



INFOFISH speaks to ... **DR MANUMATAVAI TUPOU-ROOSEN**

Director General, Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) Solomon Islands

Q Upon taking up your position as the Director General of the FFA in 2018 (and it should also be noted, the first woman to be appointed in that capacity), you had listed that the critical priorities are: regional solidarity; maximise economic and social benefits through the sustainable use of offshore fisheries resources; and to combat IUU fishing. How is the FFA working with regional and sub-regional Pacific bodies such as the WCPFC, PNA, Pacific Community (SPC) to achieve these aims? In which areas do you see the most progress, and conversely, what is the FFA hoping to see in terms of greater cooperation for mutual benefit?

A FFA's vision is "Our People enjoying the greatest possible social and economic benefits from the sustainable use of offshore fisheries resources". This vision places Our People at the centre of our work. In order to achieve our vision, I am a firm believer in the power of cooperation. It is the cornerstone of FFA's success over more than 40 years. And with cooperation, it starts from our Members but also includes cooperation with partners and stakeholders.

In particular, the FFA Secretariat works closely with partners such as PNA, the South Pacific Group (SPG - a recently formed sub-regional grouping around the South Pacific albacore) and SPC to ensure that we can all support our Members in achieving our vision. One of FFA's key services to Members is to provide a forum for regional dialogue and negotiations to develop shared regional positions and build solidarity. One such meeting is the current Management Options Consultations in Honiara where all of our Members, with support from FFA, PNA, SPG and SPC, are working together to finalise preparations for the upcoming WCPFC meeting. It is the leadership of FFA Members that has continued to drive the adoption and implementation of key measures at the WCPFC. We are also very pleased about the close work with the WCPFC under the strong leadership of Executive Director Ms Rhea Moss-Christian and the Chair Dr Josie Tamate.

Since FFA's inception, much focus and progress has been related to the goal in our vision on maximising economic benefits, including through the protection of our resources from illegal fishing. Over recent years, what has been most pleasing is the elevation of work needed for the twin goal of maximising social benefits and the associated investments needed to achieve this. This highlights the human side of our work and includes work on improving labour conditions on vessels, ensuring the safety and welfare of observers, economic empowerment of women in the sector and food security.

Q In recent years, FFA and PNA have called for the support of distant water fishing nations who are also members of the WCPFC, to work transparently towards eliminating IUU fishing in the waters of the Pacific. What are some of the most important ongoing and forthcoming initiatives undertaken by the FFA that address this issue?

A Over more than 40 years, FFA Members have developed a world-class, regional Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) framework for combating IUU fishing. This integrated framework involves a range of valuable tools such as the Vessel Monitoring System (VMS); IUU risk assessment through the Regional Surveillance Picture; regional surveillance operations; Aerial Surveillance Programme and cooperative surveillance amongst the Members and our Quadrilateral Partners, namely Australia, New Zealand, France and the United States. This framework provides important coordinated support to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing and ensure compliance with Members' laws, including the WCPFC conservation and management measures.

The FFA Secretariat facilitates the use of these MCS tools as well as provides technical and policy support to strengthen national capacity and regional solidarity to combat IUU fishing. This work is guided by the FFA Regional Monitoring, Control and Surveillance Strategy. In recognition of this highly-effective integrated MCS framework, the International MCS Network awarded the FFA the 'Stop IUU Fishing' award in 2018. We are also very pleased about the recent and well-deserved recognition to the Republic of Marshall Islands, under the leadership of MIMRA Director Glen Joseph, for their Port-State Measures work in Majuro.

One of FFA's exciting initiatives is the Persons of Interest (POI) project which involves the collection, analysis and sharing of information of persons involved in IUU fishing. A lot of the data collected and used is based on vessels including non-compliance history, for example, IUU Lists of Vessels. However, it is persons (both people and companies) that operate and control vessels and ultimately determine if they are used for illegal means. I strongly believe that this POI work will significantly bolster the MCS framework by targeting the actual perpetrators of IUU fishing.

Q How does the FFA work with other countries in the Pacific such as New Zealand and Australia? For example, there is a partnership agreement between Australia and the FFA until 2028 where the focus areas are cooperation in fisheries, development and security. Similarly, New Zealand has an agreement with the FFA that aims to increase employment and boost economic returns from the Pacific's offshore fisheries. Could you highlight several areas in which these agreements have led to significant progress for the Pacific Islands? How have Australia and New Zealand benefited from the agreements?


