



## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Fisheries Commission Executive Director in Majuro.**

*Majuro, Republic of Marshall Islands, 3 May 2006.* The Executive Director of the newly established Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission, Andrew Wright, completed a brief visit to Majuro today. Meetings were held with the President, the Hon. Kessai Note, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Hon. Gerald Zackios, the Minister for Resources and Development, the Hon. John Silk, the Chief Secretary, Mr Robert Muller and the Director of the Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority, Mr Glen Joesph. The main issues discussed were progress with establishing the Commission's Secretariat in Pohnpei, the relative roles of the Forum Fisheries Agency based in Honiara Solomon Islands and the Fisheries Commission in tuna resource conservation and management and current issues associated regional tuna industry.

Mr Wright said that on the basis of current information available from the Secretariat of the Pacific Community's Oceanic Fisheries Programme the 2005 catches of tuna from the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO) is likely to be similar to the record catches of 2004 when the total catch was just on 2 million tonnes. He noted that increasing catches since the late 1990's has led to concern about the capacity of WCPO tuna stocks to sustain recent levels of fishing activity and that the meeting of the Commission in December last year resolved to limit fishing effort in the purse seine fishery and restrict the catch of bigeye tuna taken in longline fisheries. He considered that, on the basis of provisional 2005 catch data, concern about regional yellowfin and bigeye stocks would continue to be an important matter for the Commission.

President Note welcomed the visit of Mr Wright. He said "I was very pleased to learn that the establishment of the Secretariat in Pohnpei is progressing well. It is great to see such an important international organization setting up its headquarters in Micronesia. We'll continue to offer all the support we can to assist in that effort".

Mr Wright also briefed officials on the importance of full engagement of Indonesia and Philippines in the Commission. He said that although current information is incomplete, the catch by Philippine and Indonesian fleets probably account for at least 25% of the total WCPO annual tuna harvest. He said that in order to adequately manage WCPO tuna it was imperative that more complete information from all Philippine and Indonesian fleets is made available to the Commission on regular schedule. He said additional work was also required to implement conservation and management measures adopted by the Commission throughout the range of tuna stocks in the region. *Ends.*