



PUNTARENAS DECLARATION

**Agreed at the Fourth International Fishers Forum
November 12-14, 2007, Puntarenas, Costa Rica**

Recalling that, over the past seven years, the International Fishers Forum (IFF) series has brought together large and diverse groups of fishermen and other interested persons who are united in the belief that conserving our fisheries and protecting our ocean environment are not mutually exclusive goals;

Recalling that the First International Fishers Forum held in New Zealand in the year 2000 focused on mitigating interactions between pelagic longline fisheries and seabirds, and that participants acknowledged that an integrated "bottom-up," fishery-specific, and area-specific approach was required and that progress would be determined by individual fishermen's own contribution within their own fisheries, regions or organizations;

Further recalling that at the Second International Fishers Forum, convened in Hawaii in 2002, the theme was expanded to include interactions between pelagic longline fisheries and sea turtles, and that a resulting Forum Resolution was agreed to which contained actions to promote involvement in the IFF initiatives by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Convention on Migratory Species, relevant regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) and national agencies;

Further recalling that, at the Third International Fishers Forum which was held in 2005 in Japan jointly with the International Tuna Fishers Conference on Responsible Fisheries, the theme was expanded to include interactions of demersal longline fisheries with sharks as well as other non-target species, and to address marketing issues such as eco-labeling, and to consider the potential benefits of changes in fishing gear and techniques, resulting in the adoption of the 12-point Yokohama Declaration;

Having actively exchanged wide-ranging perspectives and approaches at the Fourth International Fishers Forum in Puntarenas, Costa Rica, November 12-15, to promote responsible pelagic and demersal longline fisheries and gillnet fisheries, and to minimize sea turtle, seabird, and marine mammal incidental catch;

Recognizing that additional information has been developed since IFF3 and presented at IFF4 that further demonstrates the need for and availability of measures to ensure maintenance of a healthy marine ecosystem that is necessary to support healthy fisheries;

Reiterating that continued increases in fishing capacity in the Pacific may be preventing the adoption of effective fishery control and management programs and that control of fishing capacity is critical to ensure economic health of all the fisheries that depend on the tuna and tuna-like species of the Pacific;



Noting that many members of RFMOs profess to support capacity management controls and the need to prevent increases in fishery capacity but do not demonstrate the political will to actually prevent capacity growth in fisheries for tuna and tuna-like species, especially with respect to large-scale purse seine fishing with fish aggregating devices that are known to have very large catches of juvenile yellowfin and bigeye tuna with consequent risk to the health of the stocks;

Noting further that, while the problem of illegal fishing (i.e., without requisite permits or licenses) may be diminished, there continue to be serious problems with unreported and unregulated fishing which RFMOs and governments must resolve to ensure full consideration of the impacts of all fishing on the stocks of concern;

Considering that fair and equitable allocation schemes have not been developed by RFMOs and implemented by parties and cooperating non-parties that achieve fair sharing of available resources and protection of the interests of communities and small-scale fisheries with limited alternatives, and that all fishers must be provided information and opportunities to be part of the process when allocations are made;

Acknowledging that the concerns about the status of sea turtles and certain species of seabirds and about the possible negative effects of fishing on these populations are legitimate and warrant further consideration of measures to prevent or mitigate interactions with such species as well as measures to ensure that sensitive other species (such as some species of elasmobranchs) receive needed protection;

Recognizing that some species of sharks are especially vulnerable and are taken in substantial numbers by some fisheries such that their viability may be at risk, and that there is likely no ability to sustain the stocks by culture, and that there are inadequate data collection programs to ensure full records on the take and disposition of sharks caught incidentally in fisheries for tuna, swordfish and other species;

Agreeing that artisanal fisheries are important to the economy and culture of many communities but that artisanal fisheries also can have substantial impacts on both target stocks and related species of interest to fishers and societies of the Pacific;

Recognizing that RFMOs can make substantial contributions to the monitoring, assessment and management of artisanal fisheries, including documentation of catch, effort and bycatch, with the caveat that management of artisanal fisheries must be carried out in coordination with but not dominated by RFMOs, as monitoring and management of artisanal fisheries should be carried out at the local level to the extent practicable;

Emphasizing that measures and programs to prevent adverse impacts of bycatch and takes of sensitive species will be much more likely to be acceptable to and supported by fishers when they assure that the fishers will be no worse off while protection is provided to those sensitive species, and that measures must recognize and be tailored to the specific characteristics of the fishery involved;



Aware that the focus must be on solutions and collaboration rather than conflicts and confrontation and that effective programs and measures depend on engagement of the fishers in the development of programs and measures and the “buy in” by the fishers who will be affected by the measures and programs to reduce or prevent bycatch and interactions with sensitive species;

Noting that fishers, by virtue of experience on fishing grounds and their observations from that experience, have originated many effective measures to address bycatch problems and are ideally suited to provide expert advice about other potential solutions to bycatch problems and about the likely effects and effectiveness of bycatch reduction and sensitive species interactions, and that expert advice is critical to such measures and programs;

