



NATIONAL FISHERIES AUTHORITY

“Effectively Managing our Fisheries and Marine Resources
For Sustainable and Equitable Benefits”



Telephone: (675) 3090444
Facsimile: (675) 3202061
Email: nfa@fisheries.gov.pg
Website: www.fisheries.gov.pg

NEWS RELEASE

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PNG brings East New Britain initiative to 133rd FFC Officials meeting in Nauru

NAURU: Papua New Guinea is taking a leading role at the 133rd Forum Fisheries Committee (FFC) Annual Officials Meeting (FFC133) in Nauru, focusing on advancing sustainable fisheries management and economic development through the East New Britain Initiative (ENBi).

The FFC133 is currently underway in Nauru this week, with the annual gathering of fisheries officials from FFA's 17 Members to deliberate ways forward for the Pacific fisheries sector.

The ENBi was among a weeklong set of agendas presented before the FFC133 this week.

Justin Ilakini, Managing Director of PNG's National Fisheries Authority (NFA), is leading the PNG delegation in Nauru and was instrumental in the formation of the ENBi and the East New Britain Initiative Working Group (EWG).

The initiative was officially launched at the 23rd Special FFC Ministerial meeting in Kokopo, East New Britain Province in September 2023. It aims to enhance and maximize the economic benefits of tuna fisheries by developing regional processing hubs, spokes, and other value-addition initiatives, as well as establishing a regional fisheries development fund for FFA Members, whilst aligning with the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' vision in the 2050 Strategy.

The NFA on behalf of the Government of Papua New Guinea has also signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for a Grant funding for the ENBi initiative with the FFA Secretariat on the 12th of April 2024.

Ilakini explained that PNG provided funding of around half a million US dollars to kickstart the activities under the Workplan of the East New Britain Initiative Working Committee (EWG).

The NFA Managing Director emphasized the importance of this funding in speeding up the implementation process, ensuring that they do not delay further in putting the MOA into action with the funds now available.

He said this proactive approach is intended to encourage other development partners to join the initiative, with Japan already showing interest by allocating funds during the recent meeting of the Japan Promotion Fund Committee.

Ilakini discussed the broader objectives of the ENBi, noting the importance of identifying the most feasible entry points in the global value chain of tuna for the Pacific.

"This initiative is to provide a platform for membership to discuss innovative and inclusive investment pathways. For the past many years, we've been working at developing and strengthening our fisheries management regimes for the sustainability of the tuna resources. We must move away from just collecting resource rents and position our people to earn a greater share of the value of our tuna resources... It is important for us as a region, as the FFC membership, or as a FFA family, to really identify where in the global value chain of tuna we can find our most feasible entry point," Ilakini elaborated.

Ilakini further detailed national priorities, highlighting the signing of their Country Partnership Agreement which prioritizes PNG's needs as a member country to work with the FFA Secretariat in implementing some of their national priorities.

He expressed satisfaction with having signed two significant agreements that will enable PNG to be part of the broader regional initiatives rolled out by the FFA Secretariat.

On specific initiatives, Ilakini highlighted FFA's assistance on information management.

"One of the important pieces of work we will be seeking FFA assistance in would be the information management strategy.

"We would like to come up with an Information Management Policy that will help us manage our data and information properly. This aligns with our National ICT transformation exercise that we are rolling out."

Vision for the Future: A Multi-Sectoral Approach

Ilakini's vision involves considering sectors beyond fisheries to achieve economic aspirations using tuna resources.

"We have to also take into account other sectors that are not only confined to fisheries. We have to look out of the box and look at ways we can work together as a region to leverage our tuna resources to achieve our economic aspirations. This should help us achieve the economic aspiration of our leaders, clearly stipulated in the vision 2050 strategy of the Blue Pacific," he explained.

Reflecting on the need for a multi-sectoral development strategy, he added, "We want some of the work that we do within FFA to be multi-sectoral or cross-sectoral. For example, the 2050 strategy and the regional development strategy have been presented. We want to make sure that fisheries maintain that prominence in the region. This will require us to agree to innovation, inclusive and robust collaborative arrangements to further build on our unity, which remains our biggest strength."

Maintaining FFA's Strategic Relevance

Ilakini emphasized the importance of maintaining the FFA's strategic relevance.

"FFA has been a very important regional organization over the last 30 years in advancing the interests of our membership. We want to make sure that the FFA maintains its relevance. We are happy to see that important changes are happening in terms of making sure that the Secretariat becomes a professional organization."

As discussions at FFC133 nears its conclusion, PNG's focus on the ENBi is seen as an important approach to using fisheries resources to boost regional collaboration, enhance fisheries management, and integrate broader economic goals across the Pacific.

The outcomes from this week's discussions are anticipated to give way for further strategic initiatives at the upcoming FFC Ministerial Meeting set to be held in Nauru next month.

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