

## 2023 Administrative Report<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Introduction

In accordance with Article VII of the Convention, this report is presented by the Secretariat to the Commission to outline its activities during financial year 2022.

### 2. Contracting Parties and Cooperators to the Convention

#### 2.1 Contracting Parties

At 18 October 2022, the International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) comprises the following 52 Contracting Parties: Albania, Algeria, Angola, Barbados, Belize, Brazil, Canada, Cabo Verde, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Curaçao, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, European Union, France (St. Pierre & Miquelon), Gabon, Ghana, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea (Rep.) Guinea Bissau, Honduras, Iceland, Japan, Korea (Rep.), Liberia, Libya, Mauritania, Mexico, Morocco, Namibia, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Panama, Philippines, Russia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sao Tomé and Príncipe, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Syrian Arab Republic, The Gambia, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Türkiye, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

#### 2.2 Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties, Entities or Fishing Entities

In addition to the Contracting Parties, the Commission can also grant the status of cooperator following the procedure described in the *Recommendation by ICCAT to replace Recommendation 03-20 on Criteria for Attaining the Status of Cooperating Non-Contracting Party, Entity or Fishing Entity in ICCAT* (Rec. 21-24). The following States currently hold this status: Bolivia, Costa Rica, Guyana, Chinese Taipei and Suriname.

### 3. Approval, ratification or acceptance of the Palma de Mallorca Protocol

At the 26th Regular meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas, held in November 2019 in Palma de Mallorca (Spain), the Contracting Parties of the International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas approved a Protocol to amend this Convention. On 5 December 2019, the Executive Secretary of the Commission deposited the Protocol with the Depository of the Convention, the Director General of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).

In accordance with its Article 13, the new Protocol adopted in Palma de Mallorca (Spain) "shall enter into force for each Contracting Party to the Convention accepting it on the ninetieth day after the deposit with the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations of an instrument of approval, ratification, or acceptance by three-fourths of the Contracting Parties to the Convention, and thereafter for each remaining Contracting Party to the Convention upon approval, ratification, or acceptance by it. A government which becomes a Contracting Party to the Convention after this Protocol has been opened for signature pursuant to Article 12 above shall be considered as having accepted this Protocol".

On 11 September 2020, the European Union deposited an instrument of approval of the Protocol referred to above. Norway did likewise on 3 November 2020, Canada on 23 June 2021 (acceptance), Japan on 30 July 2021 (acceptance) and Belize on 3 February 2022 (ratification).

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<sup>1</sup> Data at 18 October 2023.

#### 4. ICCAT Recommendations and Resolutions

##### *Adoption and entry into force of the Recommendations and Resolutions*

On 23 December 2022, the Secretariat officially transmitted the texts of the Recommendations and Resolutions adopted during the 23rd Special Meeting of the Commission (hybrid / Vale do Lobo, Algarve, Portugal, from 14 to 21 November 2022) and 17 April 2023 the text of *Supplementary Recommendation by ICCAT modifying Annex 1 of the Recommendation 16-05 replacing the Recommendation 13-04 and establishing a Multi-annual Recovery Plan for Mediterranean swordfish* (Rec. 22-20) was transmitted to the Contracting Parties and to the non-Contracting Parties, Entities or Fishing Entities that have Atlantic coastlines or that fish tunas in the Convention area, and to the intergovernmental fishery organizations, requesting their cooperation in this regard.

The texts of the Recommendations and Resolutions adopted by the Commission in 2022 were published in the *Report for Biennial Period 2022-2023, Part I (2022), Vol. 1*

Following the six-month grace period after the transmission of the Recommendations and Resolutions adopted by the Commission, the Recommendations entered into force on 23 June 2023 and 17 October 2023, in accordance with Article VIII of the ICCAT Convention.

