

EXPLANATORY NOTE ON DRAFT RESOLUTION BY ICCAT ON CLIMATE CHANGE

(proposed by the United States, United Kingdom, Senegal, Republic of Korea and Egypt)

Climate change is unequivocally altering aquatic systems with consequences for fisheries around the globe, including their contributions to food security and nutrition. Warming oceans, rising seas, melting sea ice, deoxygenation, and increasing acidification are altering ecosystem structure and the distribution and abundance of marine species. Changing ocean conditions affect the location, seasonality, and productivity of fish stocks, as well as fishery interactions with bycatch, protected species, and other ocean users.

The IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report (2021) noted that many changes due to past and future greenhouse gas emissions are irreversible for centuries to millennia, especially changes in the ocean, ice sheets, and global sea level. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the UN cited recent IPCC reports when developing its Strategy on Climate Change (SCC) 2022-2031, asserting that agrifood systems, including fisheries, must become more resilient to the current and future impacts of climate change. At the 35th meeting of FAO's Committee on Fisheries (COFI), COFI encouraged the FAO to increase the knowledge and awareness on climate change impacts in fisheries and aquaculture and to provide guidance on adaptation and mitigation, highlighting the need for guidance on climate resilient fisheries management, including by convening a workshop with regional fisheries bodies. Additionally, the 2021 UN General Assembly Sustainable Fisheries Resolution A/RES/76/71 calls on RFMOs to consider climate change in carrying out their work. International fisheries organizations globally are taking notice of the serious implications that climate change poses to fisheries and of the science and adaptive management actions that likely are needed in response.

In light of this, the United States is proposing a resolution to initiate discussions about the impact of climate change on fisheries in the ICCAT context. The draft resolution calls on ICCAT to consider climate impacts on shared stocks and non-target species; to support scientific study of the effects of climate change on ICCAT-managed species; and to promote conservation and management measures that account for climate change. Recognizing that this is a complex issue, with potentially non-linear and varying impacts on stocks and their habitats, the resolution also proposes a joint experts meeting between the SCRS and the Commission's Panels. This topic necessitates a scientist-manager dialogue, not only to gain an understanding of what current SCRS information could be relevant to this matter, but also to discuss any gaps in the Commission's understanding of climate impacts on ICCAT fisheries that are critical to address in support of future management decisions. This foundational work is essential to help the Commission identify how it might adapt to the challenges posed by climate change.

ICCAT's broad membership and extensive management structure puts it in a strong position to lend leadership and expertise to the global conversations on international climate-resilient fisheries management. Effective fisheries management depends on robust information about past, current, and projected future conditions of marine ecosystems. Attention to these issues may result in better projections that improve stock assessments, assess risks, and evaluate best management strategies under a range of likely future climate and ocean conditions. ICCAT's action on climate now is essential to develop more flexible, responsive, and adaptive management regimes for our shared marine resources in the future.

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RECOGNISING international initiatives to address the climate change and its effects, including through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Paris Agreement, and the Glasgow Climate Pact;

NOTING the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change with specific reference to the Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate (2019) and the Sixth Assessment Report (2022);

AWARE that, in September 2022, at the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Committee on Fisheries (COFI) highlighted the need for developing guidance *on* climate resilient fisheries management *including* a process to facilitate coordination and cooperation among RFMO/RFBs;

ACKNOWLEDGING that climate change poses, both in the short- and long-term, significant challenges for regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs), including the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), given its widespread and lasting implications for the ocean, the animals that live within it, the ecosystems that are fundamental components of it, and the individuals and communities that depend upon it;

AWARE that the Standing Committee for Research and Statistics (SCRS), in particular, its Subcommittee on Ecosystems and Bycatch, and the scientific bodies of other RFMOs have been assessing the impacts of climate change and other associated environmental degradation on ICCAT target stocks, non-target species and species belonging to the same ecosystem or associated with or dependent upon target stocks in the Convention area;

RECOGNIZING the need to utilize fully existing data sources and for additional information gathering and research to gain a more complete understanding of the potential impacts of climate change on ICCAT target stocks, non-target species and species belonging to the same ecosystem or associated with or dependent upon target stocks in the Convention area, as well as the related impacts on the fishing communities and economies of Contracting Parties and Cooperating non-Contracting Parties, Entities, and Fishing Entities (CPCs) to ICCAT;

