

STATEMENT BY THE UNITED STATES TO PANEL 2 (3RD ROUND)

The United States would like to thank the Panel 2 Chair for his leadership on bluefin tuna and northern albacore issues during what has been an extraordinarily challenging correspondence process. This process could not support the extent of discussions we normally have when we meet face-to-face, and, without the Chair's leadership, the ability of the Panel to find ways forward on the large number of important Panel 2 issues would have been in jeopardy. For western Atlantic bluefin tuna, in particular, the Chair's proposal (PA2-608C) was instrumental in finding a compromise approach that ensures there is no gap in management and that measures reflect the most current science, based on the SCRS management scenario 3, while recognizing that a new stock assessment is needed in 2021 in light of the legitimate scientific issues identified after the 2020 assessment -- issues that could have an important impact on the Commission's understanding of the stock status. At the same time, the proposal ensures that the important work of SCRS on bluefin tuna management strategy evaluation will not be negatively impacted by the new assessment, and it ensures the remaining management measures in Rec. 17-06 will continue. These elements, taken together, make an acceptable, if not perfect, package for managing the fishery in the near-term. For the Chair's compromise proposal to be acceptable, flexibility by all CPCs was required. We appreciate the spirit of cooperation shown during this unprecedented and difficult time. We look forward to a return to an in-person annual meeting in 2021 where we will consider the conservation and management of bluefin tuna and northern albacore once again.