



## **MINISTRY OF FISHERIES & MARINE RESOURCES**

# **MINISTERIAL PRESS STATEMENT**

by

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MINISTER FOR FISHERIES AND MARINE RESOURCES**

## **HONIARA SUMMIT - PACIFIC ISLANDS EAST NEW BRITAIN INITIATIVE**

**Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA)  
Conference Center, Honiara, Solomon Islands  
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The Minister for Fisheries and Marine Resources, Honourable Jelta Wong, today addressed the gathering of Pacific Island Leaders at the East New Britain Initiative (ENBi) during the weeklong Honiara Summit. Minister Wong emphasized the vision behind ENBi as a collaborative platform aimed at enhancing coordination and cooperation among Pacific Island countries to advance our shared aspirations for sustainable tuna fisheries development.

“When discussing the retention of value from our region’s tuna catches, we are reminded of the many challenges facing Pacific Island nations,” Minister Wong said. “These challenges include inadequate infrastructure, unreliable utilities, high operational costs, limited skilled labor, and geographical remoteness from major markets.”

“These challenges will persist if we continue to operate independently, with each Pacific country pursuing tuna fishing and processing investments in isolation. ENBi seeks to shift this paradigm by promoting regional collaboration and leveraging our collective strengths.”

ENBi is founded on the belief that Pacific Island nations can achieve more by working together, leveraging each country's unique strengths to overcome shared challenges. This approach creates opportunities to develop robust business cases that can be pursued with distant water fishing nations, leading fish trading companies, or forward-thinking investors.

Minister Wong emphasized that stakeholders recognize the immense value Pacific nations bring as custodians of some of the world's best-managed tuna resources. ENBi serves as a platform for Pacific Island countries to identify strategic entry points, form alliances, and actively participate in commercial tuna ventures and supporting industries.

"The essence of our Pacific way of life is at stake if we allow ourselves to be controlled by external forces dictating global prices," Minister Wong added. "We are the rightful stewards of our resources.

It is imperative that we unite as a cohesive region, rather than allowing ourselves to be picked off one by one. We must cultivate a narrative that reflects our collective identity, with ENBi as our vital connection."

"The so-called civilized nations that seek to guide our lives often overlook our rich traditions and cultures, offering misleading aid to maintain their relevance while their foreign policies aim to suppress us. Fellow Pacific Islanders, this is our moment to stand together. Just as the tuna roam freely in our waters, we must recognize our power and potential."

He further quoted Lao Tzu, who teaches us: "Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day; teach him to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime." In our context, if we retain our fish within our region and process it ourselves, we will secure revenue for generations to come.

"Now, more than ever, we can take decisive action amidst global tensions. We must develop strategies that empower us and safeguard our future. Let us no longer be passive observers. It is time for us to enact meaningful change. No one understands the Pacific better than we do, and the responsibility to shape our destiny lies solely in our hands. Together, we will forge a brighter future for ourselves and generations to come."

Minister Wong stressed that, “despite the vital role Pacific nations play in sustainably managing tuna fisheries, these efforts remain largely unrecognized in global markets. Our investments in vessel monitoring systems, Observer Programs, and monitoring are integral to responsible fisheries management. But who benefits from these investments and management plans? Is it us?”

Minister Wong is hopeful that one day the ENBi logo will be on canned tuna products, signaling to customers that the benefits derived from the catch, processing, and sale of these products are shared by multiple Pacific Island countries. To realize this, it is imperative that all Pacific nations work with eco-label organizations and internationally recognized NGOs to amplify our message.

Minister Wong pointed to the Republic of the Marshall Islands’ Pacific Island Tuna project with Walmart as a prime example of what can be achieved. This project disrupts existing supply chains by aggregating MSC-certified tuna through dockside offloading and freighting to tuna processors for Walmart. He expressed his satisfaction that the Republic of the Marshall Islands intends to scale this opportunity through partnerships with the Federated States of Micronesia, Papua New Guinea, and potentially other Pacific countries. This is what ENBi is all about.

“Papua New Guinea aims to position itself as a regional tuna processing hub, similar to several other Pacific countries. PNG operates six processing plants, with a combined designed daily processing capacity of over 1,000 metric tonnes,” said Minister Wong. “While this is an achievement, we recognize the need for continued improvement, particularly in implementing policies that support investment, industry expansion, and operational efficiency.”

“We are working on securing fiscal incentives and developing Fisheries Special Economic Zones to attract investment from other Pacific countries and their respective partners. I know we’ve been discussing this for over a decade, but I am confident that ENBi can be the catalyst, and the participation of other countries can be the key to finally realizing this concept.”

Papua New Guinea is committed to the success of ENBi. In the first quarter of 2024, we allocated US\$500,000 to the Forum Fisheries

Agency to fund the ENBi program and activities, recognizing the potential it holds for all Pacific countries. ENBi not only focuses on hubs and spokes and the retention of tuna value in the region, but also on the establishment of a Regional Fisheries Development Fund, which will benefit all Pacific Island nations.

“I am pleased to note that progress has been made to begin this work, with the support of our development partner, the European Union. I encourage the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) to work jointly with the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat in formulating the Regional Fisheries Development Fund,” Minister Wong added. “I also want to extend my thanks to all development partners who are supporting Pacific countries in funding activities under the ENBi work plan.”

Minister Wong drew attention to the Outcome Document of the 2024 Forum Economic Ministers Meeting, particularly Outcome 22 (viii), which states, “The secretariat is urged to explore the convening of a working group on fisheries development involving Forum Economic Ministers and Forum Fisheries Committee Members to explore innovative ways to increase economic benefits from fisheries revenue, especially through greater participation in the global fisheries value chain and diversification of revenues in collaboration with the East New Britain Initiative underway.”

Minister Wong acknowledged and thanked his colleague from New Zealand, who introduced the ENBi agenda at the Forum Economic Ministers Meeting. He encouraged FFA, stating: “Let’s get this Economic/Fisheries working group established and report on our progress at the upcoming FFC Meeting in Niue. ENBi is not just about fish; it’s about economic empowerment, labor mobility, regional migration, social justice, gender equality, and regional consolidation.

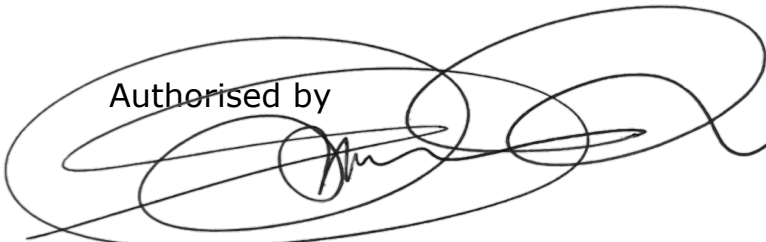
In closing, Minister Wong highlighted that “ENBi has received strong endorsement from FFC Ministers and Pacific Islands Forum Leaders, reflecting its significance for our region.”

“I therefore urge each of us to actively engage with ENBi’s initiatives and collaborate with your colleagues and the ENBi Working Group. As Gandhi famously said, ‘All good thoughts and ideas mean nothing without action.’”

“Together, we can realize the vision of maximizing the value of our region’s tuna resources for the benefit of all Pacific nations. Our Pacific Islands Forum family represents 18 Large Ocean States, each with dreams and aspirations for economic empowerment. These 18 large Ocean states represent over 10% of the UN family.”

He concluded by quoting the Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum: “We are at the center of strategic geopolitical interest. We own the strategic potential of our collective, and together, we reaffirm that we act from a position of strength. We must not forget this.”

Authorised by



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