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Press Release –Independent Adjudicator’s Ruling on MSC Certified PNA Tuna Fishery

PNA and Tokelau welcome the decision of the MSC Independent Adjudicator, in respect of the Objection raised against the application, by PNA, to extend the scope of the MSC certification of the PNA tuna fishery to include bigeye tuna and fishing on FADs. The proposed extension of the MSC certification is a hugely important initiative by PNA that would see another 300,000 tonnes of tuna certified as sustainably taken for supply to global markets. This increase would have large implications on many families, business and communities engaged in supplying MSC certified sustainably harvested tunas, and it is important that the process is seen to be scrupulously fair. PNA supports the view of the MSC that the *“outcome demonstrates the checks and balances in place to ensure the rigor of MSC certification within the dynamic and complex context of fisheries management.”*

The Adjudicator has found that the application falls short on two of the 14 elements of the MSC standards raised in the Objection:

- i) The first is that the certification process has not been able to show that the WCPFC has in place a commitment to introduce harvest control rules before WCPO tropical bigeye tuna stocks decline below B_{MSY} . This is required by the MSC if HCRs are not in place. There is some complexity with this issue because around 30 other WCPO tuna fisheries have been found by various Certification Assessment Bodies to meet this requirement, and those involved will need to work together to respond to this finding.
- ii) The second issue relates to whether the PNA fishery complies with the non-entangling FAD requirements in CMM 2018-06, where the Independent Adjudicator noted that there may be compliance, and there may not be, but a lot of the information provided to substantiate compliance was not admissible for consideration in the hearing. In future, the strengthening of the PNA FAD Buoy Tracking Programme, the introduction of the new PNA FAD Logsheet and associated reform of the role of observers in monitoring FAD requirements, will see PNA uniquely placed globally to improve performance in this area.

At this stage, the Decision won’t affect the supply of MSC tuna from PNA waters to consumers who value the high standards of PNA tuna management. Those consumers will still have access to over 600,000 tonnes of high quality sustainably caught skipjack and yellowfin catch that can be provided from PNA MSC certified free school fishery. The Decision will mean a delay in expanding that supply to cover catches from FAD associated schools and bigeye while the necessary adjustments are made by the WCPFC and PNA to address the issues raised by the decision.