



**NORTHERN COMMITTEE
Fifth Regular Session
Nagasaki, Japan
7-10 September 2009**

**SUMMARY REPORT OF THE FIFTH REGULAR SESSION OF
THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE BY THE SC CHAIR**

**WCPFC-NC5-2009-IP-06
31st August 2009**

1. The Chairman, Naozumi Miyabe (Japan), opened the Fifth Regular Session of the Scientific Committee (SC5), which took place at Port Vila, Vanuatu from 10-21 August 2009. More than 110 participants attended the SC5 from member countries, participating territories, and inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations.
2. The Hon. Ham Lini, Vanua Roroa, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Justice and Acting Minister for Fisheries, Republic of Vanuatu, welcomed delegates to the meeting in Vanuatu.
3. The following summarizes key elements that were considered at SC5 and its six Specialist Working Groups.
 - 1) The provisional total WCPO tuna catch for 2008 was estimated at 2,426,000 mt, the highest annual catch recorded, but only 6,000 mt more than in 2007. Catch by gear was 1,780,000 mt (74%), 170,000 mt (7%) and 230,000 mt (10%) for purse seine, pole and line and longline fisheries, respectively. Total catch by species was 1,630,000 mt (67%), 540,000 mt (22%) and 160,000 (6%) for skipjack, yellowfin and bigeye tunas, respectively. Yellowfin catch was higher than previous record in 1998 (460,000 mt). Albacore catch was down to 95,000 mt (4%).
 - 2) This year, a new stock assessment was provided for bigeye tuna, yellowfin tuna and South Pacific albacore tuna stocks. For bigeye tuna, six assessment runs were selected to illustrate the stock status. $F_{CURRENT}/F_{MSY}$ (where current is the average for 2004-07) is considerably greater than 1.0 (range 1.51-2.01), which means overfishing is occurring for the WCPO bigeye tuna stock. The current spawning stock biomass is greater than 1.0 if the spawning biomass reference period was 2004-2007, whereas the stock is in an overfished state if the reference period is 2008. In summary, the bigeye stock is to be in a slightly overfished state, or will be in the near future.

The bigeye stock status became more pessimistic year by year. The appraisal of CMM-2008-01 indicated that the objective of a 30% reduction in fishing mortality on bigeye by 2011 will not be achieved, as reduction in longline catch do not result in the required F , increases in both purse seine effort and its efficiency, and exclusion of

archipelagic waters that encompasses most of the fishing by Indonesian and Philippines domestic fishing and significant fisheries in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands. The SC recommended that reduction in F by 30% from 2001-2004 level (or 34-50% reduction in F from the 2004-2007 level) is required to return the stock to the F_{MSY} level, based on an analyses conducted by the Commission's Science Services Provider for WCPFC6 on the predicted annual catches and resulting F and spawning biomass for a range of scenarios including with and without the various exemptions, special considerations and areas not covered by the CMM. The analysis provided potential management options to strengthen the CMM, such as various percentage reductions by fishery.

For yellowfin and south Pacific albacore stock, they are not experiencing overfishing and are not in an overfished state although yellowfin in the western equatorial region, where 95% of the yellowfin catch is taken, is experiencing a significantly higher fishery impact than other regions. Stock assessment for bigeye, yellowfin and skipjack is scheduled for next year.

ISC's activities were also provided to the SC including the new stock assessment results of north Pacific swordfish.

- 3) This year the whole session of the ME-SWG was dedicated to a special workshop on reference points.

In relation to reference points, the Scientific Committee provided one recommendation to the NC (paragraph 239):

“The SC recommends to the NC that they consider advising the ISC that the scientific advice provided by the ISC to the SC contain information on the performance of a range of fishery indicators against appropriate reference points. Until the Commission identifies and formally adopts appropriate reference points the SC suggests that this information should detail, at a minimum, the performance of the fishery against MSY-based reference points.”

- 4) By-catch mitigation issues associated with seabirds (spatial risk indicators), sea turtles (establishment of a minimum sea turtle bycatch rate for shallow set fishery), and continued funding for ERA for 2010-2012 in addition to commencement of preliminary shark stock assessment project in 2010.
- 5) Statistics SWG discussed the issues associated with the data provision to the Commission, initiatives to address data gaps and initiatives to better characterise the proportion and size of bigeye in the purse seine catch.
- 6) The committee considered the advice and recommendations to the independent review of interim arrangements for science structure and function which led, in part, to a plan to streamline next year's SC meeting and strengthen the role of the pre-stock assessment workshop.
- 7) The status of the Indonesia and Philippines Data Collection Project (IPDCP)/West Pacific East Asia Oceanic Fisheries Management Project (WPEA), the Japan Trust Fund (JTF) and the Pacific Tuna Tagging Project (PTTP) was reported and discussed.

- 8) In order to facilitate data exchange and cooperation, MOUs with other organizations (IATTC, ISC, IOTC and others) were reviewed.
- 9) The process of implementing the work programme of the SC was updated with a revised standard for the appraisal and a new template for research proposals were adopted. The 2009-2011 work programme and budget were adopted for forwarding to WCPFC6.