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Subject: Your leadership on fisheries issues

Dear Commissioner Damanaki,

I am writing on behalf of the Pew Environment Group to express our gratitude for the leadership role the European Commission played with regards to a number of fisheries issues at the recent meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) in Agadir, Morocco, and at the European Parliament.

The proactive, science based policies that your delegation adopted on Atlantic bluefin tuna management ensured that progress was made within this important Commission, that is slowly moving towards properly managing the hugely commercially valuable fish stocks under its jurisdiction. We welcome your leadership in assuring that ICCAT continues to adhere to the recommendations of its scientists.

We also greatly appreciate your leadership on shark conservation and management at ICCAT. Although we would have preferred progress for shortfin mako and porbeagle sharks, we appreciate the European Union's strong leadership on those species and on sharks in general. We welcome your efforts to ensure ICCAT's decision to launch the process to amend its treaty to specifically include sharks, as well as the adoption of the EU-led measure to ensure compliance with existing shark measures. We look forward to working with you in the future to secure further progress on these issues in the coming months and years.

Lastly, we very much appreciate the bold stance you took to progress the closing of the loopholes in the EU shark finning regulation. Your proposal was sound, and your defense of it during the past year, and particularly during last Wednesday's debate in the European Parliament, was outstanding. The staff of DG Mare stood their ground in the many Fisheries Committee meetings, and dealt professionally and expertly with several arguments raised by the rapporteur and her allies.

Without the guidance and leadership of the European Commission delegation, ICCAT could easily have returned to the mismanagement of the past, and the shark finning ban could have been weakened even further. We appreciate the leadership of the European Commission on the key issues of bluefin tuna quotas, shark conservation and management and combating illegal fishing, which is leading to the rebuilding of ICCAT into a body respected for its precautionary and sustainable policies. We warmly welcome the open way in which your officials consulted with our staff and consultants on both files, and look forward to working together again in the future, when the hard work to ensure ICCAT builds on the progress of this year continues and tough decisions on the CFP reform have to be negotiated.

Kind Regards,

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