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FOR CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF TUNAS

Tuna Fishers' Initiative for Responsible Fishing

--The International Tuna Fishers Conference on Responsible Fisheries and the 3rd International Fishers Forum Held in Yokohama--

International Tuna Fishers Conference on Responsible Fisheries and Third International Fishers Forum (IFF3) were held in July 25-28, Yokohama.

The conference was co-hosted by OPRT and the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council with 250 attendances of tuna fishers in the Pacific Rim, researchers, government officials and environmental NGOs from over 25 countries. Various issues concerning tuna fishing such as, excessive fishing capacity, IUU fishing and by-catch of sea turtles etc., were discussed.

On the final day, tuna fishers adopted "Yokohama Declaration", with unanimous support by participants.

Interview with Dr. Rebecca Lent, Director for NMFS Office of International Affairs

U.S. Gvt Supports Tuna Fishers' Efforts for Responsible Fisheries

OPRT interviewed Dr. Rebecca Lent, Director for NMFS Office of International Affairs, U.S. Department of Commerce, who headed the U.S. delegation to the conference, regarding the U.S. Government's intention to support the conference as well as her impression of the conference.

fishing, including the reduction of bycatch and bycatch injury and mortality for seabirds, sharks and sea turtles. As both the target species and the bycatch species tend to be highly migratory, it is critical that we work multilaterally to address these important issues.



Q: OPRT appreciated the support by the US Government for the Conference and IFF3. What is your comment about the Conference/IFF3 in general?

LENT: The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries Service) was pleased to support and participate in the third conference of the International Fishermen's Forum. This important forum allows fishermen from around the world to meet and share ideas about

Q: Many issues were spoken. What issues/presentations were you interested in? Why?

LENT: NOAA Fisheries Service was interested in the whole range of issues at the conference. Our priorities areas of interest tend towards sustainable target species management as well as bycatch reduction. We also are keenly interested in addressing overcapacity in the world's fishing fleet, as this tends to be one of the major drivers behind our challenges in living marine resource stewardship. The

presentations on initiatives by the fishers themselves to reduce bycatch were very informative and demonstrated a lot of initiative.

Q: OPRT members spoke about their efforts to reduce by catch. What did you feel?

LENT: It was a particular pleasure for me to witness first-hand the face-to-face contact between fishermen from around the world, as they sat around a

table and at various exhibition booths, handling fishing equipment and discussing various bycatch reduction equipment and techniques.

Q: Yokohama Declaration. Fishers drafted it and supported by the participants. It is lengthy but it is the commitment by tuna fishers in the Pacific Rim. Will you comment it?

LENT: We are pleased with the document that was prepared by the fishermen and the commitments made therein to address sustainable fishing, bycatch, and overcapacity. It clearly showed that the fishers understand how their actions impact the ecosystems that support their livelihoods.

Q: In the Declaration, it is stated that fishers will request the Governments of the United States and Japan support fishers to implement

this declaration. Will you support?

LENT: NOAA Fisheries Service remains committed, to the main tenets of the Yokohama Declaration, including: responsible stewardship of sustainable fisheries, including reduction of bycatch and overcapacity; addressing IUU fishing; promoting the use of new technology for gear and gear configuration to reduce sea turtle and seabird bycatch. Our support comes in the form of funding of scientific and cooperative research, effective management measures, and participation in international fora, both multilateral and bilateral, to share our knowledge.

Q: What do you think about the role of OPRT?

LENT: We are grateful for the participation and support of the OPRT and other representatives from the non-governmental

community, including fishermen, NGO's and other organizations.

Q: Other questions. Do you like sashimi, sushi?

LENT: I am a frequent consumer of sushi and sashimi, particularly when the quality is very good.

Q: What do you think about tuna fisheries?

LENT: I believe that with multilateral cooperation and firm resolve, we can address the concerns that have been raised regarding the tuna fisheries and meet our goals of sustainable harvest and a healthy ecosystem for tunas, and the non-target species (seabirds, turtles, sharks) that share that ecosystem. The regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) need to continue to work together to diligently to meet these goals, and need the cooperation of governments and fishers in order to be successful.

Longlining Is Fishery Well Fit for 21st Century

--Tuna Longline Fisher Tells the Conference--

Koichi Teramoto, a Japanese tuna fisher, said that tuna longlining is an environmentally-friendly fishing well fit for the 21st century, emphasizing the importance of achieving a harmony between longlining and the natural environment and the ecosystem.

Recalling a story which he heard in his childhood, Teramoto told the audience that Japanese fishermen treated incidentally-caught sea turtles with care onboard and returned them safely to the sea. Fishermen believed that the sea turtles are the messengers from the sea, and returning them safe to the sea would bring about good harvests for fishermen, he added.