Accepting that there is a wide variety of “tools” (e.g., circle hooks, deep setting of gear, alternative baits) that have been tested and shown to have positive results, that are practical and effective, and that have been accepted in several fishing sectors and communities to reduce injury and mortality of sea turtles and seabirds taken in longline fisheries without reduction of the catch of target species;

We, fishers – from small-scale domestic commercial and artisanal fisheries to modern industrialized fleets – participating in the Fourth International Fishers Forum, do declare that we agree to carry out and support the following actions:

1. Promote and carry out collaboration among and between all involved sectors—artisanal and small- and large-scale fisheries and support industries, local and national governments, and regional fishery management organizations, and educational and non-governmental entities—to define and identify problems of bycatch; to develop, test and refine bycatch prevention and mitigation measures and strategies; and to implement in a coordinated manner such measures and strategies, with market incentives when practicable, as are found to balance maintenance of fisheries’ values and protection of sensitive species;
2. Continue to support entities that promote and achieve programs to prevent any net increases in capacity in fisheries for tuna and tuna-like species, except to the extent that such capacity growth is consistent with a capacity management plan of regional fishery management organizations or nations and with the International Plan of Action for Management of Fishing Capacity;
3. Establish mechanisms to facilitate the compilation and distribution of information documenting sound scientific research and fishery experiments that seek to identify effective and commercially viable solutions to bycatch of sensitive species groups in coastal gillnet and longline fisheries, with the aim of aiding the development of and implementing such solutions at the local and fishery specific level to the extent practicable;



4. Establish a mechanism whereby the artisanal fishery interests of Central and South America can collaborate and coordinate to:

- Develop programs to use a subregional approach to achieve effective and coordinated management of fisheries for widely distributed species (e.g., dorado) not subject to conservation and management measures of RFMOs;
- Develop education programs to ensure that artisanal fishers are aware of the impacts of their fishing on the stocks and associated resources and are able to make factually based recommendations for measures that will enhance their fisheries while ensuring their sustainability and minimizing or preventing bycatch;
- Establish a Code of Conduct for artisanal fisheries;
- Address activities that affect coastal fishery resources and their habitat with potential adverse effects on the productivity and sustainability of the fisheries that are dependent on those coastal resource;
- Promote fishery conservation and management measures that recognize the importance of coastal artisanal fisheries to local economies and cultures (e.g., area management to ensure that small artisanal fisheries are not adversely affected by industrial fisheries, or area management to separate competing gears);
- Maximize local benefits from large scale commercial fisheries to the extent practicable;

5. Responsible participants from highly migratory and trans-regional fisheries resources management institutions of the Central American region, express their willingness to join efforts towards the exchange of legal, fishing and scientific information in regard to these fisheries, with the purpose of achieving preservation, handling and use of sustainable pelagic longline fisheries. Both, the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) as well as the Central American Aquaculture and Fishing Sector Organization (OSPESCA), express their willingness to support this initiative.

6. Support actions by RFMOs, nations and other entities to continue and to expand research and experiments for developing and testing additional measures to prevent and minimize incidental catch of sea turtles, seabirds, sharks and other sensitive species in longline and gillnet fisheries and to ensure that reports on the results of such research and experiments be provided to all interested parties quickly through the internet and other mechanisms.

7. Collaborate with governments and RFMOs to ensure adequate collection and analysis of catch and effort data relating to shark fisheries and incidental shark catches in longline and gillnet fisheries and to facilitate incorporation and use of those statistics in assessing the condition of shark stocks and the effects of harvests on those stocks.



8. Urge our governments and other interested parties to support implementation of the actions agreed to at the Joint Meeting of Tuna RFMOs that was held in Japan in early 2007, including performance reviews to evaluate the effects and effectiveness of the RFMOs against common benchmarks, and to report the results of those evaluations;
9. Participate in the review and evaluation of the effectiveness of actions taken by nations and RFMOs to minimize or mitigate the takes of seabirds in longline fisheries and recommend additional actions as necessary with respect to the collection of scientific data (including observer data whenever feasible), the development and implementation of practical measures for monitoring incidental catch including (including where feasible the introduction of non-invasive electronic observer techniques), and the development and use of technology to reduce incidental catch and improve post-release survival rates for sea turtles;
10. Assist as practicable to compile and distribute information about commercially viable methods to reduce or prevent cetacean interactions in longline and gillnet fisheries for tuna and tuna-like species;
11. Work with RFMOs, governments, and other interested parties to use all available organizational resources to ensure that the best scientific information available is widely disseminated and usable to support ecosystem-based management and to minimize the potential for regulatory actions that are based on biased and unscientific assertions accusations that attack environmentally responsible tuna fisheries;
12. Support actions to ensure full and fair compliance with conservation and management measures adopted at local, national and regional levels to maintain sustainable fisheries and protect sensitive species, including requirements for parties and cooperating non-parties to RFMOs to report on their actions to implement RFMO recommendations and on the results of their investigations and prosecutions of violations of those measures by fishers from those parties and cooperating non-parties;

We will transmit this declaration to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and relevant RFMOs for their consideration, and we will request that Governments, including the Governments of Japan, Central and South American countries, the United States, and the European Union support fishers worldwide to implement this declaration.