



Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture
Male', Maldives

No: 30-D2/MIS/2009/1529

10th November, 2009

Mr. Alejandro Anganuzzi,
Executive Secretary,
Indian Ocean Tuna Commission,
Victoria, Seychelles.

Dear Sir,

Following the decision of the Fisheries Advisory Board dated (date), the government of Maldives, represented by the Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture, hereby reaffirms our continued commitment to take full membership of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) at the earliest. For this purpose we have set in motion the procedures for the ratification of the IOTC Convention.

However, the participation in IOTC as a full member has to be endorsed by the Parliament and we anticipate that this process would take time. Hence, for the time being, the government of Maldives would like Cooperating non-Contracting Party status in the IOTC as per the IOTC resolution 03/02.

Please find attached the Application for the Cooperating non-Contracting Party Status along with the necessary documents.

Awaiting your earliest response to this matter,

Regards,

Hussain Rasheed Hassan, PhD
Minister of State for Fisheries and Agriculture

Maldives' Confirmation of Commitment in Respect of the Commission's Conservation and Management Measures

We wish to apply for Cooperating non-Contracting Party Status and submit hereunder the following:

(a) Statement of commitment to respect the Commission's conservation and management measures.

We wish to confirm that the Maldives is committed to uphold and enforce the Commission's conservation and management measures. The government of Maldives believes that we may not be able to manage the shared tuna stocks pertaining to our area without being an active member of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission. Even though, Maldives has not been a full member to date, we have been an active member of the Scientific Committee of IOTC and have fulfilled the data requirements in compliance to the relevant IOTC resolutions.

The Maldives is an active member of Bay of Bengal Programme-Inter governmental Organisation (BOBP-IGO), the South West Indian Ocean Fisheries Commission (SWIOFC), INFOFISH and OIE. The Maldives has also been an active member of the Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem Project (BOBLME). The Maldives was an active member of the Indo-Pacific Tuna Development Programme (IPTP).

The Maldives is party to the United Nations Conventions on Law of the Sea (1982), Agreement relating to the implementation of part XI of the United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea of 28th July 1994 and agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Conventions on the Law of the Sea of 10th December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks.

Also,

The Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture's Licensing and Regulation Unit is setting up the administrative framework necessary to issue licenses for the fishing fleet, fish processors and aquaculture farms. These licenses would be issued in accordance to the relevant national laws and regulations and international instruments, including the European Unions' regulation to prevent, deter and eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing. The Licensing and Regulation Unit already maintains registers for fishing vessel register, fish processors and aquaculture farms.

The Fisheries Management Unit of the Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture is responsible for the development of management plans for commercially exploited fish stocks and the Unit also monitors the state of the fisheries for the benefit of present and future generations.



(b) Measures taken to ensure compliance by our vessels

The Maldivian fishing fleet at the moment operates within the coastal fishery zone (within 75 miles). The local fishing fleet has dual registration status under the national laws and regulations. The ministry Licensing and Regulations Unit maintains a complete record of all fishing vessels. The vessels are also registered as sea going vessels with the ministry of Transport as per transport regulations. The Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture is currently amending the existing Fisheries Regulations in order to attain legal powers to issue fishing licenses. Once the proposed revisions to the regulation are approved by the Parliamentary Committee on Rules and Regulations, the Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture would be empowered to issue relevant licenses for fishing vessels. Under the amended regulations, fishing vessels would have to apply for fishing licenses. The licenses would be issued for a given fishery for a given time period

At present, there are 32 foreign vessels operating in the offshore fishery zone of the EEZ (beyond 75 miles) under fixed term licenses. It is prohibitively difficult for the government to effectively monitor and control the activities of these foreign fishing vessels. For this reason the government of Maldives has decided not to renew these licenses or issue new licenses beyond April, 2010. Ministry of Economic Development issues licenses for the vessels operating in the EEZ. These vessels have to be operated by a local company in order to gain license to operate in the Maldives EEZ.

At the moment, none of the vessels in the Maldivian fishing fleet operates in the high seas;

- **Vessel Monitoring System (VMS)**
Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture in collaboration with the World Bank has started a pilot program to initiate a Vessel Monitoring System in the Maldives. Based on the results of the programme, the government plans to implement a VMS for all fishing vessels in the Maldives in collaboration with the Maldives National Defense Force – Coast Guard..
- **Catch and Effort Reporting**
Fishing vessel owners are required to submit data on fishing operations through logbooks provided by the Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture. The information collected through log books include, time spent in fishing operations, bait used, location of bait grounds, location of fishing grounds, details of catch by species, discards, details of catch sold to processors, etc.
- **Inspection Schemes and Compliance**
The government of Maldives is planning to recruit and deploy 30 Fisheries Enforcement Officers throughout the country. Their responsibilities include verification of information in log books, inspection of fishing vessels and supporting other relevant government organizations in enforcing the fisheries laws and regulations.

The Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture is confident that the actions we have taken and the results of the proposed measures demonstrate our commitment for the effective implementation of conservation and management measures relating to Indian Ocean tuna stocks.



Government of Maldives believes that tuna conservation and management measures are best addressed by encouraging the cooperation and compliance of as many fishing nations as possible. The Maldives being a major pole and line fishing nation in the Indian Ocean, the need for us to participate and contribute in the decisions taken by the IOTC is crucial.

We, therefore look to your support, by granting the Maldives the status of Cooperating non-Contracting Party.

Information provided to support the application

- a) *Data on historical fisheries in the IOTC Area*
Data already provided under the previous arrangements.
- b) *Data reported pertaining to IOTC resolutions and recommendations*
Data provided as attachments.
- c) *Evidence of Current fishing presence in the IOTC Area*
Data provided as attachments.
- d) *Research programs conducted in the IOTC area and results of the research*

The Marine Research Center (MRC) of the Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture has been collaborating with IOTC in tuna tagging programmes and providing tuna size data. Two small-scale tagging projects have been conducted recently in the Maldives as part of the large Indian Ocean Tuna Programme (IOTP). The first one in 2004 and the most recent in 2007. A total of 34,000 skipjack and yellowfin were tagged and released from mid 2007 to late 2009. Roughly 12% of the releases have been recovered so far. The recoveries from these tagging experiments are shared with the IOTC for joint tagging data analyses that provides important information on growth, movement, and most importantly interaction. These are critical information helping scientists to understand the stock dynamics and their regular exercise of stock assessment work.

During 2003-2005 the Japanese OFCF, through IOTC, supported the reviving of the Maldives Regional Tuna Sampling Programme. Following the termination of the OFCF assistance MRC has been maintaining 10 fishermen-field officers in the islands to sample their catch. These data have been regularly reported to the IOTC. Size data are used for generating the catch-at-size data, which is an important input for the stock assessment work.

IOTC has regularly invited Maldivian scientists to attend the technical meetings, most recent been the Working Party on Tropical Tuna and Working Party on By-catch held at Mombasa.

