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The Pew Charitable Trusts'
Position Statement for the 27th Regular Meeting of ICCAT
15-23 November 2021

The Pew Charitable Trusts welcomes the opportunity to participate in the 27th Meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas. We appreciate the work of the Secretariat, Chair, and members to convene a virtual meeting due to the continuing extraordinary situation related to the COVID-19 pandemic. As ICCAT did not hold a formal, virtual meeting of the Commission in 2020, there is a very busy agenda with many CPC proposals that Pew encourages the Commission to adopt. There are substantial opportunities to advance conservation and management of Atlantic tunas and reduce any remaining opportunities for illegal operators at this meeting. As such, Pew urges ICCAT to address the following items:

- **Adopt a shortfin mako rebuilding program with a high probability of recovering the north Atlantic population over the already long timelines identified by the SCRS** – A north Atlantic shortfin mako recovery plan must be agreed this year to slow and eventually reverse the highly concerning decline expected for this population over the next several years. There was substantial progress made at the October intersessional meeting of Panel 4 towards development of more effective management, and Pew urges CPCs to build on that momentum to adopt a new measure that reduces total mortality to a sustainable level.
- **Adopt proposal [PWG-414](#) to close remaining loopholes in ICCAT's management of transshipment activity** – ICCAT has the opportunity to be the first of the tuna RFMOs to improve its original transshipment measure by addressing weaknesses that may be allowing illegally-caught tuna, shark, and swordfish products to continue to enter the supply chain. Transshipment reform has been on ICCAT's agenda since 2019, and PWG-414 incorporates feedback received at IMM and in consultations that have taken place since then. The proposal should be supported by all CPCs and adopted without delay.
- **Adopt a west Atlantic bluefin tuna TAC no higher than 2,444 t** – Based on this year's stock assessment, the SCRS has concluded that a rollover over from the current TAC of 2350 t or a slight increase would be acceptable. However, the SCRS and an independent reviewer cautioned managers about using the assessment as a basis for management due to a variety of concerns. Thus, we urge managers to exercise restraint in setting a TAC for 2022, and if allowing for a quota increase, to cap that at 4%, as supported by an analysis conducted by the SCRS in response to the independent reviewer's concerns.
- **Adopt proposal [PWG-416](#) that would expand ICCAT's requirement to obtain unique vessel identification numbers from the International Maritime Organization to additional vessels** – In 2017, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) increased the number of vessels that are eligible to obtain an IMO number, providing compliance and enforcement officers with a key tool



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to correctly identify vessels. While ICCAT requires IMO numbers for some vessels, it is critical that it takes the step of extending that requirement to all eligible vessels. This would not only support ICCAT's oversight and enforcement efforts, but would align it with international best practice, including measures in force by all other major tuna RFMOs.

- **Adopt proposal [PWG-415](#) that would require CPCs to prevent their nationals from benefitting from or supporting IUU fishing activities** – To successfully prevent IUU fishing, it is important that governments have the ability to prevent their nationals, natural or legal persons subject to their jurisdiction, from not only engaging in IUU fishing but also from benefitting from or supporting such activities, even if they fish under another State's flag or do not fish at all. Illegal fishing should not be something that bad actors can find ways to continue doing by changing their flag, ownership, or vessel registration, and associated institutions should be held to a high standard to prevent this activity from threatening sustainability or encroaching on the livelihoods of law-abiding fishing operations. ICCAT managers should be supporting this proposal as an important step to preventing illegal ICCAT products from reaching consumers around the world.
- **Adopt a full management procedure for north Atlantic albacore that includes an exceptional circumstances protocol, marking a first for ICCAT** – The north Atlantic albacore harvest control rule was the first adopted by ICCAT and has already proven to be successful, with the Commission able to implement the rule and raise the TAC in 2020, despite the cancellation of the Commission meeting. But implementation of an HCR is just one step of a comprehensive, effective management procedure. ICCAT now needs to convert the HCR to a full management procedure, complete with an exceptional circumstances protocol, in order to ensure this approach leads to tested, effective management over the long term. CPCs should submit or support a proposal to combine existing north Atlantic albacore measures into a single, complete management procedure.
- **Adopt [PWG-418](#) that would establish a working group to develop an electronic monitoring program for ICCAT fisheries** – There is an increasing recognition among CPCs that electronic monitoring can be an important component of observer coverage for both science and compliance purposes. Development of a successful EM program will require drafting minimum standards and consultations among CPCs, between scientists and managers, and with stakeholders. Pew urges the Commission to support the efforts to establish an *ad hoc* working group to complete these tasks, which were included in multiple recommendations in 2019 and were originally due for Commission consideration this year.
- **Advance the development of management strategy evaluation (MSE) for the Atlantic bluefin stocks, the tropical tunas, and other priority stocks** – MSE continues to be an important tool to ensure that management procedures under consideration by ICCAT Panels have been properly tested and are robust to uncertainties. The MSE process for Atlantic bluefin has been ongoing for seven years and is now nearing an end. However, to conduct the series of meetings in 2022 necessary to finalize the bluefin MSE, the Commission must adopt the workplan and calendar as



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recommended by the SCRS. It is also an appropriate time to increase support for MSE development for western skipjack, the other tropical tunas, and north Atlantic swordfish – all efforts that are underway at the SCRS. 2022 will be a big year for the consideration and adoption of management procedures, and it is important to endorse this work at the meeting this year.

Additionally, there are other items that ICCAT must address this year, including bigeye tuna management, yellowfin tuna TAC overages, and a variety of additional strong proposals at the Permanent Working Group. While this makes for an extensive list of priorities due to a backlog of items from last year, there has been substantial intersessional work completed on all of these items. Pew urges the Commission and member governments to capitalize on the significant intersessional progress this year and address all necessary business. As each Panel and Working Group begins its work, please refer to our opening statements for more information about the issues highlighted above.