



# OPRT

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FOR CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF TUNAS

Fuel prices and tuna fisheries

### World Major Tuna Longliners Suspend Fishing

**D**istant-water tuna longline fishing organizations of Japan, Korea, the Chinese Taipei and China held a meeting in Tokyo on June 27 to exchange views on the present situation now surrounding tuna fisheries. (China participated in the form of presenting its paper.)

At the meeting, the four organizations reached the common recognition that “tuna catches have been on a decreasing trend in recent years because of the declining resources” and “it has become increasingly difficult to continue tuna fishing because of the rapid fuel price hikes lately. Based on this recognition, they agreed to appeal their stringent plight to the society at large. They agreed to coordinate among themselves and go for concerted suspension of tuna fishing operation in order to recover and conserve the tuna resources.

The participants also agreed to continue to address regional tuna fisheries management organizations, the fisheries management authorities of each country, distributors and consumers about the urgent need to introduce appropriate measures with respect to uncontrolled expansion of the fishing activities of large-scale tuna purse-seine fishing vessels as well as tuna farming in the Mediterranean Sea for which adequate management is not implemented - the two major factors that could be threatening the tuna resources.

After the meeting closed, the four organizations announced their Agreement on Conservation of Tuna Resources (See the full text below).

#### Agreement on Conservation of Tuna Resources

(June 27, 2008 Tokyo)

Japan Tuna Fisheries Cooperative Association,  
Taiwan Deep Sea Boat Owners and Exporters

Association, Korea Overseas Fisheries Association (Tuna Longline Fisheries Committee) and China Fisheries Association (Distant Water Fisheries Branch),

**Based on the common recognition** that the tuna longline fishing operation has become more difficult to continue because of the recent abnormal leap of fuel price and the fall of catch rate due to the decline of tuna resource in recent years, in addition to the fact that the tuna longline fishing business has long been depressed due to the chronic low fish price,

**Agreed** to jointly implement the following actions in order to recover and conserve tuna resources and thereby to maintain the deep sea tuna longline fisheries.

1. We, the four organizations, continue to address the regional fisheries management organizations, fisheries management authorities of each country, distributors and consumers about the urgent need to introduce measures necessary for eliminating the threat against tuna resources caused by the rapid increase of large scale purse seine fishing as well as inadequately managed tuna farming.
2. We appeal to the public the critical situation facing the deep sea tuna longline fisheries. We are determined to suspend our fishing operation in order to recover tuna resources.
3. We do our best to develop and foster the frozen sashimi tuna market in each of our countries and also to develop new markets in the USA, the EU, and other countries in order to promote stable supply-demand structure.

(Based on OPRT survey, about 400 tuna longline fishing vessels, which account for about one third

of all the 1,200 tuna longline fishing vessels in the world, including the vessels registered with the four organizations, are expected to take part

in the planned fishing suspension. In point of fact, 200 vessels from the Chinese Taipei are already suspending their tuna fishing operation.)

## Japan Tuna Coop. decides to suspend fishing of all vessels —for recovery of tuna resources—

The Japan Tuna Fisheries Cooperative Association (Japan Tuna), to which most of the owners of distant-water tuna longline fishing vessels in Japan belong, decided at the extraordinary general meeting on July 14 that all of its 233 member vessels will suspend their operation for two months or over during two years from August 1, 2008, at either designated ports in Japan or overseas. The duration of suspension of fishing will be decided so as to correspond to each vessel's fishing plan.

Japan Tuna called on other two distant-water tuna longline fisheries organizations in Japan to carry out concerted suspension of fishing, and those organizations have made clear their intention to join in Japan Tuna's decision.

Regarding the background leading to its decision on fishing suspension, Japan Tuna President Masahiro Ishikawa said in an interview that "we cannot make profit at all from our fishing operations because of the prohibitively high fuel prices."

"However," he added, "our operation suspension is also intended to recover tuna resources. Now we cannot catch tunas as we did before because tunas have been depleted due to overfishing. In the eastern Pacific, for example, CPUE (catch per unit of effort) for longline fishing vessels plunged as large as 40% during the past decade. We have to take action to cope with this situation."

"Distant-water tuna longline vessels of each country, which have gathered under OPRT, have agreed not to increase the number of their vessels in order to stop further increase in the fishing capacity. They thus took the initiative to establish a system to eliminate negative impact on tuna resources."

