



## INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE CONSERVATION OF ATLANTIC TUNAS (ICCAT)

### 2016 Annual ICCAT Meeting Press Release

**21 November 2016, Vilamoura, PORTUGAL** – During its Annual Meeting the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) approved 19 new Recommendations and 5 Resolutions, covering a number of relevant issues related to species such as: **bluefin, albacore, yellowfin**, and **bigeye** tunas, as well as **swordfish, sharks** and **sailfish** stocks. For some of these species, it was the first time ICCAT adopted catch limits for the **Mediterranean swordfish** and the **Atlantic blue shark**.

Additionally, the Commission was provided with the Report of the Second Performance Review of ICCAT, which congratulated ICCAT for making significant progress since the First Performance Review, particularly as it had adopted appropriate measures to strengthen and improve management of the species under its competency. The independent panel recognized that **ICCAT is a leading Regional Fisheries Management Organization**. Furthermore, ICCAT agreed to evaluate and address the recommendations made in the Second Performance Review, and adopted a Resolution to establish an *ad hoc* Working Group to follow up on the recommendations contained in the review report.

Vilamoura, at the heart of the Algarve region of Portugal, played host to the *20<sup>th</sup> Special Meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT)* from 14 to 21 November 2016. The meeting was chaired by, Mr. Stefaan Depypere from the European Union, and was honoured at the opening ceremony by the presence of Mr. Eduardo Cabrita, Assistant Minister to the Portuguese Prime Minister and Mr. Vitor Aleixo, the Mayor of the Loulé Municipality.

The Commission convened to evaluate the results of the 2016 working plan together with the current status of application of the regulatory measures in force and to establish the strategies and the management measures for the future. During 2016, four species were subject to a full scientific stock assessment: **yellowfin** tuna (*Thunnus albacares*, a tropical species), **albacore** tuna (*Thunnus alalunga*), Atlantic **sailfish** (*Istiophorus albicans*, an epipelagic and coastal to oceanic billfish species) and Mediterranean **swordfish** (*Xiphias gladius*, an oceanic and sometimes coastal billfish species).

The **yellowfin** stock and the management of Fishing Aggregating Devices (FADs) were important focuses of attention due to the current exploitation level, and especially to concerns with regards to fishing on FADs. The Commission adopted a Recommendation with a complete set of provisions on catch limits for bigeye and yellowfin, fishing capacity limitations, FAD fishing regulation, area/time closures, control and surveillance, etc. The Commission also adopted another Recommendation, which reinforces the Terms of Reference (broader scientific and collaborative approaches) of the FAD Working Group established in 2015.

For the **shark** species caught as by-catch in the ICCAT fisheries, the Commission adopted a management measure for the conservation of **Atlantic blue shark** caught in association with ICCAT fisheries. This is the first concrete management measure adopted for a species not usually considered to be the direct responsibility of the Commission and indicates ICCAT concern regarding by-catch species.

The Commission adopted four new regulations related to the conservation of billfish species. A Recommendation to establish a multi-annual recovery plan for **Mediterranean swordfish**, which is noted as being particularly important due to the current highly depleted status of the stock. In addition, the Commission addressed the management of both **North** and **South Atlantic swordfish**, providing provisions for annual TACs for both stocks and stipulating allocations for countries involved in the fishing of these stocks. Finally, the Commission adopted a management Recommendation for the **Atlantic sailfish** stock, something which has not been in place previously.

**Atlantic bluefin** tuna was discussed again and two new recommendations were adopted for this species. Catch limits and quota allocations for the **southern albacore** tuna stock were defined in a new recommendation, covering the period 2017 to 2020. The **northern albacore** stock was also addressed, as well as the commitment to continue to develop Harvest Control Rules (HCRs) for this stock, evaluated using the Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) process.

The remaining species under the mandate of ICCAT (*i.e.* other tropical tunas, small tunas, billfish species, and by-catch) were not neglected, and progress was made to ensure that these groups of species are also sustainably managed.

The Commission continued to dedicate attention to **Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance (MCS)** issues in its fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing activities. The full implementation of the electronic bluefin catch document scheme (eBCD) has been successful in light of the good results obtained during 2016 and its future financing was also considered by the Commission. The deliberations of the **Compliance Committee (COC)** ensured that Contracting Parties and Cooperating non-Contracting Parties, Entities or Fishing Entities (CPCs) remained vigilant in the implementation of adopted ICCAT conservation and management measures. Recommendations and Resolutions aiming to facilitate and streamline the compliance process such as the development of an online reporting system were also adopted.