COMMITTED to developing effective management and other strategies and approaches to adapt to changing conditions and improve the resilience of ICCAT stocks, fisheries, and related ecosystems, as well as of fishing communities, in the face of climate change;

RECOGNIZING the importance of exploring ways to reduce the environmental and climate impacts of the Commission related to the operation of its headquarters and meetings; and

AWARE that ICCAT has committed to implement a precautionary approach to fisheries management as reflected in the *Resolution by ICCAT Concerning the Use of a Precautionary Approach in Implementing ICCAT Conservation and Management Measures* (Res. 15-12) and other recommendations and resolutions adopted over the years as well as through reference to the precautionary approach in the Convention Amendment Protocol adopted in 2019.

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE CONSERVATION
OF ATLANTIC TUNAS (ICCAT) RESOLVES AS FOLLOWS:

1. To consider during the course of its work the potential impacts of climate change on ICCAT target stocks, non-target species and species, belonging to the same ecosystem or associated with or dependent upon target stocks in the Convention area, as well as any related socioeconomic or other impacts on the fisheries, including on CPCs and their fishing communities.

2. To take into account to the greatest extent possible the best scientific information and advice available on the potential impacts of climate change on the aforementioned ICCAT stocks, species, and ecosystems, and related impacts on fisheries in the development of conservation and management measures with a view to adapting to changing conditions and improving the resilience of these stocks, species, related ecosystems, and fisheries.
3. To support accelerated data collection and scientific research by the SCRS with a view to improving the provision of advice to the Commission on potential measures and approaches for climate change adaptation, resilience, and mitigation. Areas of focus should include, *inter alia*, the relationship between changing oceanographic conditions resulting from climate change and the aforementioned ICCAT stocks, species, and ecosystems, and related impacts on fisheries; the inter-relationships with other factors that affect these stocks, species, and fisheries; and estimates of associated uncertainties.
4. To consider how fishing activities may be affected by climate change and consider if there are actions that could be taken to reduce or mitigate any potential impacts.
5. To consider the need for capacity building and technical assistance to improve climate science as it relates to understanding, predicting, and addressing the impacts on the aforementioned ICCAT stocks, species, and ecosystems, and related impacts on fisheries, described in paragraph 1, and to explore ways to provide such assistance, where needed, with the advice of SCRS.
6. To consider through STACFAD and, if appropriate, other ICCAT bodies, approaches to reduce the environmental and climate impacts, such as the impacts of greenhouse gas emissions, of the Commission, including through headquarters' operation and meetings of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies.
7. To initiate climate work in ICCAT without delay, the Commission will convene a three-day meeting of relevant experts in 2023. Specifically, a joint expert's meeting of ICCAT's four Panels and the SCRS (in particular, its Subcommittee on Ecosystems and Bycatch) will be held to consider the issues identified in this resolution and any other relevant climate related issues, as appropriate. All CPCs are encouraged to participate in the meeting, and outside climate experts, particularly those with expertise in fisheries matters, may be invited to join the meeting, as needed.
8. The joint meeting specified in paragraph 7 above will, *inter alia*, undertake the following:
 - a) review the current state of knowledge and information available, with an initial focus on the work to-date of SCRS; regarding the potential impacts of climate change within ICCAT;
 - b) identify existing sources of climate-related data and information relevant to the Commission and SCRS;
 - c) identify data gaps and other challenges as well as research needs and opportunities;
 - d) develop a workplan to guide the Commission's work on relevant issues associated with climate change; and
 - e) recommend, if feasible and appropriate, potential actions that ICCAT could consider taking, including through cooperation with other relevant intergovernmental organizations, to address identified needs and challenges, or if more appropriate, that CPCs individually could consider taking.
9. The Chair of the joint expert's meeting will be selected by the Commission.
10. A report of the meeting will be presented to the Commission by the Chair of the joint expert's meeting. The Commission will consider this report at its 2023 Annual Meeting and decide on next steps, including on the potential need for a second joint expert's meeting and/or other actions to advance further ICCAT's work in this important area.