



## **CNMI Statement on Skipjack Target Reference Point**

Madam Chair, thank you for allowing me to me to make this intervention and give a few comments on the proposed Target Reference Point for skipjack, which we broadly support in concept.

Like our neighbor, Guam, skipjack is the principal commercial fish landed in the CNMI, accounting for over 60% of pelagic fish landings. Again like Guam, we do not have a large scale industrial tuna fishery but rely on coastal troll fishing for our tuna. We did, however, benefit in the late 1980s from a Guam-based purse seine operation which had a cold store and transshipment facility on Tinian, and fished to the south of the Mariana Islands.

Studies by the SPC have indicated that the US EEZ around the Mariana Archipelago contains a considerable skipjack resource, with an average spawning biomass in excess of 80,000 metric tonnes. Japanese pole and line vessels operating in the 1930s used to catch up to 3,700 metric tonnes, over ten times the current combined annual catches from Guam and CNMI.

Like the SIDs, the CNMI has a narrow economic base and sees fisheries as an area that could be expanded. Thus we are interested in the implications to fisheries development in the CNMI from the skipjack Target Reference Point, and also request further evaluation of the spatial impacts to the skipjack resource.

Thank you Madam Chair

Statement made by Richard Seman

Secretary of the Department of Land and Natural Resources