

STATEMENT BY EU TO PANEL 1 – ROUND #2

(Documents PA1-503A, PA1-502A & PA1-511)

PA1-503A *Draft supplemental recommendation by ICCAT to amend the Recommendation by ICCAT to replace Rec. 16-01 by ICCAT on a multi-annual conservation and management programme for tropical tunas (Proposal submitted by the Chair of Panel 1)*

The European Union is pleased to confirm its support for the Chair's proposal PA1-503A, including the editorial comments from the US.

PA1-502A *2020 Bigeye tuna catch limits (including suggested limits)*

Several CPCs requested clarifications regarding the 2020 catch limits for bigeye tuna for the European Union, as provided in document PA1-502 and in particular the carryover of 2121.35 t from 2018. These CPCs refer to the quota of the EU in 2018 (16,989 t) and did not take into account that the adjusted catch limits for the EU that year was in fact 19,537.40 t, due to a carryover of 2548.35 t from 2016. This carryover only represents 44% of the under harvest of the EU that year. In recent years, and due to the successive TAC reductions, this under-harvest has been greatly reduced and the quota uptake must now be carefully monitored in order to prevent possible quota overshooting.

In 2020, in order to ensure the respect of the newly establish TAC of 62,500 t, the EU agreed to reduce its catch limits by 21%. This significant reduction has unfortunately been compensated by an increase of the catches by CPCs without specific catch limits, once again making futile the sacrifices made by the EU and the other TAC holders. The TAC is likely to become irrelevant unless ICCAT accepts to rationalise its management by ensuring that all CPCs harvesting BET are subject to specific catch limits. If it remains unresolved, this issue has the potential to undermine the entire management framework for tropical tunas in ICCAT.

PA1-511 *Roadmap for Intersessional Meeting of Panel 1 in 2021*

The European Union thanks the Chair of Panel 1 for preparing this document and would like to make the following comments:

- While we appreciate the efforts of the Chair, we note that the proposed approach relies on the possibility to organise virtual meetings in the first part of 2021 as well as an intersessional meeting in June 2021. Regarding virtual meetings, the ICCAT Chair recently highlighted that many CPCs could not engage meaningfully in such meetings and that this was the reason for not holding a virtual annual meeting in 2020. Considering the important participation in Panel 1, we anticipate that the same limitations would preclude the organisation of virtual meetings as proposed by the Chair.
- Regarding the proposed Intersessional meeting in June 2021, there remains a lot of uncertainty regarding the possibility for such meeting to take place that early in the year, and we would therefore encourage the Chair to also prepare an alternative solution in the event that this meeting does not take place. Finally, the European Union is also increasingly concerned by the high number of intersessional meetings being foreseen for 2021. In our view, the proposed calendar of meetings is unsustainable and will present significant challenges for the Secretariat (organisation, support and attendance) and for the CPCs (preparation and attendance). We therefore suggest that the Commission should take a broader look at the feasibility of organising so many intersessional meetings in 2021, including intersessional meetings of PA1 and PA4, and take the appropriate decision.

- Regarding the proposed agenda for the virtual meetings, we note that several issues highlighted by the Chair may not be immediate priorities or may not have sufficient information early in 2021.
- The discussions proposed on the TAC for bigeye in February 2021 would benefit from the outcome of the stock assessment planned later that year. In the absence of this information, the exchanges will remain speculative.
- Regarding the allocation key for the TAC distribution, the European Union has already expressed the view that this is one of the most pressing issue to be resolved. Nevertheless, we also believe that it would be difficult to make progress without a better understanding of what the TAC will be. In addition, progress on this issue will require discussions and progress on the adoption of a robust system of capacity limits. It would therefore be difficult to engage in discussions on the TAC allocation without a clear understanding of how capacity will be managed to allow the recovery of the stock of BET. Consequently, in order to create the conditions necessary for progress to be achieved capacity limits and TAC allocation would have to be dealt with together.
- Finally, regarding the second proposed virtual meeting, we note that important progress was made in 2019 on the limitation of the number of FADs. Therefore, we do not see the need to revisit this issue in 2021. Similarly, there is no urgency to revisit the issue of the closure period for activities on FADs, and instead some stability in the measures is required to allow the evaluation by SCRS of their level of success. Instead, discussions should concentrate on the management of support vessels and the tracking and controls of the number of FADs.