

Original: English

**STATEMENT BY NORWAY ON WESTERN BLUEFIN TUNA (3RD ROUND)**

Norway would first of all like to thank the Chair of Panel 2 for his great effort in trying to reach consensus on a recommendation for the western bluefin tuna (WBFT).

Norway has, at an earlier stage, expressed our concerns on some of the draft recommendations related to WBFT from other CPC's. Our concerns relate, amongst others, to setting the TAC at 2350 tons in 2021. Norway has also questioned the process concerning the proposed stock assessment in 2021. Other CPCs have, however, argued for the importance of this stock assessment in 2021, and although Norway still has concerns with regards to the process, we have decided to show flexibility, and will not oppose or block such a stock assessment.

Regardless of the fact that a majority of the other CPC's in Panel 2 also have shown great flexibility in order to find a solution to the issues being raised with regards to the WBFT, a consensus has not been found, and a roll-over or a situation without any recommendation now are the alternatives. A roll-over provides us with a situation where the TAC is set at 2350 tons in 2021, which corresponds to a possibility of only 6% of the stock not being overfished in 2021 and without any commitment to reduce the TAC in 2022 and 2023, as advised by the SCRS in their updated assessment. If Panel 2 had chosen to follow the updated assessment, this would have been in line with the precautionary approach. Although Norway has doubts concerning a stock assessment in 2021, we do, however, fear the consequences for the stock if the TAC is set to 2350 tons in 2021 and the possibility of an updated stock assessment will be lost, an update which could provide crucial information on the state of this stock. A situation without a recommendation is even worse, and we have now come in a situation where we have to choose between two evils. Whatever we choose the result is highly suboptimal, and could potentially jeopardize the stock and put ICCAT as an organization under unfavourable circumstances.