#### 5. Intersessional meetings, Working Groups and ICCAT training courses

In accordance with Commission decisions in this regard, the meetings listed below were held in 2023:

- First Meeting of the eBCD Technical Working Group (eBCD TWG) (*Online, 23-24 January 2023*).
- First Intersessional Meeting of the North Atlantic Swordfish Technical Sub-group on MSE (*Online, 25-26 January 2023*).
- Meeting of the Online Reporting Technology Working Group (WG-ORT) (*Online, 7-8 February 2023*).
- First Meeting of the Electronic Monitoring Systems Working Group (EMS WG) (*Online, 15 February 2023*).
- Intersessional Meeting of the Tropical Tunas Species Group (including MSE) (*Hybrid/Madrid, Spain, 27 February–3 March 2023*).
- First Intersessional Meeting of Panel 4 on North Atlantic Swordfish Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) (*Online, 6 March 2023*).
- Intersessional meeting of Panel 2 (*Hybrid/Madrid, Spain, 7-10 March 2023*).
- North Atlantic Albacore Data Preparatory Meeting (including MSE) (*Hybrid/Pasaia/San Sebastián, Spain, 20-23 March 2023*).
- First Intersessional Meeting of Panel 1 (*Hybrid/ Lisbon, Portugal, 27-31 March 2023*).
- Blue Shark Data Preparatory Meeting (*Hybrid/Olhão, Portugal, 17-21 April 2023*).
- Second Intersessional Meeting of Panel 1 on Western Skipjack MSE (*Online, 5 May 2023*).
- Meeting of the Subcommittee on Ecosystems and Bycatch (*Hybrid/Madrid, Spain, 8-12 May 2023*).
- Intersessional Meeting of the Small Tunas Species Group (*Hybrid/Madrid, Spain, 15-18 May 2023*).
- Meeting of the Working Group on Stock Assessment Methods (WGSAM) (*Hybrid/Madrid, Spain, 15-18 May 2023*).
- Intersessional Meeting of the Swordfish Species Group (including MSE) (*Hybrid/Saint Andrews, New Brunswick, Canada, 22-26 May 2023*).
- Meeting of the Port Inspection Expert Group for Capacity Building and Assistance (PIEG) (*Online, 30 May 2023*).
- Meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Labour Standards (LSWG) (*Online, 31 May 2023*).
- Sailfish Data Preparatory and Stock Assessment Meeting (*Online, 5-10 June 2023*).
- Second Meeting of the eBCD Technical Working Group (eBCD TWG) (*Hybrid/Osaka, Japan, 5 June 2023*).

- Meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Catch Document Scheme (CDS WG) (*Hybrid/Osaka, Japan, 6 June 2023*).
- 16th Intersessional Meeting of the Working Group on Integrated Monitoring Measures (IMM) (*Hybrid/Osaka, Japan, 7-9 June 2023*).
- Third Intersessional Meeting of Panel 1 (*Hybrid/Madrid, Spain, 20-22 June 2023*).
- Atlantic Albacore Stock Assessment Meeting (including MSE) (*Hybrid/Madrid, Spain, 26-29 June 2023*).
- Second Intersessional Meeting of Panel 4 on North Atlantic Swordfish Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) (*Online, 30 June 2023*).
- Climate Change Experts Meeting (*Online, 11-12 July 2023*).
- Blue Shark Stock Assessment Meeting (*Hybrid/Madrid, Spain, 17-21 July 2023*).
- Second Intersessional Meeting of the North Atlantic Swordfish Technical Sub-group on MSE (*Online, 4-5 September 2023*).
- Second Meeting of the Electronic Monitoring Systems Working Group (EMS WG) (*Online, 7 September 2023*).
- Seminar on High Seas Boarding Schemes in the ICCAT Context (*Vigo, Spain, 13-14 September 2023*).
- SCRS Species Group meetings (*Hybrid/Madrid, Spain, 18-23 September 2023*).
- Meeting of the Standing Committee on Research and Statistics (SCRS) (*Hybrid/Madrid, Spain, 25-29 September 2023*).
- Third Intersessional Meeting of Panel 4 on North Atlantic Swordfish Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) (*Online, 10-11 October 2023*).