Japanese fishermen who were handed down such a tradition cannot remain indifferent to the issue of incidental catch of sea turtles. Teramoto said Japanese fishermen fully understand the need of broad use of Circle hooks to prevent sea turtle bycatch as well as Tori-pole designed to scare off sea birds from the fishing vessels. Longline fishermen are now making steady

efforts to make full use of such devices, he said.

Touching on the importance of implementing land-based protection measures, Teramoto suggested that prevention of contamination of the sea, reducing marine debris, protection and improvement of spawning grounds are issues requiring no less urgency than at-sea measures.

Tuna Fishers' Conference Showed Willingness to Be Responsible in Fishing

Patrick McGuinness, *President of the Fisheries Council of Canada, who made presentation at the conference under the theme of "Decade of Implementation," Review of the result of 26th FAO COFI and the 6th UNICPOLOS, commented about the conference as follows in response to the questions by OPRT.*

Q: OPRT appreciated your presentation for the Conference. What is your comment about the Conference/IFF3 in general?

MCGUINNESS: It was an excellent and most responsible conference because fishers themselves identified concerns with tuna fisheries issues and

expressed their opinions in order to find the practical solution. This shows a good example how fishermen are willing to be responsible in their fishing operations.

Q: How do you think about Yokohama Declaration drafted by fishers?

MCGUINNESS: The Declaration reflects the result of discussion during the Conference. I feel it is a remarkable achievement. I am impressed with its forward looking stance in dealing with the problems.

Q: Will you comment about OPRT and its activities?

MCGUINNESS: OPRT has been doing effective public communication using several brochures and

newsletter to inform the international community including United Nations of the responsible actions taken by tuna fishers, properly responding to issues of concern. In fact, the UN office commended the OPRT brochure explaining how OPRT is promoting responsible tuna fisheries with the cooperation of all stake holders. I hope OPRT will continue to take leadership in the promotion of responsible tuna fisheries in the future as well.



ICFA Supports Yokohama Declaration

The 2005 Annual Meeting of the International Coalition of Fisheries Association (ICFA) was convened in Rome from September 4 through 7. OPRT reported on the International Tuna Fishers Conference on Responsible Fisheries / the IFF 3 and also explained the Yokohama Declaration. ICFA welcomed the Declaration and adopted the Resolution on the Yokohama Declaration by Responsible Tuna Fishers.

John Connelly, Chairman of ICFA, commented as follows in an interview with OPRT:

Q: ICFA adopted the resolution to support Yokohama Declaration. As ICFA chairman, will you comment about the Declaration?

CONNELLY: I am pleased with it. It is a good example to show how fishers are doing efforts to ensure responsible fisheries. I am impressed with the strong commitment declared by tuna fishers. ICFA will also support tuna fishers to implement the Declaration.



Q: Will you give any advice to OPRT for its future?

CONNELLY: OPRT is recognized as a leader in the international fisheries community like ICFA and I expect such leadership becomes more important in dealing the United Nations. Meantime, ICFA wishes to increase its members and I think OPRT's positive activities in promoting responsible fisheries may contribute for ICFA to do so.

ICFA Resolution

ICFA:

Welcomes the Yokohama Declaration on July 28, 2005, in which the tuna fishers committed to sustainable use of world tuna resources and conservation of marine ecosystems;

Supports the tuna fisher's efforts to further promote responsible tuna fisheries particularly in addressing issues of resource sustainability, the IUU fishing, and reducing incidental catch of sea turtles and sea birds by use of technologies developed;

Supports the tuna fisher's efforts to challenge biased and unscientific accusations which attack environmentally responsible tuna fisheries;

Recognizes that the primary responsibility for the conservation and the management of tunas and all related issues lies with the FAO and RFMO's as set forth in the Yokohama Declaration. Accordingly, we urge the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) seek the technical advice of these organizations when dealing with any tuna issue; and

Requests that governments support fishers worldwide in implementing the Yokohama Declaration.

