AFN Special Chiefs Assembly
December 9-11, 2008 Ottawa, ON

Resolution no. 83/2008

SUBJECT:	STRENGTHENED AND RENEWED MANDATE FOR THE NATIONAL FISHERIES STRATEGY TO FULLY SHARE IN ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES
MOVED BY:	Chief Allison Metallic, Listuguj Mi'gmaq First Nation, QC
SECONDED BY:	Doug Kelly, Proxy, Shxw'ow'hamel First Nation, BC
DECISION:	Carried by consensus

WHEREAS:

A. The Assembly of First Nations National Fisheries Strategy (AFN-NFS) 2005-2010 is designed to assist and restore First Nations' rightful role in managing fisheries, aquatic and oceans resources that embody the recognition, protection and implementation of First Nations'' Aboriginal and Treaty rights, as well as support and promote sustainable First Nation fisheries and aquatic resources;

B. The AFN National Fisheries Strategy addresses a broad range of key legislative, policy and program sectors within the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) and continues to inform First Nations of potential positive or negative impacts;

C. The DFO is undertaking a series of program, policy and legislative reviews and is seeking input and recommendations from First Nations on areas such as *Fisheries Act Renewal*, *Species at Risk Act*, Habitat Policy Review and resource based multi-jurisdictional regulatory reform. Three major DFO Aboriginal programs are also being reviewed including the Aboriginal Fisheries Strategy, Aboriginal Aquatic and Resource Oceans Management and the Aboriginal Inland Habitat Program;

D. The AFN National Fisheries Committee places emphasis on strengthening First Nation capacity to support involvement in resource based socio-economic opportunities, co-management practices, training, employment, Youth mentorship and collaborative partnerships, consultation, joint policy, program and legislative reviews and implementation processes;

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PHIL FONTAINE, NATIONAL CHIEF

E. First Nations are subject to compliance with inadequate federal statutes, regulations and policies that infringe upon their rights to conduct fisheries, aquatic and ocean resource management regimes under aboriginal, treaty, or self-government regimes;

F. First Nations have limited access to current programs and are constrained in their ability to provide input on policies that allocate resources and capacity to address the socio-economic rights and goals of First Nations relating to the right to shared decision making with respect to jurisdiction over fisheries and oceans resources;

G. First Nations should have priority access to their Aboriginal rights to fish for food, social and ceremonial needs subject only to conservation;

H. First Nations live at a standard comparable to that of many developing nations and face unemployment rates at least double the rate of the non-Aboriginal population. First Nations also face the highest unemployment rate of any Aboriginal group at 27% and lowest labour force participation of any Aboriginal group with a rate of 54%; and

I. First Nations access and security to traditional foods is a major issue for First Nations, which impacts mental, physical and spiritual health, livelihood, Aboriginal title and rights, and the sustainability of First Nation cultures and communities.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that:

1. The Chiefs-in-Assembly direct the AFN National Chief and the Executive to seek a meeting with the Minister of the DFO to support the continuation of multi-year Aboriginal capacity building programs that enhance and allow First Nations to share in Canada's economic opportunities.

2. Chiefs-in-Assembly direct the AFN to call on DFO to support the development of new innovative technical and socio-economic development strategies that can address issues such as:
   - Development of First Nation resource management plans and strategies;
   - Full and effective integration of First Nations into the regulatory system and regulatory cycle;
   - Development of open and transparent procurement strategies;
   - Joint Performance Measurement Frameworks on results based initiatives;
   - Biodiversity and intellectual property rights, and copyright laws;
   - Protection and Use of Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge;
   - The First Nation priority access of fisheries, aquatic and oceans resources;
   - First Nation socio-economic analysis of impacts of legislation, policies and programs;
   - Establishment of First Nation certification eco-labeling models;
   - The establishment of shared-decision making authorities;
   - Support for commercial fishery activities; and
   - Undertake joint mechanisms and increased capacity to be involved in all DFO renewal initiatives.

3. The Chiefs-in-Assembly direct the AFN to support an emphasis on fisheries issues as one of the issues at the next proposed First Ministers Meeting on the Economy.

4. The Chiefs-in-Assembly direct the AFN to host a National Fisheries Policy Forum during the 2009-2010 fiscal year subject to the availability of funding.

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