

Statement on Bluefin Tuna

The Commission this week adopted a proposal for the EU position on bluefin tuna at the upcoming meeting (17-27 November) of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT). At the meeting, ICCAT Parties will be called to agree on a bluefin tuna recovery plan for the period 2011-2013.

As already mentioned by my colleague Maria Damanaki, Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, dealing with this issue, for the first time we have a clear Commission proposal for a Council mandate for a reduction of the total allowable catches of bluefin tuna, based on science. This is about a reduction in ICCAT on catches, through a precautionary approach. I will give her all the support she needs to ensure that the Council adopts an EU position in line with the Commission's proposal. We should also focus on strengthening control measures in order to eliminate illegal fishing of bluefin tuna.

Only a few days ago during the UN COP10 in Nagoya almost two hundred nations agreed on the global Strategic Plan of the Convention on Biological Diversity. Target 6, which states that by 2020 all fish stocks will be managed sustainably so that fisheries have no significant adverse impacts on threatened species, is particularly important in this case. The ICAAT agreement is a first credibility test of our biodiversity commitments.

Earlier this year the EU proposed a conditional international ban on trade in Atlantic bluefin tuna to CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species) but did not receive the support of the international community. If the measures taken by ICATT at its upcoming meeting are not sufficient to ensure the future of the species I will have no hesitation in returning to this issue in the context of CITES. I sincerely hope that this will not be necessary.