YOKOHAMA DECLARATION

(Full Text)

Declaration of responsible tuna fishers issued at the International Tuna Fishers Conference on Responsible Fisheries and Third International Fishers Forum July 25-29, 2005, Yokohama, Japan

Having actively exchanged wide-ranging perspectives and approaches to promote responsible tuna fisheries and to reduce sea turtle and seabird incidental catch in longline fishing,

Committing ourselves to sustainable use of world tuna resources and conservation of marine ecosystems,

Emphasizing that sustainable fisheries depend on a healthy oceanic environment, and expressing our strong desire to make every effort to harmonize fisheries with the environment in order to ensure sustainable marine productivity and healthy ecosystems,

Recognizing that upon the establishment of the Western Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), regional fishery management organizations (RFMOs) achieved world coverage of tuna and tuna-like resource conservation and management within the international framework envisaged in Article 64 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea,

Expressing concern that the number and capacity of tuna fishing vessels are still increasing and that tuna farming is rapidly expanding in the absence of fully developed conservation and management policies, even though several tuna and tuna-like stocks are fully exploited or overexploited, in spite of (a) the adoption of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) International Plan of Action (IPOA) for the Management of Fishing Capacity in 1999 and (b) the efforts to limit fishing capacity by large-scale longline vessels,

Expressing concern that illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing activities still persist, including shifting operations from larger vessels to smaller vessels to avoid RFMO regulations for larger vessels despite the adoption of the IPOA for IUU fishing and the efforts of RFMOs to eliminate IUU fishing activities,

Also expressing concern that certain longline fleets operate directed shark fisheries of considerable size solely for the purpose of harvesting shark fins inconsistent with United Nations General Assembly Resolutions,

Recognizing the need for all parties both on land and at sea to take holistic approaches to conserve sea turtles and seabirds, particularly, the importance of the role of fishers in implementing the FAO Guidelines to Reduce Sea Turtle Mortality in Fishing Operations, the IPOA for seabirds and the relevant mitigation measures adopted by tuna RFMOs, and

Being gravely concerned that some elements of the environmental community are conducting a concerted emotional campaign at international bodies such as the United Nations to implement a moratorium on longline fisheries in the Pacific contrary to scientific evidence and deliberately ignoring the efforts of managers and responsible fishers to introduce, implement, raise awareness and disseminate techniques for the reduction of incidental catch,

We, fishers--operators of large- and small-scale longline, purse seine, artisanal and other vessels--participating in the International Tuna Fishers Conference on Responsible Fisheries and the Third International Fishers Forum, do declare to engage in the following activities in order to further promote responsible tuna fisheries to:

1. Promote cooperation, information sharing and constructive dialog among all tuna resources' stakeholders--fishers, traders, distributors, fish workers, canners, processors and consumers--in order to promote responsible tuna fishing, trade, marketing and consumption, and to facilitate conservation and sustainable use of tuna and tuna-like species;

2. Support activities of the World Tuna Purse seine Organization (WTPO) and to promote cooperation in realizing sustainable use of tuna resources by

encouraging all tuna purse seine fishers to participate in WTPO where, at the present time, about 65% of tuna purse seine fishers are members;

3. Emphasize the importance of longline and purse seine fisheries working cooperatively with each other and with other stakeholders to improve techniques for use of fish aggregating devices (FADs) with the aim of reducing the impact of purse seiners on bigeye tuna, especially the juveniles, while recognizing the impact of longliners on bigeye adults;



4. Facilitate the establishment of new, or cooperation with existing, international rules for management of tuna fishing capacity based on the principle that any introduction of new fishing capacity should be accompanied with removal of equivalent fishing capacity consistent with the FAO IPOA on Management of Fishing Capacity and the recommendations or rules of relevant RFMOs, while taking due note of the rights and obligations of developing countries;

5. Refrain from circumventing conservation and management measures by reflagging our fishing vessels to non-parties of relevant RFMOs and/or RFMO Parties with little to no ability to control their fishing vessels;

6. Support the Joint Meeting of Tuna RFMOs to be held in Japan in early 2007 to promote cooperation and coordination of tuna RFMOs and to achieve a global consistency in tuna conservation and management measures;

7. Urge RFMOs to ensure conservation and management of shark stocks on a scientific basis in accordance with their respective resolutions/recommendations and those of the United Nations and to promote full utilization of sharks retained on board and the elimination of directed shark fisheries conducted solely for the purpose of harvesting shark fins;

8. Actively cooperate with the relevant RFMOs to make the best attempts to reduce incidental catch of sea turtles and seabirds through the following actions:
-the collection of scientific data, including observer data whenever feasible,
-the development and implementation of practical measures for monitoring incidental catch including,

among others, the introduction of electronic observer techniques, and

-the development and use of technology to reduce incidental catch and improve post-release survival rates for sea turtles;

9. Vigorously promote the immediate use of appropriate combinations of circle hooks and type of bait, including use on a trial basis, to reduce sea turtle incidental catch and improve post-release survival rate;

10. Vigorously promote the widespread use of proven techniques (such as tori poles, night setting, side setting, blue-dyed bait, etc.) to reduce seabird incidental catch, particularly, in areas with high rate of seabird incidental catch;

11. Reaffirm that the FAO and RFMOs are the organizations that have primary responsibility for addressing international tuna fisheries issues, and to encourage governments to ensure that consideration of such issues by other international frameworks, including the United Nations General Assembly, be conducted with the scientific and technical reviews by FAO and RFMOs; and

12. Continue, in every international arena, to challenge biased and unscientific accusations that attack environmentally responsible tuna fisheries.

