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**The Pew Charitable Trusts'**  
**Statement to the Plenary of the 24<sup>th</sup> Regular Meeting of ICCAT**  
**10 November 2015**

The Pew Charitable Trusts looks forward to working with ICCAT members to advance the following actions at the 24<sup>th</sup> Regular Meeting of ICCAT:

**1. Adopt a framework for the development of harvest strategies to ensure long-term sustainability and market stability.**

Pew encourages the Commission's transition towards implementation of harvest strategies, as they result in increased transparency and predictability of management, stability in fisheries, and can ensure more consistency in management across multiple species. The EU proposal put forth on harvest strategies will help to advance use of this management strategy within ICCAT. Pew urges the Commission to a) formalize a timeline for the development of harvest strategies for priority species, including northern albacore and Atlantic bluefin tuna, and b) agree on minimum criteria for management objectives and acceptable levels of risk. Additionally, Pew encourages the use of management strategy evaluation (MSE) as a mechanism for evaluating the effectiveness of these elements as part of comprehensive, stock-specific harvest strategies.

**2. Ensure that the eBCD system is implemented by all Parties by March 2016 and that it electronically tracks all catch and major sources of trade.**

The eBCD system has the potential to bolster the recovery of Atlantic bluefin, reducing loopholes for IUU fishing and helping to minimize the likelihood that science-based catch limits are exceeded. Pew applauds those Parties that are already using the eBCD and the work of the eBCD Working Group and Permanent Working Group over the last year to develop the new system and prepare for implementation. Now that the eBCD is finally operational, Pew strongly encourages the Commission to mandate full implementation of a robust eBCD system by all Parties by a March 2016 deadline. To avoid introducing new loopholes for illegal activity, the Commission should also ensure that eBCD reporting and validation requirements are at least as comprehensive as existing requirements under the paper BCD system.

**3. Establish measures to effectively manage the increasing use of fish aggregating devices (FADs) in tropical tuna fisheries**

This year's stock assessment of Atlantic bigeye tuna indicates that the stock is overfished with overfishing occurring. We call attention to the SCRS advice to reduce the bigeye TAC to levels capable of recovering the stock with high probability in as short a period as possible. Pew therefore urges the Commission to reduce the TAC to 50,000 tonnes, which would end overfishing within one year with greater than 60% likelihood and recover the stock by 2028 with 75% likelihood. As the SCRS has explicitly identified FAD-related juvenile mortality as a principal driver of overfishing, a new precautionary management measure for FAD fisheries should also be considered. Given the outcomes of the stock assessment, it is of critical importance to direct the FAD Working Group and the SCRS to

investigate the impacts that the suite of proposed FAD management options – including FAD set limits and alterations to the Gulf of Guinea area/time closure, among others – would have on juvenile bigeye mortality and the recovery of this stock.

#### **4. Implement precautionary management measures for sharks**

Immediate action is needed to ensure the proper management of sharks by ICCAT, due to the inherent vulnerability of sharks to overexploitation and the unsustainable numbers caught in ICCAT fisheries. For shortfin mako and the southern population of blue shark, there is clear scientific advice to establish a precautionary cap. Due to the inability of the SCRS to reach agreement on the management advice for the northern population of blue shark, we also call on CPCs to adopt a precautionary catch limit for this stock. We also urge the Commission to prohibit retention of common thresher and porbeagle sharks, as scientific advice indicates recovery of these stocks could benefit from a ban on retention.

#### **5. Amend the ICCAT Convention text**

Despite significant progress made by Parties during this year's Convention Amendment Working Group meeting, an additional session was deemed necessary to allow CPCs to reach an agreement on outstanding issues. We are hopeful that this year's meeting will agree to modernize the ICCAT Convention text and strengthen the Convention mandate. To accomplish these aims, Pew agrees with the Working Group's recommendations to incorporate sharks within the scope of the Convention, to include principles of ecosystem-based management and the precautionary approach, to amend the Convention text to improve alignment with relevant international agreements, as well as revise current voting and objection procedures.