In addition to the meetings referred to above, the following workshops and webinars were held:

- Workshop on Swordfish, Billfishes and Small Tunas Age Reading (*Olhão, Portugal, 13-18 February 2023*).
- Workshop on Bluefin Tuna Close-Kin Mark-Recapture (CKMR) (*Hybrid/Madrid, Spain, 14-16 March 2023*).
- Workshop on Data Limited Assessment Methods for Small Tunas (*Madrid, Spain, 9-12 May 2023*).
- Workshop of Western Africa Statistical Correspondents on Billfish Data Collection and Reporting (*Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, 12-16 June 2023*).
- First Ambassadors Webinar on Northern Atlantic Swordfish MSE (N-SWO MSE) (*Online, 12 June 2023*).
- First Tropical Tunas Workshop on MSE (for scientists) (*Online, 13 June 2023*).
- Workshop on Atlantic Bluefin Tuna Electronic Tagging (*Hybrid/Madrid, Spain, 4-6 July 2023*).
- Workshop on the Shark Research and Data Collection Programme (*Hybrid/Madrid, Spain, 13-15 July 2023*).
- Workshop on the use of the bycatch estimation tool (*Miami, United States, 25-27 July 2023*).
- Workshop to continue the evaluation of ICCAT fisheries impact on marine turtles in Mediterranean Sea (*Malaga, Spain, 2-6 October 2023*).
- Second Ambassadors Webinar on Northern Atlantic Swordfish MSE (N-SWO MSE) (*Online, 5 October 2023*).
- Second Tropical Tunas Workshop on MSE (for managers) (*Online, 13 October 2023*).
- Online training Workshop Session on using ICCAT's Integrated Online Management System (IOMS) (*Online, 16 October 2023*).

## 6. Meetings at which ICCAT was represented

Within the framework of ICCAT's mandate to inform other international organizations of the measures adopted by the Commission and strengthen cooperation with them, the Secretariat participated in several meetings and technical consultation processes, which included several regional fisheries organizations (see **Annex 1** to this Report (**STF\_201\_ANN\_1/2023**), which summarizes the main issues discussed at these meetings).

- Regional Consultation on the Development of a Coordination Framework Between Regional Fishery Bodies In The Eastern Central Atlantic Ocean (*Accra, Ghana, 30 November-2 December 2022*).
- Meeting of the Revised Fisheries Governance and Aquaculture Working Groups of the African Fisheries Reform Mechanism (AFRM) (*Cairo, Egypt, 23-24 January 2023*).
- Resumed fifth session: intergovernmental conference on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (*New York, United States, 20 February-3 March 2023*).
- CAPAM Tuna Stock Assessment Good Practices Workshop (*Wellington, New Zealand, 7-10 March 2023*).
- Regional observer programme for eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin tuna – Training of trainers (*Valencia, Spain, 3-5 April 2023*).
- FAO/PSMA Secretariat - First Meeting of the PSMA Strategy ad hoc Working Group and Fourth Meeting of the PSMA Part 6 Working Group (*Hybrid/Rome, Italy, 3-7 April and 4 April 2023*).
- European Tracking Network EU COST action final symposium and first workshop of the Strategic Infrastructure for improved animal Tracking in European Seas (STRAITS) EU HORIZON project (*Izmir, Türkiye, 1-3 May 2023*).
- Bermeo Tuna Forum (*Bermeo/Bilbao, Spain, 2-3 May 2023*).
- GFCM: Working Group on VMS and related control system; Working Group on IUU; Compliance Committee (*Rhodes, Greece, 2-5 May 2023*).
- MRAG-COFREPÊCHE Observer Training Course (*Valencia, Spain, 15-19 May 2023*).
- Review Conference on the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks (*New York, United States, 22-26 May 2023*).
- OSPAR's 6th meeting under the Collective Arrangement (*London, United Kingdom, 7-8 June 2023*).
- 6th International Conference on Fish Telemetry (*Sète, France, 11-16 June 2023*).
- GFCM/ICCAT Collaboration – Inspection training for Israel (*Tel Aviv, Israel, 26-29 June 2023*).
- Annual Meeting of the European Union Regional Coordination Group Large Pelagics (EU RCG-LP) (*St Julian's, Malta, 26-28 June 2023*).
- Meeting of the Tuna Compliance Network (*Tokyo, Japan, 27-30 June 2023*).
- First Meeting of the Project Steering Committee (PSC) of the Common Oceans Program Project: Sustainable Management of Tuna Fisheries and Biodiversity Conservation in the ABNJ (*Hybrid/Rome, Italy, 11-14 July 2023*).
- Intersessional workshop of the Sustainable Ocean Initiative (SOI) Global Dialogue with Regional Seas Organizations and Regional Fishery Bodies (*Online, 1-3 August 2023*).
- 19th Session of the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC) (*Hybrid/Bridgetown, Barbados, 6-8 September 2023*).
- ICES Annual Science Conference (*Bilbao, Spain, 11-15 September 2023*).
- 2023 ASFA Advisory Board Meeting (*Bangkok, Thailand, 3-6 October 2023*).
- Mediterranean Advisory Council (MEDAC) Meetings of the Working Group (WG2) on Pelagic Fisheries and the Focus Group (FG) on the Adriatic Sea (*Rome, Italy, 12 October 2023*).

