



Press Release– for immediate release

Fishermen Commit to Responsible Fishing Practices

PUNTARENAS, COSTA RICA (14 November 2007) The Fourth International Fishers Forum, concluded today, was held from 12-14 November in Puntarenas, Costa Rica. The conference co-hosts were the Instituto Costarricense de Pesca y Acuicultura (Costa Rica Fisheries and Aquaculture Institute) and Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council.

The international meeting of 250 fishermen, management authorities, seafood retail industry representatives, fishing technology experts, marine ecologists and fisheries scientists facilitated the sharing of information and experiences on sustainable fishery practices and approaches to minimize problematic interactions with sea turtles, seabirds, sharks and cetaceans in longline and gillnet fisheries.

Three previous International Fishers Forums were held in New Zealand, Hawaii and Japan over the past seven years. The Fishers Forum series, hosted by the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, has brought longline and now also gillnet fishers together to create synergies to improve the sustainability of their fisheries.

Kitty Simonds, Executive Director of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, said, “It has been extremely exciting working with positive-minded people who believe in the capacity of humanity and can envision a future where we can have fish forever. Over the years, the IFF community has proven its commitment to responsible fishing in the Pacific and around the globe. We are expanding and growing. We are making a difference. It is truly heartening to welcome fishermen from Central and South America joining us in this endeavor.”

Mr. Carlos Villalobos, Executive Director of the Costa Rica Fisheries and Aquaculture Institute, summarized, “The Forum has been successful in facilitating the active exchange of wide-ranging perspectives and approaches for responsible longline and gillnet fisheries, including minimizing sea turtle, seabird, and marine mammal incidental catch and ensuring that sharks and their relatives receive needed protection. Most importantly, the Forum has identified gaps where priority international attention is warranted and created new industry-to-industry collaborations to continue our progress in resolving fisheries bycatch problems.” Mr. Villalobos continued, “A key outcome was the decision by Central American government representatives and regional non-governmental organizations to join efforts to exchange legal, fishing and scientific information about fisheries for highly migratory and trans-regional fishery resources. Both the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission and the Central American Aquaculture and Fishing Sector Organization expressed their will to support this initiative.”

“During the past three days the Forum participants have taken an honest look at the state of our artisanal and industrial fisheries, exchanged ideas on how to improve them and committed to concrete follow-up actions,” explained Ms. Simonds. Ms. Simonds further explained, “The Forum included a focus on management and sustainability issues faced by Latin American artisanal fishermen. A key outcome was the decision by artisanal fishermen to establish a new international fishery association to provide improved regional collaboration and coordination of Central and South America artisanal fishermen, including the adoption of a Code of Conduct for responsible longline fisheries.”

Mr. Villalobos explained, “The Forum participants adopted the Puntarenas Declaration, to express their agreement and support for the implementation of twelve specific actions to improve the sustainability of artisanal and industrial fisheries, including to address issues related to bycatch, allocation, fishing capacity, ecosystem-based approaches to fisheries management, illegal fishing and compliance.”

For More Information Please Contact

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