We will transmit this declaration to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and relevant RFMOs for their consideration, and we will request that Governments, including the Governments of Japan and the United States, support fishers worldwide to implement this declaration.

Holistic Approach to
Conservation and
Management of Sea Turtles
--An Experience of Survey on
Leatherbacks in Indonesia--

Dr. Hiroshi Minami

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The incidental catch of sea turtles, including leatherbacks, by tuna longling fisheries has been at issue. Some people go to such an extent to make a radical assertion that "fisheries that kill sea turtles should be banned." However, over history of humankind ranging 4 million years, humankind has always used natural resources and will continue to do so in the years to come. **It is therefore important to attain a goal of co-existence of sea turtles and fishing activities.**

Sea turtles spend most of their life in the ocean, but females breed in nesting beaches. On the beaches, newly hatchling come out of the sand and start their life in the sea as the next generation turtles.

As factors threatening the survival of sea turtles in the oceans, we can enumerate predation by other marine species, such as sharks, collision with ships, incidental catch by fisheries in the coastal and offshore areas, and turtles' swallowing of artificial floating objects like marine debris. **On land**, we can cite such factors as predation of eggs and nesting females by humans and other animals, loss of nesting grounds caused by erosion of coastlines and industrial development, sinking of eggs into the water caused by high tide, impediments to nesting by light, and disturbance of breeding by anthropogenic activities.

As there exist factors leading to decrease of sea turtle resources both on land and the ocean, the argument focusing only on longline fisheries, as asserted by some conservationist groups, will not serve for the protection of sea turtles. **In order to protect the sea turtle resources, it is necessary to carry out surveys not only on the marine environment but also on the environment surrounding the nesting grounds, and build up an appropriate conservation and management system.**

Leatherbacks are distributed in the oceans all over the world. In the Pacific, however, this species went almost extinct in the Malaysian nesting grounds, and the number of nesting females in Mexico and Costa Rica has been decreasing. While the number of nests is on a decline in various parts of the Pacific, there remain large nesting grounds in Indonesia and Papua New Guinea in the western Pacific. The resources of leatherback turtles in these nesting grounds should

be preserved in order to prevent their extinction. I have been engaged in the research and studies on reducing incidental catch of seabirds and sea turtles by tuna longling fisheries, and the major objective of my studies cover oceanic areas. But surveys in the nesting grounds as well have become important for the conservation of sea turtle resources.

We, at the Ecologically Related Species Section, launched surveys on leatherback nesting grounds at Jamursba-Medi beach in Papua State of Indonesia in 2001, with the cooperation from (NPO) Everlasting Nature of Asia (ELNA) and the (NPO) Indonesia Sea Turtle Research Center. In that region, there exist some villages, and villagers live an almost autarkic life based on hunting and land cultivation. Naturally, they have used the eggs of leatherbacks as an important protein source. **However, since the number of nesting leatherbacks showed a decline in recent years, villagers took the initiative of launching a campaign to conserve leatherbacks**, including prohibition of harvest of eggs. ELNA and the Indonesia Sea Turtle Research Center have been assisting in the conservation program jointly with villagers since 1999. They have built electric fences to prevent wild pigs from eating the eggs and are monitoring the number of nests by employing local people as guards. When we conduct surveys, we use the huts of the local guards as our base camp. Besides the guards, village women help us by cooking meals, and the staffs of Solon Branch of the Forestry Ministry responsible for guarding the coasts, accompany us during the local survey.

In order to clarify where the leatherbacks go after nesting, we trace the activities of leatherbacks by attaching a satellite transmitter on them. Leatherbacks land ashore and lay eggs during the calm nighttime. Satellite transmitters are attached during nesting. In carrying out this work, we sweat all over although it is fairly cool on the beach at night. We are filled with a sense of relief after completing the work to attach transmitters on the turtles, and wish for the turtles to come back to the beaches safely. During the daytime, we take part in the surveys to count the nests of leatherback as well as the surveys on hatching of eggs. The Jamursba-Medi beach extends 18 kilometers, and we keep on walking on the beach for about three days. While walking on the beach, we find many footprints and nests of leatherbacks. We are surprised by the survival of so much of nature and at the same time consider that we should protect it.

It is my hope to continue research and studies to achieve coexistence of humans and nature so that man may not threaten the survival of sea turtles, while utilizing the natural resources, represented by fish, sustainably and effectively.