## 7. Tagging lottery

### **General ICCAT tagging programmes**

National bodies give awards or prizes to people who recover tags to encourage the return of tags. In order to support these programmes, ICCAT organizes an annual lottery with prizes of \$500.

In the last ICCAT lottery, which was held on 25 September 2023, prizes were awarded for five tags, one from each of the following categories: small tunas, sharks, billfish, temperate tunas and tropical tunas.

The winning tags were as follows:

- *Small tunas*: The tag HM107852 was recovered from a blackfin tuna (*Thunnus atlanticus*/ BLF) by a citizen from the United States, 13 days after it was attached. The tagging was carried out during the United States campaigns.
- *Sharks*: The tag 19731 was recovered from a blue shark (*Prionace glauca*/BSH) by a Portuguese citizen, 50 days after it was attached. The tagging was carried out during the Irish campaigns.
- *Billfish*: The tag HM105836 was recovered from a sailfish in the Atlantic (*Istiophorus albicans*/SAI). The tagging was carried out during the United States campaigns.
- *Temperate tunas*: The tag AAB001961 was recovered from an albacore tuna (*Thunnus alalunga*/ALB) by a Spanish citizen, 427 days after it was attached. The tagging was carried out during the Spanish campaigns.
- *Tropical tunas*: The tag GBS005917 was recovered from a yellowfin tuna (*Thunnus albacares*/YFT) by a St Helena citizen, 184 days after it was attached. The tagging was carried out during the St Helena campaigns.

#### **Atlantic-wide Research Programme for Bluefin Tuna (GBYP)**

Again this year, an additional draw was held with the support of the ICCAT Atlantic-wide Research Programme on Bluefin Tuna (GBYP). This lottery awards three prizes (first prize carries €1,000 and second and third prizes carry €500 exclusively for recoveries of bluefin tuna (*Thunnus thynnus*/BFT). The winning tags and the awards were as follows:

- €1,000: The tag BYP079279 was recovered by a Canadian citizen.
- €500: The tag BYP057968 was recovered by a Spanish citizen.
- €500: The tag BYP078785 was recovered by a Canadian citizen.

#### **8. Letters concerning compliance with budgetary obligations**

In early 2023, the Executive Secretary notified all the Contracting Parties of the amount of their contributions to the 2023 budget. In July 2023, a reminder was sent to the Contracting Parties that had not made the corresponding payments. Subsequently, and for those Contracting Parties that had not taken action, a second reminder was sent in October. The following table summarizes the correspondence sent to the Contracting Parties in arrears as regards their ICCAT and eBCD contributions.

	<i>First reminder Letter of 18 July 2023</i>	<i>Second reminder Letter of 4 October 2023</i>	<i>First eBCD reminder Letter of 18 July 2023</i>	<i>Second eBCD reminder Letter of 4 October 2023</i>
Barbados	X	X		
Brazil	X	X		
Cabo Verde	X	X		
China (P.R.)	X			
Côte d'Ivoire	X	X		
Curaçao	X	X		
Gabon	X	X		
Ghana	X	X		
Grenada	X	X		
Equatorial Guinea	X	X		
Guinea (Rep.)	X	X		
Honduras	X	X		
Liberia	X	X		
Libya			X	X
Morocco	X	X		
Mauritania	X	X		
Mexico	X	X	X	X
Namibia	X			
Nigeria	X	X		
Panama	X			
Russia	X	X		
St Vicent and the Grenadines	X	X		
Sao Tomé and Príncipe	X	X		
Sierra Leone	X	X		
Syria, Arab Rep.	X	X	X	X
South Africa	X	X		
Trinidad and Tobago	X			
Tunisia	X	X	X	X
Türkiye			X	
Venezuela	X	X		

