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The Pew Charitable Trusts'
Statement to the Permanent Working Group of the 24th Regular Meeting of ICCAT
13 November 2015

Pew encourages the Permanent Working Group to agree upon concrete actions at this year's Commission meeting to increase transparency in the activities of all ICCAT Parties, establish controls to reduce transshipment-at-sea, and to continue the development of new technologies to increase the availability of data on all fishing activities in the Convention Area.

This year, the Permanent Working Group finally has the opportunity to deliver an electronic catch documentation system for Atlantic bluefin. Difficult policy decisions and technical challenges have complicated development and delayed implementation for years, while evidence of ongoing illegal fishing of Atlantic bluefin has persisted. Now, five years after work to transition from a paper-based system to electronic bluefin catch documentation system (eBCD) began, the eBCD system is operational, a number of Parties are already using the system, and the groundwork has been laid for a final eBCD measure.

In the original eBCD Recommendation (10-11), the Commission recommended that an electronic catch documentation system covering all bluefin tuna caught, farmed, harvested, and traded be developed and maintained. This, and subsequent measures, recognized the benefits of rapid communication, the ability of an electronic system to detect fraud and deter IUU shipments, and the necessity to strengthen bluefin catch documentation by implementing an electronic system. As drafted, the eBCD system is very much in line with this intent and has the potential to be a powerful tool to reduce loopholes for illegal catch and to ultimately support bluefin's long-term recovery.

Recognizing the threat of illegal fishing to conservation and management of bluefin tuna, and the need for the eBCD system to be robust enough to be effective, the PWG should immediately adopt an eBCD measure that:

- 1) Mandates implementation of the eBCD system by all ICCAT Parties by March 2016
- 2) Is, at a minimum, as comprehensive as the existing requirements under the paper BCD system, including as it relates to validation of eBCDs for intra-EU trade, to ensure that new loopholes for illegal activity are not introduced.

We would also like to highlight the importance of establishing adequate controls over transshipment at-sea and to recommend significantly improving ICCAT's VMS. In this regard, we call on ICCAT Parties to convene the Working Group on Integrated Monitoring Measures in 2016, and agree to consider initial proposals that can end illegal transshipments at sea and ensure that the activities of all ICCAT vessels, and not just those targeting eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin tuna, are duly tracked via VMS.