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LETTER FROM LIBERIA TO THE CHAIR OF PANEL 1

The Convention of the United Nations on the Law of the Sea grants privilege to coastal States the sovereign rights to access its fisheries resources. Pursuant to this, Liberia as a developing coastal State is developing its fisheries resources for the betterment of its people.

In order to protect the equity of the State of Liberia and to maximize its potential to the benefit of the Republic of Liberia, the Government has decided to access its fishing potential.

In light of the above, Liberia has issued a provisional flag State status to two (2) tuna purse seiners on its domestic vessel registry and attracted investment to start operating by January 2020. Liberia is now conducting its due diligence process for issuance of permanent flag State status to the two purse seine vessels, after which the details of these vessels will be submitted to the Secretariat of ICCAT in accordance with Rec. 13-13.

Moreover, Liberia has strengthened its legal regime through the passage of the National Fisheries and Aquaculture Management and Development Law, ratification of the FAO Port State Agreement (PSMA) and EU Economic Partnership Agreement, adoption and implementation of the National Plan of Action for shark's conservation (NPOA-Sharks) and the National Plan of Action to deter and prevent Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported fishing activities (NPOA-IUU), among other interventions.

Having made these efforts to improve the Liberian economy that has suffered from a myriad of difficulties, our ongoing project which is aimed at developing our fishery sector will be undermined with the restrictions that are targeted at all ICCAT CPCs. We think that these restrictions should be targeted at countries that have developed their fleet and have had an unfettered advantage in this vital sector of the world's economy.

We deem it only fair that we are accorded our sovereign rights to exploit these resources without restrictions on freezing capacity. Therefore, we strongly recommend that paragraph 4bis in the Chair's proposal to replace Rec. 16-01 be deleted or modified to accommodate Liberia's two purse seine vessels and others as the opportunities arise.

In view of the aforementioned, we highly anticipate that our request will be granted.