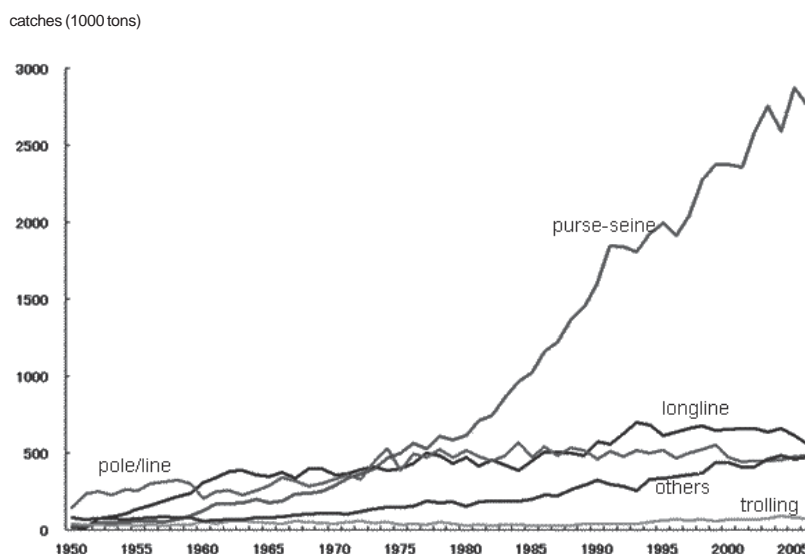
"With respect to tuna purse-seine fishing vessels, however,

that catch tunas, including juvenile fish, efficiently and in large quantities, for raw materials of canned products, there is no system to control negative impact caused by growing fishing capacity, and there is no country that takes the leadership in coping with this issue. This is in sharp contrast with tuna longline fishing that is less efficient than purse-seine fishing but is more consistent with the principle of sustainable utilization of the resources."

"In the light of the present status of tuna resources, first and foremost, measures to control ever-expanding tuna purse-seine fishing in the world are needed. In order to restrain further deterioration of tuna resources, it is necessary to take concrete steps to stop any further increase in tuna fishing capacity in the world, including longline fishing, as expeditiously as possible, with the aim to reduce the catch to an appropriate level."

"We, tuna fishermen, should have a clear awareness of the fact that we are utilizing natural resources which are not available unlimitedly," Ishikawa said.

### Trend in world catches of tuna by fishing method



Data compiled by RFMOs, edited by Dr. P. Miyake

OPRT FY2008 General Meeting

## OPRT calls for joint efforts to overcome the difficult situation facing the world tuna industry

OPRT held the general meeting for fiscal 2008 on May 27. At the opening of the meeting, OPRT President Isao Nakasu said: “OPRT has so far been striving to promote the sustainable use of tuna resources jointly with the distant-water tuna longline fishermen throughout the world and traders, distributors and consumers in Japan.”

“At present, we are faced with the sharp rise in fuel prices. If the prices remain at the present abnormally high levels, it would become extremely difficult to continue tuna fishing. We now have to cope with the issue of high fuel prices, along with the issue of ensuring the sustainable use of tuna resources. I believe that all stakeholders should join their forces to overcome this difficult situation,” Nakasu emphasized.

Akira Nakamae, Deputy Director-General of the Fisheries Agency of the Japanese Government, addressed the meeting on behalf of the guests that “the environment surrounding the tuna longline fishing industry is very hard due to the impact from soaring fuel prices, coupled with the deterioration of tuna resources around the world and the stagnant fish prices. As a responsible fishing and tuna consuming nation, the Government of Japan will continue its cooperation in order to ensure the effectiveness of the international tuna resource management regime.”

He further stressed that “it is crucial for not only producers but also all other stakeholders to unite in their efforts on a global scale in order to ensure the sustainable use of the tuna resources. The role of OPRT in these efforts is assuming an even greater importance.”

Then, participants at the meeting endorsed the Business Plan for fiscal 2008 as was originally drafted under the policy to implement the proposed projects through coordination and cooperation among Members, with the aim to contribute to the realization of OPRT’s objectives of establishment, i.e. (1) the promotion of sustainable use of tuna resources and (2) the development of tuna fisheries to fulfill international and social responsibility. (For details, please see the OPRT Business Plan section of our website.)

During fiscal 2007, the Seychelles and Fiji

became new Members, bringing the total membership to 18 organizations with 1,153 distant-water tuna longline fishing vessels registered with OPRT. The number of Supporting Members also increased to 403 (including 61 corporations).

### World’s tuna longline fishing to be suspended —International mechanism should be introduced to control exorbitantly high fuel prices—

On May 26, the day before the general meeting, OPRT organized a meeting for exchange of views among Members from each country regarding the present state of tuna fisheries. Through the discussion, it became clear that the tuna industry in each country is facing the difficulty in continuing fishing operation due to soaring fuel prices, and many fishing vessels, including those from the Chinese Taipei and China, are already suspending their operation.

