



2 February 2016

Miguel de Serpa Soares  
Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs  
and United Nations Legal Counsel  
Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea  
Office of Legal Affairs  
Room DC2-0450, United Nations  
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Dear Under-Secretary,

Further to our letter of 22<sup>nd</sup> January, 2016, I am pleased to provide undercover of this letter the WCPFC's contribution to Part 1 of the Report of the Secretary General on oceans and the law of the sea, on the subject matter of debris, plastics and microplastics.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Feleti P Teo", is positioned above the typed name.

Feleti P Teo, OBE  
**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

WCPFC contribution to the first part of the report of the Secretary-General on marine debris, plastics and microplastics, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 70/235 of 23 December 2015, entitled “Oceans and the law of the sea.”

The Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission is mandated to ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of highly migratory fish stocks in the western and central Pacific Ocean. Among the principles which guide the Commission in carrying out its functions are to assess the impacts of fishing, other human activities and environment factors on stocks and dependent species, and to adopt measures to minimize water, discards, and catch by lost or abandoned gear.

Marine debris, plastics and microplastics pose challenges to the Pacific Ocean marine environment. Concern has been expressed in papers to the WCPFC Scientific Committee over the impact of plastics on sea turtles, caused by entanglement in and ingestion of marine debris. In the Pacific purse seine fishery the challenge posed by marine debris and plastics arises from the use of fish aggregation devices (FADs) as FADs may be constructed of synthetic materials, which may have an impact on the marine environment if lost or abandoned.

The actions taken by WCPFC to respond to the challenges posed by marine debris, plastics and microplastics address data collection on marine debris, the prohibition on the use of large-scale driftnets, and FAD management.

- a. Observers in the Regional Observer Programme are required to collect data on lost or abandoned fishing gear, on the disposal of metal, plastics or old fishing gear, and on the use of FADs. The FAD data collected includes data on floating objects observed and on the main components making up the FAD or floating object.
- b. The Commission has passed CMM 2008-04, which prohibits the use of large-scale driftnets on the high seas of the Convention area. The CMM notes concern over “ghost fishing” by lost or discarded driftnets which have serious detrimental effects on species of concern and the marine environment.
- c. Since 2013 the Commission has placed controls on the use and management of FADs. Under conservation and management measures (CMM) 2013-01, followed by CMM 2014-01 and CMM 2015-01, purse seine vessels are not permitted to use FADs for certain months of the year. FAD management plans are also to be submitted to the Commission.
- d. In 2014 an Intersessional Working Group on FAD Management Options was established. A workshop was held in December 2015 and a further one is to be held in September 2016. The Working Group is expected to provide advice to the Commission on FAD management options including the impact on FADs on the marine environment.