## 9. Publications of the Secretariat - 2023

In 2023, the following publications were issued which are available on the ICCAT website:

- Report for Biennial Period 2022-23, Part I (2022), Vols. 1, 2, 3 and 4: English.
- Report for Biennial Period 2022-23, Part I (2022), Vols. 1, 2, 3 and 4: French.
- Report for Biennial Period 2022-23, Part I (2022), Vols. 1, 2, 3 and 4: Spanish.
- Collective Volume of Scientific Papers, Vol. 80, comprising eight volumes.
- Statistical Bulletin No. 48, which includes the catch series by species and country from 1950 to 2021.
- ICCAT Newsletter (February 2023 and October 2023).

## 10. Organisation and management of the Secretariat staff

### 10.1 Organisation

The Secretariat is organised as follows:

#### *Executive Secretary*

Mr Camille Jean Pierre Manel. He is responsible for selection and administration of staff of the Commission and oversees execution of the main functions of the Commission, such as:

- Coordination of research programmes
- Preparation of budget estimates for review by the Commission
- Authorising disbursement of funds according to the Commission's budget
- Accounting of the Commission's funds
- Preparation of coordination with sister organisations
- Collecting the necessary fisheries statistics
- Preparation of scientific, administrative and other reports

#### *Assistant Executive Secretary*

Dr Miguel Neves dos Santos. Reporting directly to the Executive Secretary, he performs all the tasks delegated to him by the Executive Secretary, which include management of the Secretariat and representation of the ICCAT Secretariat at meetings of a technical and/or administrative nature. In addition, he performs the functions of scientific coordinator, carrying out tasks related to the coordination of research programmes, collection of fisheries statistics, preparation of reports and coordination with closely related organisations. He is in charge of the Department of Translation and Publications and coordination of work between the Department of Science, Statistics and Compliance. He is also responsible for coordination between the Secretariat and the SCRS and preparation of SCRS meetings and management of Commission meeting documents.

#### *Department of Science*

By reason of its mandate to manage and conserve tuna fishery resources, ICCAT members carry out a broad range of scientific research and monitoring activities. The Secretariat is directly involved in the coordination of some of these activities, although a large part of the practical work is carried out by the Contracting Parties.

The research and statistics activities, under the supervision of the Scientific Coordinator, are carried out by Dr Mauricio Ortiz, Head of Department and Fisheries Data Analyst, Dr Ai Kimoto, Population Dynamics Expert, and Dr Nathan Taylor, By-catch Coordinator. The main tasks that they carry out are: data analysis to support and/or facilitate formulation of scientific advice, establishing the meetings and facilitating relevant information and data, facilitating data input for the stock assessment processes and facilitating compilation and storage of all relevant data and preparing reports.

#### *Department of Statistics*

The Secretariat maintains a large number of databases that contain information on fishery statistics which are useful for stock assessments and for compliance-related records, which are essentially for scientific advice and decision making on conservation and management of the stocks and ICCAT fisheries. The main tasks that are carried out are data requests, rules for data transmission, development of databases, development of software (user interfaces of the databases and software in general), quality control of data, dissemination of data (structures, mining and publication), tagging inventory, and preparation of reports.

Under the supervision of the Scientific Coordinator, the activities on statistics are carried out by Mr Carlos Palma, Head of Department and Biostatistician, Mr Carlos Mayor, Database Programmer and Developer, Mr Jesús García, Database Programmer and Mr Manuel Maestre, Mr. José Sanz and Mr Dashiel Portel, Software Developers for the Integrated Online Management System (IOMS) project.

