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**PREPARATORY CONFERENCE FOR THE COMMISSION  
FOR THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF  
HIGHLY MIGRATORY FISH STOCKS IN THE WESTERN  
AND CENTRAL PACIFIC**

Fifth session  
Rarotonga, Cook Islands  
29 September – 3 October 2003

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**STATEMENT BY THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION**

(Submitted by the delegation of the Russian Federation)

Distinguished Chairman, distinguished participants,

The Russian Delegation has emphatically and repeatedly stated its interest to take part in the deliberations of the Preparatory Conference based on its official status on a permanent basis.

According to the resolution appended to the final document of the Conference we currently have an indefinite kind of observer status just allowing us to attend to witness the meeting that makes it not possible for us to participate in decision-making at present. According to the decision by the second session of the Preparatory Conference, the status we currently have is inadmissibly low, which in our opinion is not right. Making it more visual, we are allotted the last seat in the last row, i.e. where we are physically located now. The other states, which have official observer status enjoy broader rights and possibilities in the development of rules and decisions of the Conference. This can be easily traced through the Conference documents.

However, the Russian Federation has contributed significantly to the study of tuna populations in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean. The history of Russian tuna fisheries in the area of the future convention dates back quite far. Soviet long-liners started to harvest tunas and swordfishes as early as in the 1960s, and those fisheries went on for over 20 years. Between 1975 and 1985 the Soviet Union conducted intensive research of the distribution and abundance of tunas from long-lining ships. Beginning from 1984 Soviet commercial tuna seiners started to fish in the Area, mostly in the high seas regions of the Caroline and Melanesian subareas; some 3 to 7 vessels were sent to the fishery annually. Besides, licensed fishing of tunas was carried out in the EEZs of Kiribati and Papua New Guinea. During the same period specialized fishery research was made to study the pattern of distribution and the behaviour of tunas in the range of the Soviet tuna fisheries. According to the Russian scientific assessment, the potential catch of tuna is beyond the exclusive economic zones of the countries of this region is rather high.

In addition to tunas, Soviet and Russian researchers have accumulated long series of data on the distribution, biology and fishing possibilities in the Convention Area in respect of such highly migratory species as the Pacific pomfret, mackerel, Peruvian horse mackerel, oceanic pelagic squids and others which in future could be added to the list of managed species under the provision of article 1 (f) of the Convention.

The southern part of the Russian exclusive economic zone, and the adjacent high seas waters of the Pacific are within the range of tunas and other highly migratory species. That is why the Russian Federation is interested in the conservation and optimum exploitation of these stocks.

Some organizational and legal measures to develop tuna fisheries globally have been taken in the Russian Federation, with special emphasis on the South Pacific. A federal enterprise for the construction and charting of tuna vessels has been set up. A scheme of funding the construction of tuna boats and provision of tuna fisheries in the oceans through using a licensing mechanism to secure loans is being considered. We expect that the first boats of the new generation will be able to start fishing for tunas in the South Pacific in early 2005. Respective Russian organizations are looking into ways of leasing tuna boats from foreign owners.

The Russian Federation shares the provisions of the Convention of 2000 regarding the adoption of measures for long-term sustainable development of the stocks and getting the best scientific data in order to sustain them. The principle of precautionary approach reflected in article 5 of the Convention is to become the mainstay for conservation and management of stocks.

Mr. Chairman, in view of the above, the delegation of the Russian Federation once again urges the Conference participants to confer on us the status of observer with full rights, which would correspond with the real role of the Russian Federation as a major fisheries nation, bordering the Convention Area. This would enable us to participate more efficiently and actively in meetings of the working groups with the aim of developing rule documents concerning Commission's structure, stock research regulations, monitoring, enforcement and inspection of vessels. If we all really want this Convention to be efficient all these documents should take care of the concerns of all states bordering the Convention area without any exception. Only then they will become universal and will be applicable by all.

In conclusion, may I give my thanks to the Government of Cook Islands for the invitation to attend the Fifth Session of the Conference as well as for the great hospitality and excellent organization of the significant forum.

Head of Delegation  
Leonid I. Kholod

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