

STATEMENT IN RELATION TO DRAFT PROPOSAL PA1-503, SUBMITTED BY THE CHAIR OF PANEL 1, TO AMEND THE *RECOMMENDATION BY ICCAT TO REPLACE RECOMMENDATION 16-01 BY ICCAT ON A MULTI-ANNUAL CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME FOR TROPICAL TUNAS*

(Submitted by the European Union)

The European Union continues to be deeply concerned about the status of the ICCAT stocks of bigeye and yellowfin tuna, and by the growing fishing capacity in fisheries targeting stocks already subject to overfishing. This is not consistent with the CPC's obligation, under Article IV of the ICCAT Convention, to apply the precautionary approach to the management of ICCAT fisheries.

While important progress was made with the adoption of the *Recommendation by ICCAT to replace Recommendation 16-01 by ICCAT on a multi-annual conservation and management programme for tropical tuna* (Rec. 19-02), crucial decisions are still required, in particular concerning the proper implementation of the established catch limits. Once again, the total catches of bigeye and yellowfin tuna last year were above the TACs for these stocks. The European Union is deeply concerned by this trend and by the fact that the management of the TAC for bigeye tuna is not possible under the current scheme of allocation. While a reduction of the TAC for 2021 would appear as a rational way to compensate for the overfishing in previous year, such a decrease would in effect only penalise the CPCs with a TAC allocation. This would not be an acceptable outcome for European fishermen who respected their catch limits and who last year accepted a 21% reduction of their catches to facilitate the implementation of the TAC.

The European Union continues to strongly advocate for the establishment of a scheme of allocation of the TACs for both bigeye and yellowfin tunas, under which each ICCAT CPC would be fully accountable for possible overharvests, and the ending of the current system of aspirational limits, which has been, and continues to be, responsible for the overfishing of these stocks. This work should be a priority for the Commission and the European Union therefore strongly supports the suggestion from the Chair of Panel 1 to organise an intersessional meeting of Panel 1 in 2021 to focus on this issue. The European Union expects to be able to provide a voluntary financial contribution to facilitate the organisation of this meeting and of other possible intersessional meetings.

Conscious of the challenges to adopt new measures by correspondence, the European Union supports the proposal of the Chair of Panel 1 to extend by one year the measures of Recommendation 19-02 which were due to expire this year. However, this should not concern measures adopted in 2019 and due to enter into effect in 2021 concerning the implementation of a 3 months closure period (paragraphs 27 and 28 of Rec. 19-02) and of a lower maximum number of FADs (300 in 2021, under paragraph 30 of Rec. 19-02). The entry into effect of these measures was delayed to 2021 to allow a gradual implementation by the fleets concerned and there is therefore no justification for seeking an additional delay for their implementation.

In conclusion, the European Union urges all ICCAT CPCs to adopt a pragmatic approach and to support the proposal from the Chair of Panel 1.