

## Opening Statement to Panel 1 - ICCAT 2020

The cancellation of this year's Commission meeting will limit very much the scope of the discussions that will take place. Nevertheless, for Sciaena, one of the Panel 1 stocks continues to be a great cause of concern – bigeye tuna.

As we have stated in the past, the critical state in which the Atlantic bigeye tuna stock is in is worrying because of the negative impacts it has on the population and the health of pelagic ecosystems, but also due to the importance of the stock for the fishing communities of the Azores and Madeira. As signatory of [the Azores Declaration](#), Sciaena would like to see ICCAT and its CPCs recognizing the particularities and the importance of the pole and line fleets of Azores, Madeira and Canary Islands, which operate with very low environmental impact and are essential to the economies of these island communities.

Although Recommendation 19-02 adopted by ICCAT in 2019 doesn't fully live up to the urgency of the situation bigeye tuna is in, we believe it provides a good starting point to the discussions that will take place in 2021 and that it includes measures that will have a positive effect on the recovery of the stock. In our view, it is clear that Recommendation 19-02 requires a decrease in total catch between 2020 and 2021, and therefore any attempts to not fulfil this requirement cannot be considered by ICCAT or its CPCs.

Furthermore, Sciaena would encourage the scheduling of a Panel 1 intersessional meeting in 2021, to allow for work and discussions to be advanced on several of the stocks under its remit.

