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PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS TO THE UN OFFICE & OTHER
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN GENEVA

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Agenda Item 9: Combating IUU Fishing

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. At the outset, we wish to convey our appreciation to the FAO for the assistance provided to Pacific SIDS under the Global Capacity Development Programme to support the implementation of the PSMA and complementary international instruments.

We further welcome the cooperation between FAO (and its offices) and regional organisations in the Pacific, particularly the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), in the implementation and application of global instruments such as the PSMA. Having said that, we note the need for ongoing and strengthened engagement going forward, including with respect to capacity building support to Pacific Island countries.

We wish to also note that the FFA and its Members have approved the Regional FFA Port State Measures Framework that seeks to support the adoption of comprehensive and integrated Port State Measures among FFA Members including through the ratification and implementation of the PSMA when countries are in a position to do so.

We wish to refer to the “Quantification of IUU in Pacific Tuna Fisheries” study that was commissioned by the FFA and undertaken by MRAG in 2016 which showed that the main source of IUU fishing in the Western & Central Pacific Ocean tuna fisheries now comes from licenced vessels engaged in under or misreporting of catch.

Transshipment was also identified as a likely factor in IUU fishing given the lack of adequate regulation and monitoring of transshipment activity, particularly by longline vessels operating on the high seas.

We are pleased to note that the FFA study is one of the “case-studies” for work that FAO is doing on guidelines for quantification of IUU fishing. At this stage, we wish to inform the Committee that the 2016 Study is currently being updated so as to provide a measure of progress over the past 5 years. It is our hope that the results of this study, also being conducted by MRAG, will be available in the coming months.

Lastly, with regards to the Global Study on Transshipment, we wish to reiterate the concerns shared by all Members of the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency about the weak regulation and monitoring of transshipment events on the high seas, particularly involving longline vessels.

While we would support the development of international guidelines for the regulation of transshipment, we note that such voluntary international guidelines will not prejudice or add requirements for any transshipment resolutions already in place at RFMOs. The guidelines should build on existing regional mechanisms and practices and can act as a resource for RFMOs that are looking to implement or strengthen existing regulations.

We further note that such guidelines would be beneficial for DWFNs with vessels that fish globally on the high seas as they should help harmonise reporting and monitoring globally. This is especially useful for vessels that are subject to and have to navigate transshipment measures across multiple regional jurisdictions. I thank you, Mr. Chairman.