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**The Pew Charitable Trusts’
 Statement to Panel 2
 October 2020**

Despite the cancellation of this year’s Commission meeting, Panel 2 has a number of critical conservation and management decisions to consider via correspondence over the coming weeks. While this format is new to the Commission, a number of previously agreed measures provide members with a firm basis and clear-cut path forward for these decisions, including Rec. 11-13 on the principles of decision making, Rec. 15-12 on the precautionary approach, and stock management Recommendations for northern albacore and Atlantic bluefin. Additionally, following the ICCAT Chair’s directive, the PA2 Chair has taken the initiative to submit four proposals that address essential business and are in line with these commitments.

The Pew Charitable Trusts strongly urges PA2 members to support each of the Chair’s proposals. Specifically, PA2 should:

- **Apply the harvest control rule (HCR) for northern albacore (NALB) by adopting a 12.5% increase in the TAC to 37,801 t.** This increase is based on application of the results from the 2020 NALB stock assessment to the reference points defined in the HCR. The ability to apply the HCR in a straightforward way during an otherwise difficult year for fisheries management underscores one of the key benefits of managing ICCAT stocks in this way – allowing a TAC increase without negotiation. PA2 should adopt the Chair proposals PA2_606 and PA2_607 to implement this increase.
- **Reduce the TAC for western bluefin tuna to 1,785 t to give a nearly 60% chance of ending overfishing in 2021.** The western stock has been subject to overfishing since 2018, and Rec. 11-13 requires overfishing to be ended with “high probability...in as short a time as possible.” Western bluefin requires emergency action this year and a rollover of the existing TAC would not be an acceptable way forward for ICCAT, since it would lead to continued overfishing in 2021 with almost complete certainty. As such, PA2 should follow the lead of the Chair and adopt PA2_608 to prevent overfishing in 2021.

The only other western bluefin proposal under consideration is from the United States (PA2-610), and this proposal is concerning in that it fails to propose a TAC that would end overfishing. It also calls for a western assessment in 2021, which is counter to the SCRS advice to convene the next assessment in 2022 and the SCRS practice of concurrent eastern and western assessments. Furthermore, the SCRS already has multiple assessments scheduled for 2021, and there is not adequate justification to divert resources to another western bluefin assessment just one year later. It would be beneficial to the work of the Commission, if the U.S. were to withdraw its proposal and enable consensus on the Chair’s proposal, PA2_608.

- **Follow the advice of SCRS scientists and adopt a measure for East Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin that maintains the TAC at 36,000 t per year in 2021 and 2022.** PA2 should adopt the Chair’s proposal PA2_609 to maintain the TAC at current levels and should continue to support the development of management strategy evaluation for both bluefin stocks.

- **Schedule a PA2 intersessional meeting for late summer or fall 2021 to:**
 - Make final recommendations for the expansion of the northern albacore HCR into a comprehensive management procedure (MP), including exceptional circumstances.
 - Advance the management strategy evaluation process for Atlantic bluefin tuna, including by providing feedback on preliminary candidate MP results and finalizing operational management objectives for bluefin management.