

Déclarations d'ouverture

Canada

Good morning, distinguished representatives, ladies and gentlemen. It is my sincere pleasure to be here as head of Canada's delegation.

I would like to thank the European Union and Spain for hosting this second joint meeting of tuna fisheries management organizations in beautiful San Sebastian.

As Canada's Ambassador for Fisheries Conservation, I have the privilege of working closely with our partners across all continents to meet our shared objectives of prosperous, sustainable fisheries and healthy ocean ecosystems.

The Regional Fisheries Management Organization (RFMO) reform agenda has momentum and that is something we should celebrate. Good progress has been made on the development and adoption of the amendments to the 1978 Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) Convention, on the amendments adopted to the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) Convention, and in the continuing negotiations to create a South Pacific RFMO.

We recognize that there are different paths on the road to modernization and reform. The Kobe meeting was initiated because of growing concerns about tuna stocks globally and the need to improve management efforts by tuna RMFOs. It was the first coordination effort among the tuna RFMO and launched the Kobe Course of Actions, which identified 14 key challenges. A number of follow-up actions were also agreed upon — a significant step on the path towards reform. Recently, three tuna RFMOs completed Performance Reviews for their organizations. They are now considering the steps towards prioritizing and implementing the recommendations of the respective reviews. This is encouraging.

This week we will review the progress in implementing the Kobe Course of Actions.

On the whole, Canada is disappointed that the commitments made at Kobe were not followed through and that very little concrete action has developed. Simply put, not enough has been accomplished since 2007.

Mr. Chairman, we recognize that this process is a work in progress. However, the lack of progress may be, in part, attributed to the fact that the process was not binding. In retrospect, the list of issues laid out for action was far reaching and perhaps too ambitious and unfocused. Moreover, many countries did not participate in the process, and as a result, did not have any particular "ownership" to the commitments.

Our lack of political will has resulted in little follow-up action since 2007 — collectively and as individual members of RFMOs.

RFMOs play a crucial role in the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement. Effective international fisheries governance in the 21st century must include shared responsibility, collective problem-solving and transparent decision-making.

Mr. Chairman, at the end of the day, RFMOs must fulfill their obligations with credibility. That responsibility starts first with individual members, who must be accountable for implementation of RFMO measures. If RFMOs fail to deliver on their obligations, other organizations not involved in fisheries management will step in to fill the gap.

There is a growing global recognition that the tuna RFMOs are severely underperforming. There is a sense of increasing urgency for concrete and immediate progress at this meeting. There is a need to translate commitments into tangible actions within the respective tuna RFMOs and bring their actions in line with recent legally binding international instruments.

There is a clear need to strengthen coordination and cooperation among the tuna RFMOs. We must do so with the aim of closing loopholes to IUU fishing, and sharing information and agreeing on common standards, approaches, as well as working methods. This will simplify our work and help avoid duplication. We have much to gain from the mutual lessons learned.

Mr. Chairman, by working hand-in-hand, I believe the countries here today can make a difference in this important issue. The challenges before us may be great but by working together with other delegations in a frank and constructive manner, we can – and will – make significant progress in conserving our global tuna stocks.

Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA)

Chair, I am making this statement on behalf of the 17 member countries and territories of the Forum Fisheries Agency, who meet regularly to cooperate in fisheries management, fisheries development and MCS. I would first of all like to thank the Government and people of Spain and in particular the Basque Country for the excellent meeting arrangements and the hospitality that has been offered to us since we arrived. I would also like to express our gratitude to the EC and to Japan for the funds that many of us have used to be here and participate in this important meeting.

FFA members are pleased to cooperate with other attendees in the work of this forum. As with the first meeting of this body, we look forward to finding ways forward to increase the efficiency and performance of our RFMOs and improving the overall status of tuna stocks.

Having said that Chair, it is important that I articulate several issues that FFA members view as the critical priorities for this meeting. My colleagues and I will talk further about these issues throughout the week.

The first key issue is the need for full recognition of the special requirements of developing states, particularly small island developing states. Noting that 15 of the 17 FFA members are Small Island Developing States or Territories, this is an issue that is at the core of our economic and social well being. It is essential to us that RFMOs find ways to implement articles 24 to 26 of the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement.

Secondly, and on a related note, the integral relationship between fleet capacity, the status of stocks and our development aspirations remains a key challenge to us in making the most of the fishing opportunities that are available. In particular, FFA members have long opposed the use of capacity limits based on historical fleets as a means of managing our fisheries. We have first hand experience both with the inability of such regimes to actually restrain fishing mortality and with the abuse of such measures to block the development of our domestic fisheries.

FFA members are eager to work with other participants to determine more sophisticated fisheries management measures that address the root-causes of over-fishing rather than just addressing the symptoms, and that can deliver sustainability and economic outcomes as well as facilitating SIDS domestic fleet development and associated restructuring of developed fleets. A broader discussion on how we can work to improve fisheries management outcomes in the five tuna RFMOs would be welcomed. While removing excess capacity is critical for effective tuna management, FFA members will not accept any outcomes or positions from this meeting that call exclusively for the direct management of capacity or for moratoriums on existing capacity levels, which strongly favour developed fleets that have been responsible for overfishing in the past.