*Department of Compliance*

In recent years, the Commission has adopted an increasing number of Recommendations and Resolutions that require CPCs to communicate various types of information largely related to Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) measures; there are currently around 100 reporting requirements of this type. This department compiles and distributes a large volume of information. The Department's main tasks are: preparation of the compliance tables and compliance summaries and management of the associated correspondence; maintenance of the Record of Vessels and other ICCAT records; implementation of the Regional Observer Programmes; VMS management; inventory of vessel chartering and access agreements; port inspection; joint inspection programme; bluefin tuna farming reports; periodic catch reports (weekly, monthly and quarterly), data and validation of the statistical documents and of the ICCAT Bluefin Tuna Catch Documentation Programme; eBCD management, preparation of the compendium of the management regulations; determination of reporting requirements, management of requests for cooperator status and requests for observer status; compilation of Annual Reports; responses to compliance related queries; as well as tasks related to general correspondence with CPCs, intergovernmental organisations and others. The department is composed of Ms. Jenny Cheatle, Head of Department, Mr M'Hamed Idrissi and Mr Alberto Parrilla, as Compliance Coordinators, Dr Valerie Samedy, as VMS Programme Manager / Technical Officer and Ms. Dawn Baity, as Technical Officer, and Ms. Aldana Vieito, as Compliance Assistant and Mr Javier Martínez, as Full Stack Developer (eBCD).

*Department of Translation and Publications*

The Department of Translation and Publications carries out tasks related to the compilation, adoption, translation and publication, in the three official languages of the Commission, of circulars, reports and scientific documents, ASFA and FIRMS entries, report writing, coordination of peer reviews of scientific documents, and publications in electronic format, communications and design and management of the website. The department is coordinated by Dr Neves dos Santos and is composed of Ms. Marisa de Andrés, Editor, and six translators: Ms. Christine Peyre (French), Ms. María José García-Orad (Spanish), Ms. Rebecca Campoy (English), Ms. Dorothée Pinet (French), Ms. Karen Donovan (English) and Ms. Beatriz Motos (Spanish); and Mr Juan Carlos Muñoz, Webmaster and Database Programmer.

*Department of Administration and Finance*

This Department carries out all the administrative and financial tasks of the Secretariat. Its main tasks are: preparation and control of the budget, accounting, preparation of the administrative and financial reports, organisation of ICCAT meetings, management of special funds, human resources within the Secretariat, purchases, travel, reception, archives, management of contact information, inventory of the library and publications, photocopying, scanning and mail. The department is composed of eight members: Ms. María Bonacasa, Head of Department, who coordinates all the tasks related to the department, Ms. Africa Martín (Accountant), Ms. Ana Martínez (Accounting Assistant), Mr Juan Angel Moreno (photocopying and mail), Ms. Esther Peña (Administrative Secretary) and Ms. Gisela Porto (Administrative Assistant to the Executive Secretary), Mr Pablo Herranz and Ms. Ingrid Ferrer (Administrative Assistants).

In July 2023, the separation on retirement of Mr Juan Antonio Moreno Rodríguez, following 48 years of service in ICCAT, became effective.

*Information Technology (IT)*

Mr Jesús Fiz, under the direct supervision of the Executive Secretary, is responsible for information technology and security of the information systems of the ICCAT Secretariat. His main tasks include design, planning, management and ensuring maintenance and protection of the information technology in the Secretariat. He also manages the security of the information and communication systems, aligns information security with ICCAT objectives, facilitates implementation of ISO 27001 and provides technical support for adaptation of the data protection policy.



### *Atlantic-wide Research Programme for Bluefin Tuna (GBYP)*

The overall aim of the programme, which began in January 2010, is to improve the scientific basis for decision making in relation to management of bluefin tuna in the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. The programme includes a list of actions, to be carried out over several years, such as recovery of basic data collections, improvement of knowledge on key biological and ecological processes or improvement of assessment models and provision of scientific advice. The programme is implemented by Dr Francisco Alemany (Coordinator), Ms. Stasa Tensek (Assistant Coordinator) and Mr Alfonso Pagá (Database Specialist).

#### **10.2 New appointments**

In June 2023 Ms. María Bonacasa was hired as Head of Department of Administration and Finance.

