APIL Resolution No. 35-GA-19

“Requesting the Board of Directors of the Association of Pacific Island Legislatures to establish a Standing Committee to address illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, including the enforcement and implementation of shark sanctuaries in the region.”

WHEREAS, the health of the Pacific islands’ ocean ecosystems and the sustainability of its resources, specifically its fisheries, is critical ecologically, economically, and culturally to the region; and

WHEREAS, illegal fishing deprives coastal communities of jobs and income, harms the environment, and undermines the accuracy of stock assessments and efforts to sustainably manage fisheries, and

WHEREAS, across the Pacific, vessels landed 3.5 million metric tons of tuna in 2014, and fishermen were paid nearly 6.2 billion dollars (U.S.) for it; and

WHEREAS, this product went on to generate approximately 28.5 billion dollars (U.S.) at supermarkets and restaurants around the world; and

WHEREAS, it is the sense of the APIL that protecting that wealth is a matter of regional security; and

WHEREAS, a study by the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) revealed illegal fishing by licensed fleets is costing Pacific nations more than 600 million dollars (U.S.) per year; and

WHEREAS, the Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA), an international treaty intended to prevent vessels that fish illegally from landing their catch through harmonized port controls, information sharing, and regional cooperation, will enter into force on June 5, 2016; and

WHEREAS, the PSMA is a highly cost-effective means to control illegal fishing; and

WHEREAS, certain fish populations, specifically sharks, which are both targeted and caught as a bycatch, are threatened by overfishing due to the global demand for shark fins, the primary driver of the shark populations decline worldwide; and
WHEREAS, because sharks grow slowly, are late to mature, and produce few young, they are intrinsically vulnerable to overfishing; and

WHEREAS, the loss of sharks can result in a cascade of indirect effects due to changes in the abundance of other organisms; and

WHEREAS, the APIL, recognizing the important role sharks play in the region’s waters, passed Resolution No. 53-BOD-04; Resolution No. 32-GA-08, CD1; Resolution No. 30-GA-03, CD1; and Resolution No. 55-BOD-10 over the course of the previous five years; and

WHEREAS, leaders in the Pacific have fulfilled their commitment to Resolution No. 30-GA-03, CD1 by completing the establishment of the Micronesia Regional Shark Sanctuary in 2015, which includes the jurisdictions of the Federated States of Micronesia and its four states of Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei and Yap; State of Hawaii; American Samoa; Republic of Palau; the Republic of the Marshall Islands; the Republic of Kiribati; the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and the U.S. Island of Guam; and

WHEREAS, to ensure the shark protections implemented through the establishment of the Micronesia Regional Shark Sanctuary are effectively enforced, representatives from nine jurisdictions held a two day workshop in Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia, on April 6 and 7, 2016, to identify various tools and mechanisms to improve communication and collaboration on enforcement of the regional sanctuary, and to discuss larger fisheries management challenges, including illegal, unreported, and unregulated vessels; and

WHEREAS, understanding the challenges associated with ensuring enforcement is effective across the entire region, workshop participants strongly agreed that creating a Standing Committee of the APIL will guarantee progress to safeguard the Pacific islands’ fisheries is continued into the future; and

WHEREAS, Article VI of the by-laws of the APIL further provides that “The Board of Directors may, from time to time, appoint standing or special committees, or task forces, as it may deem advisable and shall provide for their powers and duties”; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED that the Association of Pacific Island Legislatures 35th General Assembly, island of Guam, June 1-3, 2016, does request the President of the APIL to place on the agenda of the next meeting of the APIL Board of Directors a copy of this Resolution conveying the sense of the 35th General Assembly that the APIL should formally establish and maintain a Standing Committee to address illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing, including the enforcement and implementation of shark sanctuaries in the region; and
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that in preparation for the next Board meeting, the President of the APIL is requested to join together an interim working group of interested individuals of each delegation from within the APIL to prepare a prospectus for the Board of Directors on the opportunities and challenges which will confront this new committee upon its establishment; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the APIL President certify and the APIL Secretary attest to the adoption hereof, and that copies of the same be transmitted to each member of the APIL Board of Directors; and to the Presiding Legislative Officers of each member jurisdiction of the Association of Pacific Island Legislatures.

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

KENNETH A. KEDI
PRESIDENT

FERNANDO SCALIEM
SECRETARY