A At the outset, we acknowledge and are grateful for the steadfast and valuable support of our Members Australia and New Zealand who are our two largest donors. These funds contribute significantly to the core work of FFA across the whole range of Members' priorities, including combating IUU fishing; supporting more effective management of the South Pacific albacore fishery to increase food


and economic security; increasing employment that is safe and secure; and increasing returns from fisheries.

Specific examples include:

- enhancing port-State measures (PSM) and ensuring a functioning catch documentation scheme through the development of a Regional PSM Framework and a regional CDS Framework enabling increased traceability of tuna and enhancing market access; as well as ongoing work on the regional electronic system development;
- support for our work with SPC to provide substantive technical information and advice to FFA Members on the status of the South Pacific albacore resources; the fisheries that harvest South Pacific albacore; and biological and economic issues associated with the assessment of options for high-seas and zone-based management;
- progress on integrating electronic reporting (ER) to national and regional information management systems;
- gender development to increase the participation of women in tuna fisheries;
- investment appraisal and facilitation which involves supporting Members with infrastructure development, policy development, and capacity building on finance and corporate governance;
- developing private sector small- and medium-enterprises;
- ensuring market access compliance for exports to key markets in the EU, USA, and other regions;
- enhancing regional information-sharing and cooperation;
- supporting risk-responsive tasking of assets;
- increasing the capacity of Pacific Island Countries (PICs) to undertake enforcement operations and regional monitoring control and surveillance strategy activities to combat IUU; and
- the Aerial Surveillance Program initiated and managed by the Agency to provide aerial surveillance for the 15 FFA Pacific Island Members.


New Zealand and Australia are an integral part of our Pacific Membership and a fundamental development partner for FFA. The mutual benefits that accrue to our region, including New Zealand and Australia, include the continuing safety and security (both economically and socially) of our people. For the FFA, the successes we have achieved, including having the healthiest stocks of tuna in the world, has emanated from the regional solidarity of our Members, including NZ and Australia.


 *“Security cooperation in the Pacific Islands can be described as a patchwork of bilateral and multilateral, formal and informal agencies, agreements, and arrangements, across local, national, regional and international levels”. Would you agree with this statement? What are the advantages and disadvantages of this approach?*

 I agree with this statement. Another way to frame this concept is as a patchwork of cooperation which has been built over several decades - each playing its own role in the security of our valuable fisheries

resources. Combating Illegal fishing is central to ensuring that our People can continue to maximise their returns from these resources. In recent years, we have worked together with related agencies including the Pacific Transnational Crime Coordination Centre and Oceania Customs Organisations during regional surveillance operations, noting the value-add of working jointly, for example when aircraft or vessels are searching for illegal fishing they may also identify and share information for broader law enforcement purposes.

I can only see advantages to this, in particular, all the benefits that come with working together. We therefore look forward to the review of the regional security architecture and to seeing how best we can work together for the enhanced security of the region.

 *As a final question, and not forgetting the most important component in Pacific tuna fisheries: people and communities. How does the FFA work to ensure food security and protection of the livelihoods of Pacific Islanders from threats such as warming seas, low prices paid to fishers for the raw materials, and illegal commercial fishing in coastal zones?*

 Climate change is an existential threat to all Pacific Island Countries. Our Leaders have stated that it is the greatest threat to the security and well-being of our Pacific People. In our tuna fisheries contexts, it places at great risk the current benefits to our Small Island Developing States. The latest science shows that under the current GHG emission scenario, it is expected that there will be substantial changes in the abundance and distributions of skipjack, yellowfin and bigeye tunas within the Pacific Ocean Basin, with predicted shifts in biomass from the Western and Central Pacific Ocean toward the Eastern Pacific Ocean, and from areas under national jurisdiction to the high seas. In addition, the impact of climate change on bycatch species has implications for food security given the importance of edible bycatch as a protein source to most of the communities in Pacific Island Countries.

Given the all-encompassing and complex nature of climate change, our collective effort is required to prepare and respond to those threats by taking a proactive approach to managing the potential risks, increasing the resilience of offshore fisheries, and ensuring associated benefits for the people who depend on them. This should be undertaken, maintaining a good understanding of the broader connected impacts of climate change in the region and the associated economic, social, security and environmental implications.

The FFA is taking concrete steps to address climate change impacts in our fisheries, and we are pleased to advise that our FFA Ministers adopted an FFA Climate Change Strategy in August of this year. This Strategy will guide us in our collective effort to increase our resilience to climate change, including strengthening our efforts and commitment to managing our offshore fisheries in an ecologically sustainable manner; as well as advocate for climate action through stronger cooperation and engagement in the broader international community. We also look forward to FFA participating at this year's UNFCCC-COP28 and elevating, from a fisheries lens, the effects of climate change on fisheries.