



NGO CALLS ON CANADA TO STAND AGAINST SUSTAINABILITY SECRECY IN THE PACIFIC

[Reykjavik, Iceland, 27 November 2024] - Calling for an end to the practice of conducting key fisheries sustainability meetings in private, NGO Accountability.Fish challenged Canadian Fisheries Minister Dianne Lebouthillier to move for their opening at the General Meeting of the Western & Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) currently underway in Fiji.

WCPFC is the only international body governing the world's tuna supply that currently conducts key parts of its compliance process behind closed doors.

Noting that Lebouthillier declined to respond to a request to confirm Canada's willingness to uphold key provisions of the UN Fish Stocks Agreement (UNFSA) to which it is a signatory, Accountability.Fish Global Director Ryan Orgera called on her to take a stand for accountability at this General Meeting.

"Canada is a country that talks a good game when it comes to the environment and sustainability. Minister Lebouthillier has a golden opportunity to make sure Canada finally walks that talk at the WCPFC General Meeting - to challenge WCPFC's secrecy practices and to put the members on the record about having WCPFC remain the world's only commission that governs tuna supplies to keep its key compliance processes secret," Orgera said.

Accountability.Fish, a global non-governmental organization dedicated to improving the transparency and accountability of Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs), has raised concerns for some time over the lack of transparency within the Western Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC).

On 9 September 2024, the organization sent letters to and publicly named 17 member states—including New Zealand—that refuse to allow observers into the full Technical and Compliance Committee (TCC) meeting where key sustainability data is reviewed and confirmed.

"Canada has a reputation as a country of laws with a commitment to international law. But its failure to stop WCPFC secrecy actually contradicts its treaty obligations. The Minister's lack of a response so far reflects cavalier attitude towards those obligations - something Canada should correct during the proceedings in Fiji," said Ryan Orgera, Accountability Fish's Global Director.

"Article 12 of the Agreement clearly stipulates that "States shall provide for transparency in the decision-making process and other activities of subregional and regional fisheries management organizations. Thanks in no small part to Canada's collusion, this is not yet the case in the WCPFC." Orgera added.



“Furthermore, the WCPFC’s actions are inconsistent with key international frameworks, including the Rio Declaration, the Aarhus Convention, the Almaty Guidelines, and the Escazú Convention, all of which call for the involvement of civil society in environmental decision-making processes.

“Canada” citizens need to understand the gap between the country’s reputation as a leader on environmental issues and international law and it’s actual behavior. It’s time to walk the talk Orgera concluded.

About Accountability.Fish

Accountability.Fish is an international non-governmental organization focused on enhancing transparency, accountability, and public participation in the governance of the world’s fisheries. Through its advocacy and outreach efforts, the organization seeks to ensure that decision-making processes in fisheries management bodies remain open and inclusive. It is funded by the Oceans Five Foundation.

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