

**LETTER FROM THE COMMISSION CHAIR ON PROGRESS ON ESSENTIAL COMMISSION BUSINESS  
TO BE DISCUSSED VIA CORRESPONDENCE (Round #3 – Part III)**

Dear Colleagues,

Firstly, I hope you have had the chance to rest a bit after an exhausting and challenging 2020. Secondly, I wish you all the best 2021. Although the COVID-19 pandemic still causing substantial problems to all of us, I trust the ICCAT community will be able to face all the challenging issues we have in front of us and work together and in a cooperative manner to allow us to move forward efficiently during another challenging year.

Since my last letter, we have made good progress, having now received the comments on the reports of three subsidiary bodies. We have received suggestions for a few modifications that I do not believe these raise any relevant issues. In addition, the Compliance Committee was able to close its discussions. I should like to briefly propose a way forward to conclude the 2020 Commission decision process as soon as possible.

As you may recall, in order to be able to ensure the effectiveness of our measures in 2021, I proposed in one of my previous letters (ICCAT Circular #8260/20 from 1 December 2020) to divide the adoption process into two, or if necessary three, "blocks". As you know Block #1, which comprised the reports from Panel 3, Panel 4 and STACFAD has already been adopted, together with the documents cited in those reports. I am now providing you with revised versions of Block #2 that comprises the reports from Panel 1, Panel 2 and PWG, which I hope we can now consider adopted with the editorial changes incorporated, together with the documents cited in those reports. However, as usual I am available for minor editorial comments, but only on the underlined text. As mentioned in my previous letter (ICCAT Circular 8655 from 21 December 2020), I urge all CPCs to refrain from re-opening any issues already agreed during the correspondence period. Therefore, some of the comments that I received were not taken into consideration, namely those that should have been raised during the respective correspondence periods, but instead were sent late to the respective subsidiary body Chair and/or myself.

Sincerely, I hope that under the circumstances and due to the delay compared to our usual calendar, all decisions adopted by the subsidiary bodies can be endorsed by the Commission without further debate. In order to ensure continued management regimes for our more vulnerable stocks, I would again urge all CPCs to refrain from re-opening any issues already agreed until 2021 and focusing now on the draft Compliance Committee report and on the draft Plenary report that you can find attached to this letter.

Accordingly, any comments on these should be sent by on **28 January 2021 (18:00 Madrid time)**, after which they will be considered to be formally adopted, as it is my intention to try to close the 2020 Commission process in late January, as mentioned in my previous letter.

In addition to the issues being discussed in the Panels and other subsidiary bodies, please see below a brief update on the progress of Plenary issues for the different agenda items:

**4. Review and endorsement, if appropriate, of proposals put forward by the Panels 1 and 2**

I have worked with the Chairs of Panels 1 and 2 who have made the attached revised reports available, listing the decisions requiring endorsement and adoption by the Commission. Only minor comments on the underlined text of these will be accepted, if received by **28 January 2021**. After reading the comments received, I consider that consensus has been reached in Panel 1 on PA1-503A, aimed at rollover of the ICCAT Rec. 19-02, which is not limited in time and will remain in force in 2021. Therefore, document PA1-503A is now considered adopted.

**5. Review and endorsement, if appropriate, of the decisions taken by the Conservation and Management Measures Compliance Committee (COC)**

The Chair of the Compliance Committee has made the attached report available, and I invite comments by **28 January 2021**. In addition, documents COC-304E (Compliance tables received in 2020) and COC-308D (Summary compliance tables) have now been posted. Please note that these documents merely reflect the comments received within the previous deadline and the period for comments on these documents is closed, hence further changes should not be submitted at this time.

**6. Review and endorsement, if appropriate, of the decisions taken by Permanent Working Group for the Improvement of ICCAT Statistics and Conservation Measures (PWG)**

I have worked with the Chair of PWG who has made the attached revised report available, listing the decisions requiring endorsement and adoption by the Commission. Only minor comments on the underlined text will be accepted, if received by **28 January 2021**. Note that not all the attachments are being circulated at this time but are available on the document web site and will be included in the final publication.

**7. Intersessional meetings in 2021**

With my last letter I circulated a third draft ICCAT calendar for 2021 (posted as document PLE-106B) and requested comments on this. I, and my fellow Chairs, have received some comments which are contained in the related attached Excel file. From these comments, some modification to the tentative schedule were made and I am attaching a new revised proposal to this letter which will be posted as PLE-106C, which contains changes on the schedule of the September SCRS Species Groups meeting and SCRS Plenary. These will allow a longer period between the end of the SCRS and the beginning of the Commission meeting, as it is the usual practice. However, such change will imply that the SCRS Species Groups will need to make much progress in advance of the September meetings. On the other hand, unfortunately there is no room to avoid the overlap between Panel 1 and Bluefin Species Group meetings held in September, as delaying the Bluefin tuna meeting would imply either delaying all remaining SCRS and Commission meetings by a week or oblige the SCRS to only focus on those species/stocks that will be assessed in 2021, precluding the Committee to address other relevant issues as requested by the Commission. I trust this is acceptable to everyone and will be forwarding this revised version to plenary in my report for formal approval.

I should also like to remind you of my request that any CPC which believes that it may be in a position to host any of the in-person intersessional meetings scheduled to be held in 2021 inform the Secretariat and myself as soon as possible. I do understand the difficulties in making any firm commitment at this stage, but expressions of interest would be welcomed. Moreover, under the current circumstances on the pandemics, in-person meetings will possibly require imposing limitations in terms of the number of participants. This is a relevant issue that I am assessing with the Secretariat and will come back to you at a later stage.

**8. Other matters**

As mentioned in my previous letter, after consultation with the members of the Virtual Working Group on the Review of the Rules of Procedure (VWG-RRP), I will convene an intersessional meeting of the VWG-RRP during the first quarter of 2021, in order to proceed and conclude the works aiming the approval of a new version of the Rules of Procedure prior to the 2021 Commission meeting.

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

Since I have not received additional comments, the 27th Regular Meeting of the Commission will be held between 15 and 22 November 2021, on the assumption that an in-person meeting can be held, but possibly with some limitations on the number of participants.

Since at this stage the Secretariat has not received any expression of interest to host our 2021 annual meeting, I reiterate my request that any CPC who believes they may be in a position to host the meeting to inform the Secretariat and myself as soon as possible, and preferably before **31 January 2021**. I do understand the difficulties in making any firm commitment at this stage, but expressions of interest would be welcomed so that these can be followed up as early in the year as possible, depending on the evolution of the pandemic. In addition, I will urge the Secretariat to further explore any possibility to find potential venues for the meeting bearing in mind the current sanitary measures regarding meetings.

#### **7. Adoption of the report containing the decisions of the Commission**

As the correspondence period has already closed for all subsidiary bodies of the Commission, I am now seeking formal adoption of the attached reports by **28 January 2021 (18:00 Madrid time)**.

As mentioned in document GEN-007E, until the end of the decision-making process, both CPCs and Observers may provide the Secretariat with one consolidated Statement to each subsidiary body and the Plenary, which will be translated and included in the 2020 Commission proceedings, **but not posted** in the document's webpage. However, consolidated Statements that exceed the limit of 450 words will not be published, unless provided in the three official languages of the Commissions.

Finally, I should like to thank you all for the excellent progress to date and look forward to concluding this process in the most efficient manner possible.

Warm regards,



Raul Delgado  
*Commission Chairman*