

Original: English

**LETTER FROM COMMISSION CHAIR ON THE WAY FORWARD
ON ROUND 2 OF CORRESPONDANCE PERIOD**
(submitted by the Commission Chair)

9 November 2020

Dear Contracting Parties, Cooperators and Observers,

First of all, I should like to welcome the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland as a Contracting Party to ICCAT, effective 21 October 2020. As the United Kingdom will represent its Overseas Territories, the overall number of Contracting Parties remains the same at 53. The opening statement of the UK is available as **PLE-117/20**.

Statements to plenary have also been received from the United States and from the following observers: Global Tuna Alliance, ISSF, Monterey Bay Aquarium, Pew Charitable Trust, SCIAENA, Shark Project and Shark Trust all of which are published on the document web site.

Below please find an update of progress to date on our deliberations.

1. Reports of intersessional meetings

No comments on any of the reports from 2020 intersessional meetings were received, and will be considered officially adopted on 30 November 2020,

2. Cooperation with other organisation and MoUs

The United States supported my suggestion transmitted through Circular 7324/2020 regarding possible next steps on a framework for cooperation between ICCAT and WECAFC and GFCM (please see **PLE-118/20**). No other CPC has made any comment and no objections have been raised, so I will consult with CPCs to draft during the intersessional period, as necessary, letters of cooperation with these two organisations under the umbrella of ICCAT's agreement with FAO. The question of the MoUs will be revisited in 2021.

3.- 6. Items 3, 4, 5 and 6 remain open as discussions by the subsidiary bodies are ongoing.

7. Intersessional meetings in 2021

As a result of the ongoing pandemic and the restrictions on movement which this entails, it would be unwise to schedule face to face meetings in the first semester of 2021 at this stage, unless conditions significantly improve in the next few months.

Having consulted with the SCRS Chair, it has been agreed the original schedule foreseen by the SCRS is too ambitious to be carried out virtually, and some revisions are required. The Chair of the SCRS suggests therefore the postponement of the Atlantic Swordfish and Blue Shark stock assessments. All other meetings would remain in the calendar, including a Western Bluefin tuna full assessment as required by the Panel 2.

For the Commission, I am in consultation with the officers, but we believe that we will need to try to hold face to face meetings of Panel 1, Panel 4 and IMM, although it is hoped that some issues can be advance previously by correspondence. Panel 2 will hold a virtual meeting in early March, with most preparation being carried out by correspondence. I would encourage the Port Inspection Expert Group to continue work by correspondence during 2021, as well as two established Virtual Working Groups (VWG-SF and VWG-RRP) and the Online Reporting Working Group. Should this latter require a face to face meeting, we may try to schedule this in conjunction with the IMM or Commission meetings.

I will be in contact with CPCs on how to advance some pending issues under discussion in the Virtual Working Group of the Rules of Procedure in the near future.

After consultation with the Commissions officers, a new draft ICCAT calendar for 2021 is attached to this letter as document **PLE-106**. I would very much appreciate receiving your comments, noting that for the time being the SCRS is considering all meetings to be held on-line. If the situation improves and allows in-person meetings to be held, the SCRS September Species Group and the Plenary meeting would have the standard format and schedule.

8. Other matters

The only other matter for decision is whether or not the *Resolution by ICCAT on Ecosystems that are Important and Unique for ICCAT Species* [Recs. 16-23] should be removed from the active compendium. Please see **PLE-103/20** for more details. If any CPC has concerns about the deactivation of this Resolution, please inform me before **24 November 2020**. No other matters have been brought to my attention for this process.

A few comments were received from CPCs on PLE-105 (Secretariat report on research and Statistics), which have been addressed by the Secretariat and will be reflected in the last version of the document.

9. Date and place of the next meeting of the Commission

At this stage, we cannot foresee whether or not it will be possible to hold a meeting in 2021. I would suggest that we tentatively schedule 22-29 November. If this is not possible, an alternative could be 15-22 November 2021. I should be grateful if those CPCs with preferences could inform me before 30 November 2020.

10. Adoption of the report containing the decisions of the Commission

I am confident that the subsidiary bodies can make their reports to me within the timelines envisaged, and the findings on Items 3-6 will be circulated for approval by Plenary once the business of the subsidiary bodies is concluded. I believe of the Plenary items there is not further business requiring any discussion or decision other than items 3-6.

In accordance with Circular 7324/2020, CPCs who may have comments can submit those as Statements to the Plenary, as due to the special circumstances I have allowed one statement per CPC and subsidiary body in each round of the correspondence period. These will be translated and posted on the 2020 Commission documents webpage. Comments other than in the form of statements may also be forwarded to me and the Secretariat, but these will not be translated to avoid delays on the decision-making process. There will be a two-week period for comments. The exact deadline will be specified by the Secretariat in the cover circular to this letter.

Finally, I should like to thank you all for the excellent cooperation and flexibility you are showing to ensure the success of this process, and the progress to date. I believe that together we will be able to ensure the sustainability of the stocks in our care until we can meet again in person.

Please accept the assurances of my highest consideration,

Raul Delgado



Commission Chair