



25th Regular Meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas

Press Release

21 November 2017, Marrakech, Morocco – Raising the bar and the bluefin tuna quota for 2018, giving teeth to shortfin mako shark management, swords crossed on swordfish management and improving performance were the main outcomes of the 25th Regular meeting of the Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT).

Marrakech the Red City, where the traditional and contemporary mingle to lure the visitor with a promise of incomparable sensations, played host to the 25th Regular Meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) from 14 to 21 November 2017. The bar has been raised when it comes to showing flexibility, claimed Martin Tsamenyi the ICCAT Chair, as after more than four years of negotiations, a spirit of compromise has almost led to the conclusion of the Working Group on Convention Amendment, although the text could not be finalised, delegations came so close that the Commission undertook to do this in one last meeting of the Working Group.

The Commission convened to evaluate the results of the 2017 working plan together with the current status of application of the regulatory measures in force and to establish the conservation and management measures for the future. During 2017, four species were subject to a full scientific stock assessment: **bluefin tuna** (*Thunnus thynnus*); **Atlantic swordfish** (*Xiphias gladius*); **Atlantic shortfin mako shark** (*Isurus oxyrinchus*); and **Mediterranean albacore** (*Thunnus albacares*). Overall **nine** new Recommendations covering relevant issues related to species conservation and fisheries management were adopted. Mr. Camille Jean Pierre Manel (Senegal) has been elected as new ICCAT Executive Secretary.

The Red City saw a considerable increase in the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for **eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin tuna**, following the advice of the scientific committee. The new approved TAC for 2018 is of **28,200** t. While a larger pie to share should have led to greater possibilities of consensus, the demands by those who already had a quota for a larger slice made negotiations tougher than ever, but in the end tentative agreement was reached on the quota share for 2018, pending further negotiations in March 2018 for the share out in future years. While 28,200-32,240-36,000 t are the TACs for the period 2018-2020 for this emblematic species, the details of the new management plan could not be agreed, so most of the current provisions were left in place for a further year.

While initially it seemed that it might be daggers drawn on the **Atlantic swordfish stocks**, the wave of cooperation continued and consensus was quickly reached on a four year management plan up to 2021.

Shortfin mako shark was another species under scrutiny, with myriad proposals on the table for consideration. Agreement was reached finally on measures for the northern stock. In 2016, a mechanism for review of compliance with existing shark measures was adopted, but the full review was deferred to an intersessional meeting in 2018 of the Compliance Committee, in order to give this issue the time it deserves.



The warm Moroccan sun set the right climate for agreement on supplemental **tropical tuna** measures, with a ban on wasteful discards from the purse seine fishery, in an attempt to ensure food security for the coastal States affected by these fisheries.

In addition to the long awaited management measures for **Mediterranean albacore**, Harvest Control Rules for **Northern Atlantic albacore** were agreed, and technical details of the electronic bluefin catch document scheme (eBCD) were tweaked.

The Compliance Committee expedited its work in 2017 under the new process adopted in 2016, but one of the recurrent complaints of all Contacting Parties was the number of reporting requirements which membership of ICCAT entailed – currently over 150. Online reporting and a more streamlined approach is clearly the only way for countries to be able to meet their obligations in the future.

The Commission also considered the recommendations which had arisen from an external performance review and took steps to develop an action plan for the application of the advice contained in the review. This will require work by all the subsidiary bodies as well as intersessional work.

The Commission took the opportunity to extend its thanks to Mr. Driss Meski (Morocco), who will retire from the position of Executive Secretary in 2018, for the excellent service he had provided to the Commission over the last fourteen years. ICCAT also elected a new Chairman, Mr Raul Delgado (Panama) and expressed its profound appreciation for the excellent service of the outgoing Chair, Mr. Martin Tsamenyi (Ghana) had dedicated to the Commission over the past two years, and highlighted the progress made under his leadership. Additionally, the Commission reiterated its confidence in the 1st Vice-Chair Mr Stefaan Depypere (European Union) and elected Mrs. Zakia Driouich (Morocco) as 2nd Vice-Chair.

The 25th Regular Meeting of ICCAT was opened by the Secretary of State of Moroccan Fisheries Department of the Ministry of Agriculture, Maritime Fisheries, Rural Development, Waters and Forests on behalf of the Minister, who welcomed over 630 delegates from 44 Contacting Parties, four cooperating non-Contracting Parties, Entities or Fishing Entities and observers from two non-Contracting Parties six international organisations and 23 NGOs.

Finally, ICCAT wants to express the most sincere gratitude to all the persons who, 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; www.iccat.int



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List of adopted Recommendations

- Recommendation by ICCAT on prohibition on discards of tropical tunas caught by purse seiners
- Recommendation by ICCAT amending the Recommendation for the conservation of North Atlantic swordfish, Rec. 16-03
- Recommendation by ICCAT amending the Recommendation for the conservation of south Atlantic swordfish, Rec. 16-04
- Recommendation by ICCAT on a harvest control rule for the North Atlantic albacore supplementing the multiannual conservation and management programme, Rec. 16-06
- Recommendation by ICCAT establishing management measures for the stock of Mediterranean albacore
- Recommendation by ICCAT for an interim conservation and management plan for western Atlantic bluefin tuna
- Recommendation by ICCAT amending Recommendation 14-04 on bluefin tuna in the eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean
- Recommendation by ICCAT on the conservation of North Atlantic stock of shortfin mako caught in association with ICCAT fisheries
- Recommendation by ICCAT amending Recommendation 15-10 on the application of the eBCD system