pacific Islands Countries and we must get value for money from our tuna resources.

We must not continue to depend on fisheries access fees or rents from the use of our oceans and seas to sustain our livelihood and our small economies.

This is unsustainable in the long run and therefore we must take serious actions to develop our domestic tuna industries, set up tuna processing plants in our Islands that will set a firm foundation for the long term sustainability of our economies.

Papua New Guinea therefore fully supports the Regional Roadmap on establishing regional processing hubs in partnership between countries. This is very important and this FFC must give clear and firm directions for this goal to be pursued forthwith.

Thirdly, in this regard, we need to ensure that the deliberations and the decisions we make at the FFC meetings must give clear focus and priority towards achieving this important goal.

Further, we need to ensure that the annual work program of FFA Secretariat and other relevant CROP Agencies, along with the commitment of resources, organizational setups, and recruitment of expertise are designed to provide the necessary support to the Pacific Island Countries to achieve this objective.

Mr Chairman,

Papua New Guinea is of the view that several key issues are evident in the Agenda before us, principal of which is the focus on strengthening regional cooperation and streamlining the Agency's focus on robust regional management and conservation of our fisheries resource.

Papua New Guinea is committed to working in close partnership with all stakeholders to implement regional initiatives contained in the Fisheries Roadmap and SPC's New Song, and others that entail protective measures of this natural resource, which must be strictly harmonized amongst all FFA members. Papua New Guinea having said so many times before, we can only succeed, when countries truly own and lead their national

development plans and strategies whilst integrating international and regional commitments, which are in constant change.

Mr Chairman,

Papua New Guinea welcomes donor partners providing funding support to the FFA Secretariat to pursue its important work programs. However, we need to ensure that, in the pretext of providing such support, they must not be allowed to place a disproportionate burden to the Agency's focus in achieving the purposes and objectives for which it was established.

Further, PNG maintains that the Agency should focus on the effective management of its internal structures in order to modernize the usage and promotion of compatible systems, whilst recognizing the sovereignty and independence of Island states to control (develop, promote and protect) their own fisheries.

The sustainable fisheries development for Papua New Guinea, means making sure that these systems remain mutually compatible and sustainable for the future generation. These key development challenges are met through specific actions and interventions to remove inequalities and improve livelihoods.

Mr Chair,

Papua New Guinea is currently running its National General Elections which should result in a new Government coming into office by August this year. This will be a great opportunity for PNG to review its priorities to further enhance its contributions to the on-going progress within the FFA work program and the wider regional community. Even more so, Papua New Guinea will maintain a systematic approach to sustainability where the economic, socio-political and the environmental systems are embedded.

There are now established domestic policies that embrace principles of responsible sustainable development meaning that we must fully gain from our natural resources and provide equal opportunities for our future generations.

We are encouraged by the positive level of cooperation amongst the various fisheries organizations in the region, each demonstrating a greater capacity and control in fulfilling this goal, and it is pleasing to note that after the various reviews and studies the Secretariat has a greater understanding the practicalities of fisheries in this region and most importantly finding suitable and meaningful solutions to address the challenges.

Mr Chairman,

Papua New Guinea will be refining its enabling national policies, strategies and plans to provide a conducive environment to address challenges in the areas of proactive fisheries management and development in tandem with technological change but significant challenges still lay ahead of us.

The challenge remains for PNG to convert the observed economic growth and transformations into improved practical human development outcomes to achieve our national priorities. We have taken on the responsibility as the biggest tuna processing country in the region and will look to enhancing this beyond national boundaries. This should then result in PNG achieving the regional and international initiatives going forward.

Mr Chairman,

At a sub-regional level, PNG will strengthen its commitment to PNA and other “island” driven fisheries initiatives. We continue to promote the Vessel day Scheme developed by PNA members and how it has been proven to be effective in providing sustainable revenue to its members. PNG is also supporting gradual build-up of the Vessel Day Scheme for the long line fishery as a way forward to manage this fishery.

PNG is also committed to the US Treaty under the current arrangements, which is progressing well and anticipates ratifying the agreed amendments in time.

Papua New Guinea will be hosting the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Leader’s Summit in 2018 and is planning towards advocating our Regional Initiatives on fisheries within the APEC process. A Pacific Leaders Dialogue within the APEC process is deemed necessary to demonstrate the importance of regional initiatives and will be realized in close consultation with relevant regional bodies such as FFA.

Finally, Mr Chairman, Papua New Guinea delegation is looking forward to a fruitful deliberation on the issues before the Committee to make the 102nd FFC meeting a success for our people.

Tanikiu Bada-herea