

**STATEMENT BY THE WESTERN AND CENTRAL PACIFIC FISHERIES COMMISSION (WCPFC)
SECRETARIAT**

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Preparatory Commission for the Entry into Force of the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction and the Convening of the First Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Agreement (First Session)

Item 5: Arrangements for the Functioning of the Secretariat, Including Its Seat

New York, Tuesday, 22 April 2025

Co-Chairs, Distinguished Delegates, Colleagues,

Thank you for the opportunity to deliver this statement on behalf of the Secretariat of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC).

As this is the first time the WCPFC Secretariat is delivering a statement at this meeting — or at any BBNJ-related process — I would like to briefly introduce who we are. The WCPFC, headquartered in the Federated States of Micronesia, entered into force 2004 and plays a central role in the governance of 60% of the world's tuna catch. The WCPFC comprises 26 Members, 7 Participating Territories, 7 Cooperating Non-Members, and 65 Observers. The WCPFC mandate covers the Pacific region, which has the world's highest concentration of Small Island Developing States and territories, where tuna fisheries are central to economic development, food security, and cultural identity. In a number of these SIDS and territories — including Kiribati, Tuvalu, the Marshall Islands, Nauru and Tokelau — tuna-related revenues contribute over 80 to 90 percent of domestically generated income. The sustainable management of tuna stocks in this region is critical to strengthening economic resilience and maintaining long-term regional stability.

Tuna Regional Fisheries Management Organizations—namely the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC), the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT), and our neighbouring Pacific partner the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), —have long served as pillars of what regional collaboration can achieve in global fisheries governance. Collectively, these five bodies manage all major tuna stocks across the world’s oceans and operate with a shared commitment to science-based decision-making, ecosystem-based management, and inclusive participation. At the subregional level, the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA)—an organisation comprising 17 Pacific Island countries and territories—has been an important driver of collective action, working collaboratively on the conservation and management of tuna resources in the Pacific since its establishment in 1979, predating the adoption of UNCLOS.

The BBNJ Agreement and tuna RFMOs are grounded in a common goal: to safeguard the health and resilience of our ocean and the communities that depend on it. By working collaboratively— each within its respective mandate and with respect for the roles and competencies established under international law —we can amplify our collective commitment to effective and inclusive ocean stewardship. Constructive cooperation will be critical to ensuring policy coherence, avoiding duplication, and advancing the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction, while also continuing to support long-term fisheries sustainability.

In that spirit, the WCPFC Secretariat supports the proposed action outlined in paragraph 55(e) of the “Note by the Secretariat,” which recommends that the interim BBNJ Secretariat explore areas of cooperation with the secretariats of other relevant instruments, frameworks, and bodies. We see this as not only desirable, but essential. The WCPFC Secretariat stands ready to contribute to this process throughout the lead-up to the second Preparatory Commission and beyond, as arrangements to enhance cooperation with relevant legal instruments and global, regional, subregional, and sectoral bodies are further considered.

Thank you, Co-Chairs.