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COUNCIL

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Margarita Lizárraga Medal

Executive summary

The Margarita Lizárraga Medal is awarded biennially to a person or organization that has served with distinction in the application of the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries by the Director-General upon proposal by the Council. The Selection Committee for the Margarita Lizárraga Medal 2024-2025, held on 11 July 2024, unanimously agreed that the Award be given to the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency based in the Solomon Islands.

Suggested action by the Council

The Council is invited to endorse the nomination of the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency and recommend that the Medal be presented by the Director-General at an award ceremony to be held during the 37th Session of the Committee on Fisheries in 2026.

Queries on the substantive content of this document may be addressed to:

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1. At its 29th Session in November 1997, the FAO Conference, by Resolution 18/97, instituted the Margarita Lizárraga Medal. The Medal is awarded biennially by the Director-General, upon a proposal of the Council, to a person or organization that has served with distinction in the application of the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (the Code). The Medal pays tribute to the late Dr Margarita Saucedo Lizárraga, Senior FAO Fishery Liaison Officer, for her decisive role in promoting the Code, for her work in the field of fisheries for almost 40 years, and for her strong commitment to fostering the promotion of the fisheries sector, especially in developing countries.
2. The Selection Committee for the award, composed of the Assistant Director-General (ADG)/Director of the Fisheries and Aquaculture Division (NFI), and the Bureau of the 36th Session of the Committee on Fisheries, was held on 11 July 2024. The meeting was chaired by the Deputy Director-General, representing the Director-General.
3. The Selection Committee reviewed the three nominations for the 2024-2025 biennium, shortlisted by the ad hoc Screening Committee (chaired by ADG/Director NFI) from a longer list of nominations, taking into consideration that the nominees must have demonstrated:
 - an outstanding, practical and hands-on contribution to the application of the Code;
 - tangible output;
 - results achieved were a sustained effort and not a one-off initiative; and
 - results achieved have the potential for a snowball/catalytic effect.
4. After assessing the nominees, and through a voting procedure, the Committee agreed that the 2024-2025 Award be given to the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), based in the Solomon Islands. FFA's 17 Pacific Island members are Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.
5. FFA was established in 1979 by the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders to help countries sustainably manage their fishery resources that fall within their 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zones, in anticipation of the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea in 1982. Since this time, FFA has championed coastal states' rights in the sustainable management of the region's valuable offshore fish stocks. Many FFA members depend principally on fisheries for their income generation, and the FFA Secretariat works closely with member countries to bring enhanced economic benefits, employment, food security and a better quality of life to all island communities.
6. Regional cooperative efforts of FFA members, supported by the FFA Secretariat, have achieved outcomes including:
 - a. multijurisdictional Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) tools, including:
 - i. the regional Vessel Monitoring System run by the Regional Monitoring Center in Honiara, with feeds into every FFA member country;
 - ii. coordinated regional surveillance operations using all the regionally available assets (plane and patrol vessels) plus the help of Australia, France, New Zealand, and the United States of America forces;
 - iii. the FFA Regional Register of Fishing Vessels list of vessels in good standing; and
 - iv. the Niue Treaty, which is an agreement about cooperation in MCS, including exchange of information;
 - b. Harmonized Minimum Terms and Conditions for Access by Fishing Vessels, which were recently amended to include labour conditions for crew;
 - c. a regional observer programme, with over 2 000 deployments a year providing substantive employment opportunities to Pacific Islands communities;

- d. leadership on fisheries policy and management, market access requirements and trade, including championing sustainability through ecosystem-based management, reference points, effort controls and fish-aggregating device management; and
- e. development of unique management measures, such as the Parties to the Nauru Agreement Vessel Day Scheme, for purse seine and longline vessels, and quota management systems in some members' longline fisheries.

7. The achievements of FFA can provide an example to other regions of the benefits of coastal States working together for sustainable fisheries management, including addressing illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. Based on the principle of "strength through unity" FFA members have shown substantial leadership in terms of coastal States' rights and responsibilities, as well as sustainable management of shared stocks.