

**LETTER FROM THE COMMISSION CHAIR ON PROGRESS ON ESSENTIAL COMMISSION BUSINESS
TO BE DISCUSSED VIA CORRESPONDENCE (ROUND #3 – PART IV)**

Dear Colleagues,

Although the COVID-19 pandemic is still causing substantial problems for all of us, I trust the ICCAT community has been able to remain safe and in good health.

Since my last letter, we have made excellent progress, having now received the comments on the ICCAT Calendar for 2021, and to the Compliance Committee and the Plenary reports. We have not received editorial comments to any of the other subsidiary summary reports circulated with my last letter (PWG, PA1 and PA2), which are now considered to be adopted. In addition, suggestions for a few modifications which I do not believe raise any relevant issues, were received to the COC and Plenary summary reports. I should like to briefly propose a way forward to conclude the 2020 Commission decision making process very soon.

As mentioned in my previous letter (ICCAT Circular 0245 from 14 January 2021), I urge all CPCs to refrain from re-opening any issues already agreed. We already have a two-month delay compared to our usual calendar, and therefore all decisions adopted by the subsidiary bodies shall be endorsed by the Commission without further debate.

Sincerely, I believe that under the current circumstances we shall now focus our attention on the remaining few issues open regarding the Compliance Committee and Plenary summary reports that you can find attached to this letter.

In addition to the issues being discussed in relation to the recommendations of the Compliance Committee, 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

The Panel 1 and 2 reports are now considered adopted, as I have not received additional comment to PA1-550A or to PA2-650A. Accordingly, as mentioned in my previous letter, document PA1-503A, aimed at rollover of the ICCAT Rec. 19-02 is considered adopted.

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

The issue of the correct subsidiary body to discuss the renewal of Cooperating Status was raised, given that Rec. 03-20 indicates that this is to be done by the PWG. However, in 2011, the Commission agreed, following a meeting of the Working Group on the Future of ICCAT, that the Terms of Reference of the PWG and the Compliance Committee should be revised and the work of the two bodies streamlined.

At that time, it was agreed that the consideration of requests for cooperating status, as well as the renewal of this status, should be carried out by the Compliance Committee, given that the granting and renewal of this status was dependent on the compliance performance of the Parties, Entities or Fishing Entities concerned. This is reflected in the mandate and the terms of reference for the Compliance Committee adopted under Recommendation 11-24.

In accordance with past practice, this was reflected in the Notes on Essential Business of the Compliance Committee and was not included for an item for discussion in the PWG, and this was accepted by all Parties at the outset of the correspondence process.

In any case, the issue of the renewal of Cooperating Status has now been referred to Plenary. Therefore, I am further addressing this issue under item 10 below.

7. Intersessional meetings in 2021

With my last letter I circulated a fourth draft of ICCAT calendar for 2021 (posted as document PLE-106C) 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, namely regarding one SCRS intersessional meeting and a two-day session of COC to take place in conjunction with the annual meeting in 2021 as recommended in the COC report and by mistake were not included in the previous proposal. I am attaching a new revised proposal to this letter which has been posted as PLE-106E. With these changes the calendar shall now be considered adopted.

However, under the current circumstances of the pandemic, in-person intersessional meetings are increasingly challenging, therefore if in-person meetings are not possible, these meetings should be converted to a virtual format. On the other hand, currently scheduled online meetings (e.g. September SCRS Species Groups and Plenary meetings) may be reverted to in-person meetings if the situation allows.

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

The Secretariat has not received any expression of interest to host our 2021 annual meeting, scheduled between 15 and 22 November 2021. If no communication is received before **9 February 2021**, I will request the Secretariat to urgently find potential venues for the meeting bearing in mind the current sanitary measures regarding meetings, possibly with some limitations on the number of participants.

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

The correspondence period has already closed for all subsidiary bodies of the Commission, I am now seeking formal adoption of the attached reports. Since only a few issues are still being discussed, I am proposing that we shorten the correspondence period to one week, therefore any addition comments you may have shall be sent by **9 February 2021 (18:00 Madrid time) at the latest**.

The issue of the renewal of Cooperating Status has now been referred to Plenary. Within the established deadlines, we have received one objection to the renewal of cooperating status for Colombia, and two subsequent objections to this objection, supporting the request of Colombia. Notwithstanding these latter two objections, I propose that the Report of the Compliance Committee should be considered endorsed by the Plenary without modification on recommendation not to renew the cooperating status to Colombia for the following reasons:

- These two later objections were not raised during the Compliance Committee procedure;
- They are not based on the substantive issues addressed by the Committee in its assessment of the request from Colombia; and,
- It is not the issue of the participation in the work of the Commission, which was questioned by the COC, but instead the critical issue of the compliance of the applying Party with the ICCAT conservation and management measures.

I am pleased to report that all other business of this Commission process has been successfully concluded and no other items remain open at this time. I therefore open a final round of correspondence which is open **only** on the changes submitted to the summary reports of the Compliance Committee and of the Plenary session. Comments may, therefore, be related **only to the underlined text**, and new edits will not be considered. Comments should be sent by **9 February 2021 (18:00 Madrid time)** at the latest, otherwise these will not be considered.

As mentioned in document GEN-007F, 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** on 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,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "R. Delgado".

Raul Delgado
Commission Chairman