Thirdly, there is an urgent need for all participants to renew their commitment to acting in good faith in RFMOs, fully implementing conservation and management measures and MCS arrangements and fulfilling reporting and data provision obligations. At the same time, we strongly support any and all efforts taken by RFMOs to establish fair and transparent processes for monitoring compliance and putting in place remedial actions, either on a punitive or incentive basis, in regards to their members, vessels and nationals that are found to be non-compliant.

Lastly, FFA members fully support efforts to harmonise and coordinate arrangements between RFMOs, particularly those related to MCS programmes and the collection, and management of data. In doing so, we note that the drive for compatibility should be used as a means to improve those arrangements that are already in place and to seek uniform international best practice, not to weaken or dilute existing practices, or create a “lowest common denominator” affect, as has sometimes been seen in collaborative management in the past.

Chair, these are some of the issues that FFA members see as the fundamental matters for discussion through the next few days and I thank you for allowing me to talk to them.

United States

On behalf of the United States delegation, I would like to thank the European Community for hosting the Second Joint Meeting of Tuna Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) in the beautiful city of San Sebastian.

The United States has a strong interest in sustainable management of fisheries throughout the world’s oceans. We participate actively in three of the five existing tuna RFMOs: the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), and the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT). We are committed to a science-based, ecosystem approach to management by these organizations, ensuring the sustainability of target stocks while also conserving associated and dependent species and their habitat.

This follow up to the process that was started in Kobe comes at a critical time. Two years out from the Kobe meetings the United States remains concerned that the credibility of the tuna RFMOs as effective fora for the management of shared natural resources continues to be undermined due to the fact that overfishing continues for many of the key commercial tuna stocks. Some of these remain in an overfished state and at least one may be on the brink of collapse. It is difficult to say with confidence that existing conservation measures are adequate to allow for the recovery of these stocks to levels that will sustain MSY. Recent scientific assessments indicate that without disciplined management and rigorous compliance and enforcement, some tuna stocks will continue to decline, perhaps precipitously. In addition, IUU fishing further complicates our stewardship of these common resources. While some RFMOs have taken meaningful steps to address the by-catch of associated and dependent species in the two years since the joint meeting in Kobe, more action is necessary. Highly migratory fish are caught globally and traded globally, and the United States continues to believe that successfully conserving tuna stocks hinges on global cooperation.

Addressing these challenges successfully will require courage and creative thinking. The scientists have told us what needs to be done – we have the task of determining how to reach our goals. Therefore, we very much welcome the initiative contained in the Agenda aimed at ensuring that fishing capacity is commensurate with fishing opportunities available. As responsible nations, we must all face head-on the reality that many management difficulties are exacerbated by overcapacity. Our deliberations to find a way to reduce and manage capacity will prove very challenging, as we must at the same time devise a scheme to allow for the aspirations of developing, island and coastal States. The United States recognizes that effective capacity controls would make the necessary conservation and management decisions easier from a social and economic standpoint. However, even with the optimal levels of fishing capacity and perfect compliance, overfishing and the decline of stocks will

continue if total allowable catches (TACs) and other fishing controls are not set so as to restrict fishing mortality (F) to sustainable levels and rebuild overfished stocks.

The United States is not sure that the stocks can afford the time for capacity plans to be developed and implemented. We believe that we must focus on harvest control measures supported by sound science. Therefore, the United States is proposing that stock assessment reports include standardized, user friendly tables providing TAC/F levels that would stop overfishing and rebuild overfished stocks within a range of years with a moderate to high probability of success, as well as an indication of the degree of uncertainty associated with these estimates. The first meeting in Kobe called for “management measures based on the best scientific advice.... and consistent with the precautionary approach.” The United States suggests that this meeting call for an end to all overfishing within the next three years and the rebuilding of stocks to levels that will support MSY within a decade. Adherence to the principles of science-based management, within the context of an ecosystem approach, is the only clear way to discharge our duties with respect to the world’s tuna stocks. We must not lose sight of that reality, and we believe that additional actions to move the tuna RFMOs in this direction should be fundamental components of the course of action that will be developed at this meeting.

Harmonizing management measures, such as statistical document programs, improving data reporting, reducing by-catch, strengthening monitoring, control and surveillance measures to address IUU fishing, and, most notably, the issue of capacity are key elements both for discussion here and constructive, effective action at the regional level. In addition, taking swift and effective action according to the results of the performance reviews that have been undertaken by RFMOs to date is critically important to improving management of fisheries resources worldwide. Those RFMOs that have not yet agreed to sideboards for a performance review must do so with due haste.

While the United States does not believe that we will be able to resolve all of these matters in this meeting, we are optimistic that we can take stock of how far we have come since Kobe and develop a strategy for progress in the years to come. We look forward to a productive outcome.