

STATEMENT BY CANADA TO PANEL 2 ON WESTERN BLUEFIN TUNA – ROUND 3

Canada supports fisheries management decisions that are based on the best available scientific information, and, where there is uncertainty, the application of the precautionary approach.

These principles are well established, including within ICCAT in Resolution 15-12, in the amended ICCAT Convention, and more broadly, including in the High Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy's recently released *Transformations for a Sustainable Ocean Economy: a Vision for Protection, Production, and Prosperity*, to which some of Panel 2 members have signed onto. This declaration includes a call to strengthen regional fisheries management organizations by, among other steps, promoting the use of a precautionary approach and management that controls harvest levels based on scientific assessment.

Based on these principles, Canada is extremely dissatisfied with the outcome of this year's negotiations to adopt a total allowable catch (TAC) for western Atlantic bluefin tuna, an iconic species.

The projections provided by the 2020 stock assessment update and the resulting Standing Committee on Research and Statistics (SCRS) advice – the best science advice we have available – make it clear that a prompt and significant total allowable catch (TAC) reduction is the most appropriate way to hold the risk of overfishing at an acceptable level.

A TAC of 2,350 tonnes in 2021 will result in a 94% probability of overfishing. Canada believes this is both contradictory to the objectives of ICCAT and not in the best long term interests of the species nor the industry.

Nevertheless, we have no desire for this measure to lapse and result in an unregulated fishery for 2021. To prevent such a scenario, Canada will not block consensus on the Chair's proposed TAC of 2,350 tonnes, as per PA2_608C, despite our significant concerns.

Throughout this correspondence process, Canada and others have advocated for a full assessment of this stock in 2021 beyond the simple update that was conducted in 2020. We believe that this would provide the SCRS with an opportunity to address issues with certain indices that have been identified by scientists, fully explore the data inputs, and provide certainty going forward in setting TACs fully in line with the scientific advice. Canada supports the inclusion of a request for a stock assessment in 2021 in the Chair's proposal PA2_608C.