

**United States Department of State***Bureau of Oceans and International
Environmental and Scientific Affairs**Washington, D.C. 20520*

December 4, 2023

Dear Council Members and Staff,

I have a few quick updates for you below. I also plan to join virtually to deliver remarks on December 12.

Assistance to the Pacific Islands

At the U.S.-Pacific Islands Forum Summit meeting at the White House on September 25, President Biden renewed our commitment to enhancing our partnership with the Pacific Islands, and the respective governments, to achieve our shared vision for a resilient Pacific region of peace, harmony, security, social inclusion, and prosperity, where individuals can reach their potential, the environment can thrive, and democracy can flourish. Last year, the Biden-Harris Administration released the first ever U.S. Pacific Partnership Strategy with an ambitious slate of initiatives to achieve this vision and meet Pacific priorities including announcing plans to provide over \$810 million in new assistance. And in May, Secretary Blinken highlighted our commitment to working with Congress for over \$7.2 billion in new funding and programs for the Pacific Islands region. You can read more about these and other more recent commitments here: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/09/25/fact-sheet-enhancing-the-u-s-pacific-islands-partnership/>

South Pacific Tuna Treaty

We had a good meeting on the treaty with the Pacific Island Parties (PIPs) and we continue to make progress on terms of access for 2024 and beyond. The United States and the PIPs are committed to conclude negotiations by 2024. We plan to have another meeting soon.

United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Sustainable Fisheries Resolution

The annual negotiation of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Sustainable Fisheries Resolution was held November 7 to 14 in New York. The United States priorities included elevating discussions on climate change in fisheries, combating IUU fishing, increased labor protections in the fisheries sector, advancing marine mammal bycatch guidelines, recognizing the roles of and supporting participation by women,

Indigenous Peoples and local communities in fisheries, and recognizing the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization's (NAFO) determination that their conservation and management measures are other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs).

Commissioner Appointments

Mr. Dang's alternate appointment for WCPFC was formally approved on June 27, 2023, and this was communicated to him by the Department of State. This is in line with standard practice. Currently four of the five Commissioners for WCPFC are filled by Alternate United States Commissioners, each awaiting a Presidential appointment and endowed with all the powers of a Presidentially approved Commissioner. Regarding Mr. Soliai, his SPRFMO Commissioner appointment package is in the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs (OES) front office pending action to send it up to the Secretary of State for transmittal to the White House. I am unaware of any changes or developments as between State/OES and Commerce/NOAA leadership since I last briefed the Council on this matter.

Sincerely,

C. Colin Brinkman
Office of Marine Conservation