Moreover, in July 2023, Ms. Ingrid Ferrer was hired as Administrative Assistant for the post of Photocopies and Library following the retirement of Mr Cristóbal García.

In June 2023, the contract of Mr Dashiell Portel was extended for a 12 month period, as (IOMS) Software Developer to integrate the UN/FLUX system for vessels data exchange, and to maintain and to improve the functionality of user assistance, and help module, and to collaborate in the process of continued development of the IOMS.

## **11. Other matters**

### **11.1 Management of other programmes**

It should be noted that the Financial Report contains detailed information on these programmes and funds.

Since 2005, the United States has contributed to the Special Data Fund established in accordance with the *Resolution by ICCAT on Improvements in Data Collection and Quality Assurance* (Res. 03-21), to assist scientists from developing countries in participating in the meetings and work of the Scientific Committee. The voluntary contributions received in 2023 amounted to €93,100.00.

In April 2021, the contract was extended with the Consortium MRAG/CapFish for the ICCAT Regional Observer Programme for at-sea transshipment, in compliance with *Recommendation by ICCAT on a Programme for Transshipment* (Rec. 12-06). This programme was financed in 2023 by voluntary contributions from China (People's Rep.), Japan, Korea (Rep.), and Chinese Taipei; the programme continues to be managed by the Secretariat.

To implement the provisions of the *Recommendation by ICCAT Amending the Recommendation by ICCAT to Establish a Multi-Annual Recovery Plan for Bluefin Tuna in the Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean* (Rec. 08-05), in 2009 the Regional Observer Program for bluefin tuna was established. For this purpose, in April 2023, the contract was extended with the Consortium MRAG/COFREPECHE for hiring and deployment of observers. During this period, vessels, farms and traps have participated, and their operators have financed the programme.

Since 2008, the United States delegation has made numerous contributions to the United States Fund for Capacity Building for developing countries.

At the 16th Special Meeting of the Commission (Marrakesh, Morocco, 17 to 24 November 2008), the Commission endorsed a five-year coordinated Atlantic-wide bluefin tuna research program (known as GBYP-ICCAT). Currently, the programme is in its thirteenth phase. The European Union is financing 80.00% of this amount, and the remainder is being financed through voluntary contributions from Albania, Algeria, Canada, Iceland, Japan, Korea, Libya, Morocco, Norway, Tunisia, Türkiye, and Chinese Taipei.

Following the ICCAT-Japan Capacity-building Assistance Project (JCAP), which was implemented from 2014 to 2019, in December 2019, a special new project for capacity-building with a five-year duration began, financed by the Government of Japan, the ICCAT-Japan Capacity-Building Assistance Project - Phase 2 (JCAP-2). Its overriding objective is to assist ICCAT developing CPCs in complying with their obligations related to data compilation and reporting, as well as in implementing efficiently ICCAT measures.

Since 2011, China (P.R.) has made numerous contributions for continuation of the activities of the Special Data Fund-People's Republic of China. In 2023, a voluntary contribution in the amount of €16,116.00 was received.

Following approval in 2020 of the *Recommendation by ICCAT Amending Recommendation 14-14 on the Establishment of a Meeting Participation Fund for developing ICCAT Contracting Parties* (Rec. 20-09), the Secretariat received in 2023 an allocation of €170,000.00 charged to the Commission's budget.

In 2013, the Morocco Fund to Support National Capacity for Participation at Commission Meetings was established. For this purpose, in May 2023, Morocco made a voluntary contribution in the amount of €130,608.56.

In 2013, the Commission adopted the *Recommendation by ICCAT on the Establishment of a Scientific Capacity Building Fund for Developing States which are ICCAT Contracting Parties* (Rec. 13-19) for the purpose of supporting scientists from ICCAT Contracting Parties that are developing States in their need to acquire knowledge and develop skills on issues related to ICCAT. This special Scientific Capacity Building Fund (SCBF) was allocated €80,000.00 from the Working Capital Fund. In light of the limited activity of this fund, in 2017, the Commission decided to transfer the balance of this fund to the new Strategic Research Programme. It also decided that this fund should be maintained for future activities, but with no balance.

