

Original: English

STATEMENT BY THE UNITED STATES TO COC

The United States thanks the COC Chair for the list of recommended compliance actions (COC_308 Appendix 2). We can support these recommended actions, including proposals to lift identifications and instead send compliance letters to El Salvador, Grenada, and Dominica to acknowledge recent improvements as well as remaining compliance concerns. We noted that COC_308C is missing information on some CPCs that did not submit shark and billfish check sheets, as identified in COC_314, COC_315, and their addendums. The United States requests that the compliance actions include letters to all CPCs that did not submit check sheets, reminding them of the importance of submitting those reports prior to the 2021 COC meeting.

The United States offers some comments for the purpose of articulating our views and helping inform the Chair's compliance letters:

General comments: We have noted that a number of CPCs have failed to meet basic reporting requirements for a number of years in a row and have failed to address these issues after receiving several compliance letters. The United States is concerned that this repeated failure to report may be the result of a broader failure to implement ICCAT measures. ICCAT's Schedule of Actions outlined in Rec. 16-17 describes frequent non-reporting as a significant compliance issue that meets the threshold for identification under Rec. 06-13.

The United States took note of several comments by CPCs in their billfish check sheets or in responses to the COC that indicated recreational catches are not reported to ICCAT, in some cases implying that the impact of those catches is minimal. We would like to remind CPCs of their obligation to report recreational catches to ICCAT, regardless of whether that catch took place inside or outside of EEZs. Even in the case of catch and release fisheries, recreational catch provides important data for scientists to understand temporal, spatial and size distribution, as well as stock status, and it is critically important that CPCs provide all relevant data from all relevant fisheries to the SCRS. As noted above, this frequent non-reporting and/or insufficient reporting of recreational catch can meet the threshold for identification for undermining the effectiveness of ICCAT.

If the reporting failures seen this year continue into next, stronger action from the Commission will be required. CPC-specific comments are contained in COC_328_APP_1.