

STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION ON THE COOPERATING STATUS OF COLOMBIA

(Submitted by the European Union)

The EU has taken note of the information provided by Colombia in Doc. COC_322 and regrettably, the necessary reassurances that fleet capacity will not be transferred from the Pacific to the Atlantic have not been given. It is understood from the operational programme submitted in 2019 (Doc. No. COC_307/ 2019) that Colombia's intentions are to build up a fleet both through the reallocation of capacity from the Pacific and the flagging of new vessels to exploit fisheries under the ICCAT purview. This was already a concern raised by the EU during last year's meeting.

The implementation of the operational programme raises concerns in view of the status of the stocks of tropical tunas, and the overcapacity which already exists. It is therefore expected that any review of the TAC system will bring about a reduction of the present fleet so that it is commensurate to the existing available resources. It is therefore difficult to reconcile Colombia's ambitions with the realities of the fisheries involved. Another point of concern is on the capacity of Colombia to exercise the necessary governance over its activities. On the latter point, the EU recalls the case of the vessel HALELULYA, which is still being addressed at the PWG, and whereby Colombia has already informed (Doc. PWG_418/2020) that it has authorised a stateless vessel to fish through the renewal of its fishing licence and that its activities, including the catches, have not been monitored and reported because they were attributed, erroneously, to Tanzania's responsibilities.

The EU also recalls that, as recorded in the Report of the Conservation and Management Measures Compliance Committee (COC) adopted as part of the 2019 Commission proceedings, Colombia had committed to provide more details on its fisheries¹. In this regard, the EU notes that this commitment remains unfulfilled. Additionally, what was at the time understood as a failure on the part of Tanzania to respect the rules of ICCAT seems now to be attributable to Colombia. This is reminiscent of the reasons for which Colombia's cooperating status had been withdrawn in 2013.

Within this context, since Colombia has not shown in a tangible manner that it intends to or is in a position to discharge its obligations as a cooperating non-contracting party, the European Union expresses its opposition to the renewal of such status.

¹ "Several CPCs raised concerns about the new request for cooperating status from Colombia, particularly the lack of details regarding its proposed fishery. Ultimately, contingent on receiving more information on the nature of its fisheries, the COC supported extending cooperating status to Colombia. One CPC expressed concern about the possibility that Colombia may seek to bring purse seiners from the Pacific to the ICCAT Convention area."