Yuichiro Harada, managing director of OPRT, stated: “The soaring fuel price hike dealt a direct severe blow to tuna longline fishing vessels operating in distant-water fishing grounds. Each Member has made utmost cost-saving efforts in order to absorb the fuel cost hikes. But the continuation of fishing under these abnormal prices led only to accumulating losses on a daily basis for fishermen. As a result, many tuna longline fishing vessels have been compelled to suspend their operation. It is truly unfortunate that supply of wild sashimi tuna to the market will be slashed because of this suspension of fishing.”

“However,” Harada continued, “there is very little that one private industry can do in countering the soaring prices of fuel, which has become the target of uncontrolled infusion of money that is truly disturbing the international crude oil market. It seems that there are people who enjoyed enormous profits through speculative transactions in crude oil, while fishermen are sustaining unbearable hardships as they are unable to operate their vessels and cannot have a future management outlook.”

“Should we just stand idle in face of this unchecked inflow of speculative money in the crude oil market from the perspective of ensuring social fairness?” he questioned. “Further, the wild rise of crude oil is affecting not only fishing but also other industries in many countries. We hope some international mechanism will be introduced as expeditiously as possible to control the unreasonable rise in fuel prices,” Harada said.

## Topics

### DNA test for prevention of IUU fishing

OPRT will carry out testing and analysis of DNA of tunas landed in Japan as one of its projects for fiscal 2008. The project, entrusted by the Fisheries Agency, the Government of Japan, will be implemented jointly with the National Research Institute of Far Seas Fisheries.

Until last year, OPRT has been conducting tuna DNA testing and analysis independently. The project was enlarged this year as a government-entrusted program, by increasing the number of cases of testing and analysis. Especially, testing of processed frozen tunas shipped by container vessels, which have been increasing in recent years, will be reinforced. The purpose of this project is to prevent imports into Japan of tunas caught in violation of resource management measures of regional fisheries management organizations, by analyzing tuna DNA and verifying tuna species and the areas of catch.

It is also aimed to enable Japan, as a responsible tuna fishing and consuming nation, to contribute to ensuring the effectiveness of the resource management measures implemented by regional fisheries management organizations.

Previously, there was a case of exposure by DNA testing that bigeye tunas caught in the Atlantic were landed in Japan under false reporting as tunas from the Pacific. In this respect, therefore, DNA testing and analysis at the time of landing will have an important and effective role in preventing illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing activities.

### “Tuna sashimi is delicious!” Learning tuna culture of Japan

Five foreign trainees participating in the Overseas Fishery Cooperation Foundation (OFCF)’s training course for leaders in fishery management had a lecture session about

the tuna culture in Japan at “Ginza Maguro-ya,” a sushi restaurant in Akasaka, central Tokyo, on July 25.

The participants were Mr. Ambakisye Polland Simtoe (Tanzania), Mr. Guo Zhenhua (China), Ms. Sadia Belcaid (Morocco), Mr. Mamadou Thiam (Senegal) and Mr. Francis Tofuakalo (the Solomon Islands). All of them are fisheries experts of their respective governments.

The OFCF program is given for the duration of seven months from May to December this year, during which the trainees study about fishery management in Japan.

The July 25 session was realized through the cooperation by OPRT and Ginza Maguro-ya. At the outset, presentation was given by an OPRT official about the historical background in which the Japanese came to eat tuna sashimi habitually. The trainees then challenged eating tuna sushi and sashimi which are typical food in the Japanese food culture. They readily accepted those dishes.

To the question which items were delicious, they responded that “tuna sashimi

tasted sweet” and “it was the first time to eat such delicious foods,” showing their satisfaction in their experience of tuna sashimi and sushi.

Another question was posed to them which between the use of wild resources and aquaculture should be promoted with greater emphasis in the future. Mr. Simtoe answered that “wild tunas should be utilized through cooperation in resource management among countries concerned.” Ms. Belcaid commented that “aquaculture is not a bad approach but there may be difficult technical aspects in culture of tunas. It is better to utilize the wild tunas by ensuring proper resource management”

On a somewhat different tone, Mr. Thiam expressed the view that “we should promote tuna aquaculture, and in the mean time, we can increase wild resources.” Mr. Tofuakalo said “it is preferable to emphasize aquaculture in the future because fuel prices are rising and the resources are decreasing.” Mr. Zhenhua presented his opinion that “demand for tunas is expanding around the world, so it is crucial to promote both aquaculture and management of wild resources.”