In March 2017, the Tunisia Fund to Support National Capacity for Participation at Commission Meetings was established.

In 2015, the special Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance Fund (MCSF) was established to support and strengthen development and implementation of efficient in port inspection systems by developing CPCs for the purpose of achieving or surpassing the minimum standards established in the *Recommendation by ICCAT to support effective implementation of Recommendation 12-07 by ICCAT for an ICCAT scheme for minimum standards for inspection in port* (Rec. 14-08).

In 2017, the Commission decided to create the Strategic Research Programme, with the objective of grouping and including gradually in the regular Commission budget all ICCAT scientific activities. In 2023, the Secretariat received an allocation of €416,635.00, charged to the Commission's budget, as well as a voluntary contribution from Chinese Taipei in an amount of €5,000.00. To supplement the financing of the Commission's scientific activities for 2023 within the framework of the new Strategic Research Programme that are not covered by the budget, in 2023, a contract was entered into with the European Union with the objective of financing 80.00%, for a total amount of €810,525.00.

In July 2022, a contract was signed with the European Union for a term of twenty-four months to continue to improve the capacity of developing countries, which includes the activities envisaged in the *Recommendation by ICCAT amending Recommendation 14-14 on the establishment of a Meeting Participation Fund for developing ICCAT Contracting Parties* (Rec. 20-09). The total contract amount is €375,000.00, of which the European Union will finance 80.00%; for this purpose, a contribution of €210,000.00 has been received.

In 2023, a contract was signed with the European Union to integrate the UN/FLUX system for vessels data exchange, and to maintain and to improve the functionality of the user assistance and help module, and to collaborate in the process to continue development of the IOMS. The contract will cover the hire for twelve months of a software developer and the equipment and programs necessary for this development. The budget of the contract is for €187,501.80, of which the European Union will cover 80%. In parallel, another contract was also signed with the European Union to develop the IOMS Vessel Manager module with the aim of incorporating all the ICCAT notification obligations related to vessels and/or fishing authorisations. The budget of the contract is for €125,022.36, of which the European Union will cover 80%. As with the UN/FLUX contract, it will cover the hire for 12 months of another software developer, as well as the necessary equipment and software.

In September 2021, the United States Fund for Tropicals was established, to support the work to conclude the Atlantic Ocean Tropical Tunas Tagging Programme (AOTTP) and finance a software upgrade to continue development of a tool to support decision making on tropical tunas.

In 2021, the Commission approved the *Resolution by ICCAT Establishing a Pilot Project for the Implementation of Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) on Bluefin Tuna Processing Vessels* (Rec. 21-17). To finance this project, a voluntary contribution in the amount of €50,100.00 was received from the United States and a contract has been entered into with the European Union. The budget of the project is for €209,506.00 euros, 80% of which will be covered by the European Union.

In August 2023, an agreement was signed with FAO “Strengthening compliance in ICCAT members, develop ecosystem indicators, and promoting joint tuna RFMO initiatives on topics of global relevance”, with the aim of achieving responsible, efficient and sustainable tuna production and biodiversity conservation in the ABNJ in a changing environment. The project will have a duration of 4 years and a total budget of €1,416,074.17, €212,411.00 of which has been received.

Also in August 2023, the United States Fund for Caribbean Deepwater Horizon Restoration was established to support activities for Atlantic tuna and tuna-like species: review of available catch data, identification of specific gaps in catch data and infrastructure, analysis of the repercussions of data limitations, and support for priority data collection activities through capacity building, where appropriate. The Fund is supported by a voluntary contribution from the United States in the amount of €259,292.00.

### **11.2 Auditors**

The five-year period during which BDO Auditores, S.L.P. carried out the audit of ICCAT concluded in 2023. The Secretariat has consulted ten auditing firms in order to select a new auditor for the next five years (2023-2027).

Of the ten firms consulted, four firms submitted their bids by the deadline (Grant Thornton, Deloitte, SW Spain and Crowe). In relation to these four bids, taking into account the technical references and financial proposals received, the Secretariat has selected the following two candidates for submission to the Commission for a final decision:

- 1st: Grant Thornton
- 2nd: Crowe