Both ICCAT scientists and managers have planned a highly demanding agenda for 2017. Thirteen scientific meetings are scheduled in addition to seven Intersessional Commission meetings. The outcomes of these meetings will be the basis for the deliberations at the **next annual meeting** of ICCAT, which will be held in Marrakech, from 13 to 20 November 2017. For updates, details on venues and other information, please visit: [www.iccat.int](http://www.iccat.int) under "Meetings".

The *20th Special Meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas* (ICCAT) was a productive meeting, attended by representatives of 46 (out of the 51) ICCAT Contracting Parties and three Cooperating non-Contracting Parties, Entities or Fishing Entities. The assistance, as Observers, of three Intergovernmental Organisations, two non-Contracting Parties, Entities or Fishing Entities and 22 Non-Governmental Organisations, completed the participation. Overall, 600 delegates or representatives of the Organisations present, have participated in the meeting. This notable level of assistance reinforces the increasing relevance of ICCAT as a world reference in the field of sustainable management and conservation of fisheries resources.

Finally, ICCAT wants to express the most sincere gratitude to all the persons which, directly or indirectly, individually or as representatives, made this meeting possible.

For more information contact: Driss Meski, ICCAT Executive Secretary  
Tel: +34 91 416 56 00, Email: [driss.meski@iccat.int](mailto:driss.meski@iccat.int); [www.iccat.int](http://www.iccat.int)



**20<sup>th</sup> Special Meeting of the International Commission  
for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas**

**List of adopted Recommendations and Resolutions**

- Recommendation by ICCAT on a Multi-Annual Conservation and Management Program for Tropical Tunas
- Recommendation by ICCAT on Management Measures for the Conservation of Atlantic Blue Shark Caught in Association with ICCAT Fisheries
- Recommendation by ICCAT on Improvement of Compliance Review of Conservation and Management Measures regarding Sharks Caught in Association with ICCAT Fisheries
- Recommendation by ICCAT replacing the Recommendation [13-04] and Establishing a Multi-annual Recovery Plan for Mediterranean Swordfish
- Recommendation by ICCAT for the Conservation of North Atlantic Swordfish
- Recommendation by ICCAT for the Conservation of South Atlantic Swordfish
- Recommendation by ICCAT on Management Measures for the Conservation of Atlantic Sailfish
- Recommendation by ICCAT Amending Recommendation [15-05] by ICCAT to Further Strengthen the Plan to Rebuild Blue Marlin and White Marlin Stocks
- Recommendation by ICCAT Amending the Supplemental Recommendation by ICCAT Concerning the Western Atlantic Bluefin Tuna Rebuilding Program
- Recommendation by ICCAT to Supplement Recommendation 14-04 by ICCAT Amending the Recommendation 13-07 by ICCAT to Establish a Multi-Annual Recovery Plan for Bluefin Tuna in the Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean
- Recommendation by ICCAT on the Southern Albacore Catch Limits for the Period 2017 To 2020
- Recommendation by ICCAT on a Multi-annual Conservation and Management Program for North Atlantic Albacore
- Recommendation by ICCAT to Establish Minimum Standards for Fishing Vessel Scientific Observer Program
- Recommendation by ICCAT to Amend ICCAT Reporting Deadlines in Order to Facilitate an Effective and Efficient Compliance Process
- Recommendation by ICCAT on Transshipment
- Recommendation by ICCAT to Clarify and Supplement the Process for Seeking Capacity Building Assistance Pursuant to ICCAT Recommendation 14-08
- Recommendation by ICCAT for the Development of an Online Reporting System
- Recommendation by ICCAT to Establish an Ad hoc Working Group on Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs)



- Resolution by ICCAT to Establish an Ad Hoc Working Group to Follow up on the Second Performance Review
- Resolution by ICCAT to Facilitate an Effective and Efficient Compliance Process
- Resolution by ICCAT Establishing an ICCAT Schedule of Actions to Improve Compliance and Cooperation with ICCAT Measures
- Resolution by ICCAT on Ecosystems that are Important and Unique for ICCAT Species
- Resolution by ICCAT on the Third Meeting of the Standing Working Group for Enhancing the Dialogue Between Fisheries Scientists and Managers (SWGSM)