A RESOLUTION

APIL Resolution No. 35-GA-18

“Recognizing the threats posed to coastal communities and their fisheries by large-scale industrial commercial harvesting of wild sea cucumbers and calling for the prohibition of large-scale commercial harvesting of wild sea cucumbers across the Pacific.”

WHEREAS, sea cucumber populations across the Pacific and elsewhere have been decimated by large-scale commercial harvesting; and

WHEREAS, for the past few years, including this year for the first time, planned mass harvesting is happening in Pohnpei and Hawaii, a trend that has also occurred in other APIL member jurisdictions; and

WHEREAS, Pohnpei and Hawaii, like other protected fisheries in the Pacific, are the target for commercial interests, especially for traders willing to take extraordinary measures in order to get supplies; and

WHEREAS, a shortage of sea cucumbers worldwide has created escalating demands for these products, and since seventy percent of the Pacific fisheries are closed to the harvesting of sea cucumbers, the APIL understands why traders will not overlook its member jurisdictions; and

WHEREAS, the high demand and lucrative prices, combined with overstrained fishery management controls contribute to the spiraling decline of sea cucumber populations worldwide; and

WHEREAS, according to the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), “many species remain unknown to science; for example, one commercially important species,
Hairy greyfish – Actinopyga, present only in Yap, Palau, and recently recorded in Pohnpei is yet to be identified. Limited knowledge is complicated by the variation in the naming systems (trade, scientific, and local names) used, where they live and the best way to assess them. Without underwater information, catch and export information are important; however, these are rarely collected. The challenge for Pacific island fisheries agencies is simply lack of a stronger management and monitoring system which stems from limited knowledge of these species, the same situation being faced by other FSM States;” and

WHEREAS, sea cucumbers play a vital role in the ocean ecosystem and food chain of near-shore fisheries, which are of paramount importance for food security, health and income of coastal Pacific populations; and

WHEREAS, as Pacific leaders, the members of the APIL urgently need to understand the impact of removing sea cucumbers and other invertebrates on the health and resilience of our reefs at a time when our reefs face an uncertain future due to climate change, persistent and unsustainable harvests, and other events and activities that contribute to the decline of coastal fisheries; and

WHEREAS, any effective protection and conservation of sea cucumbers across the Pacific requires a joint and concerted effort through the development of complementary policies and legislation; and

WHEREAS, the legislative leaders at the APIL represent the people of the Pacific, as members of our local communities, in recognizing the threat imposed on communities and our coastal resources by any large-scale harvesting of sea cucumbers; and
WHEREAS, in our role as legislative leaders, the APIL has supported conservation and management efforts in the fisheries sector due to the need to ensure the sustainable utilization of both pelagic and coastal resources; and

WHEREAS, it is the salient responsibility of the members of the APIL of the various islands of the Pacific to help advance legislation that will serve to conserve, protect and preserve the cultures, traditions, and livelihoods of the people of the Pacific now and for future generations; now, therefore, 

BE IT RESOLVED by the Association of Pacific Island Legislatures, 35th General Assembly, Island of Guam, June 1-3, 2016, that this Assembly does hereby recognize the threats posed to coastal communities and their fisheries by large-scale industrial commercial harvesting of wild sea cucumbers, and calls for the prohibition of large-scale commercial harvesting of wild sea cucumbers across the Pacific; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the APIL President shall certify and the APIL Secretary shall attest to the adoption hereof, and that copies of the same shall be transmitted to the Chief Executives and the Legislative Presiding Officers of the respective National, State and Municipal governments and the Traditional Leaders of each member jurisdiction of the Association of the Pacific Islands Legislatures.

DULY AND REGULARLY ADOPTED ON THE 3RD DAY OF JUNE, 2016.

KENNETH A. KEDI  
PRESIDENT

FERNANDO SCALIEM  
SECRETARY