



ICCAT Press Release

ICCAT agreed new protection measures for cetaceans, whale sharks and mobulid rays, new conservation and management measures for blue shark, swordfish and albacore, and set minimum standards for the optional implementation of Electronic Monitoring Systems

Closure of the 28th Regular Meeting of the Commission

20 November 2023 – The International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) met in New Cairo (Egypt) to take important decisions on the regulation of ICCAT fisheries and adopted, among others: three new measures for the protection of cetaceans, whale sharks and mobulid rays incidentally caught in ICCAT fisheries; two new conservation measures for Atlantic blue shark; an increase in the North albacore Total Allowable Catch (TAC); the establishment of minimum standards and programme requirements for the use of Electronic Monitoring Systems in ICCAT fisheries. ICCAT has also planned the adoption in 2024 of a management procedure for northern Atlantic swordfish; and has advanced on plans for and to respond to Climate Change and biodiversity impacts.

Egypt, *Um-El-Dunya*, literally translated as *Mother of the World*, is an Arabic expression which Egyptians and others have used over history in reference to the country's ancient civilization, superlatives and achievements. It was within such spirit that, for the first time in its history, the Commission met in Egypt to evaluate the results of the 2023 work 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. In 2023, full scientific stock assessments were carried out for three species: **Atlantic blue shark** (*Prionace glauca*), the most common shark species caught in ICCAT fisheries; **eastern and western Atlantic sailfish** (*Istiophorus albicans*), a common billfish in artisanal fisheries; and, **northern Atlantic albacore** (*Thunnus alalunga*). In total, 20 new Recommendations and 4 Resolutions were adopted covering relevant issues on Atlantic tuna and tuna-like species conservation and fisheries management.

ICCAT adopted three new protection measures for cetaceans, whale sharks and mobulid rays caught in the Convention area in association with ICCAT fisheries, which prohibit these species being retained on board, transhipped, or landed, in whole or in part.

The effectiveness of the management measures adopted for North Atlantic albacore in recent years resulted in an increase in abundance, allowing ICCAT to set a new TAC of 47,251 t for this stock for 2024 to 2026.



INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE CONSERVATION OF ATLANTIC TUNAS

An annual TAC of 30,000 t was established for North Atlantic blue shark, whereas in the case of the southern stock the TAC was set as 27,711 t, which corresponds to reductions of 23.3% and 4.2%, respectively. It was agreed that, by 2025, the Scientific Committee shall inform on the feasibility, cost, options and tentative roadmap for developing a Management Strategy Evaluation framework (including inter alia candidate Harvest Control Rules) for the management of these stocks in the ICCAT Convention area.

On North Atlantic swordfish, the Commission agreed to review at the 2024 Annual Meeting the final Candidate Management Procedures and select one for adoption and application to establish the TAC for 2025-2027 and future years.

Albeit the extensive discussions regarding the multi-annual conservation and management programme for tropical tunas, no progress was achieved. Therefore, an agreement was reached for a simple rollover of the current measures, which implies a Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for bigeye tuna of 62,000 t for 2024, while the annual TAC for yellowfin will remain at 110,000 t. In addition, in order to reduce the fishing mortality of juvenile bigeye and yellowfin tuna, a 72-day fishing closure and the limitation on the use of FADs in 2024 were also kept. Finally, it was agreed a roadmap for the work to be done next year to review existing measures and, inter alia, develop catch limits and associated catch verification mechanisms for 2025.

The Commission also took some solid steps to reinforce and ensure the effective implementation of conservation and management measures. In particular, ICCAT adopted Recommendations establishing minimum standards and programme requirements for the use of Electronic Monitoring Systems in ICCAT fisheries and a Resolution on core principles on Labour Standards in ICCAT fisheries. Amendments were also made to strengthen ICCAT's existing port inspection and Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) vessel listing measures and a Standing Working Group on Catch Document Schemes was established.

The Compliance Committee focused on a more in-depth review of Contracting Parties and Cooperators implementation of ICCAT requirements and of the Schedule of Actions to address compliance issues. A more comprehensive approach was also agreed to encourage the use capacity building as a tool to improve compliance in ICCAT.

Finally, at this meeting, ICCAT reiterated its commitment to sustainable exploitation of tuna resources and to conservation of marine biodiversity. Moreover, as an inclusive Intergovernmental Organization that seeks a regional geographical balance among its subsidiary bodies, ICCAT has re-elected all its officers for a 2-year mandate.

For further information on ICCAT please see www.iccat.int, contact the Secretariat (info@iccat.int) or the Executive Secretary Mr Camille Jean Pierre Manel (camille.manel@iccat.int).

New Cairo, 20 November 2023



List of Recommendations and Resolution adopted by ICCAT

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resolution by ICCAT on next steps on the Joint Experts Group on Climate Change in 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resolution by ICCAT on the implementation of biodiversity conservation instruments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation by ICCAT to establish minimum standards and programme requirements for the use of Electronic Monitoring Systems (EMS) in ICCAT fisheries
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation by ICCAT on port State measures to prevent, deter, and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation by ICCAT on establishment of a Standing Catch Document Scheme Working Group (CDS WG)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation by ICCAT amending and replacing Recommendation 18-13 on an ICCAT Bluefin Tuna Catch Documentation programme
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation by ICCAT amending Recommendation 21-13 on establishing a list of vessels presumed to have carried out illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resolution by ICCAT on core principles on labour standards in ICCAT fisheries
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation by ICCAT on Senegal's bigeye tuna payback plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation by ICCAT on Brazil's bigeye tuna payback plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation by ICCAT extending and amending Recommendation 22-01 on a Multi-annual Conservation and Management Programme for tropical tunas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation by ICCAT for a pilot project for farming bluefin tuna (<i>Thunnus thynnus</i>) in the Cantabrian Sea
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation by ICCAT amending Recommendation 22-08
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation by ICCAT amending the Recommendation 22-08 establishing a Multi-annual Management Plan for bluefin tuna in the eastern Atlantic and the Mediterranean
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation by ICCAT amending the Recommendation 22-09 establishing a management procedure for Atlantic bluefin tuna to be used for both the western Atlantic and eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean management areas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation by ICCAT amending the Recommendation 21-04 on conservation and management measures, including a management procedure and exceptional circumstances protocol, for North Atlantic albacore
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resolution by ICCAT on cetaceans encirclement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation by ICCAT for the conservation of whale sharks (<i>Rhincodon typus</i>) caught in association with ICCAT fisheries
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation by ICCAT on mobulid rays (family Mobulidae) caught in association with ICCAT fisheries
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation by ICCAT on Curaçao's blue marlin payback plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supplemental Recommendation by ICCAT amending Recommendation 22-12 on the bycatch of sea turtles caught in association with ICCAT fisheries
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation by ICCAT to replace Recommendation 19-08 on management measures for the conservation of the South Atlantic blue shark caught in association with ICCAT fisheries
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation by ICCAT replacing Recommendation 22-03 extending and amending Recommendation 17-02 for the conservation of North Atlantic swordfish
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation by ICCAT to replace Recommendation 19-07 on management measures for the conservation of North Atlantic blue shark caught in association with ICCAT fisheries