

**MEETINGS AT WHICH ICCAT WAS REPRESENTED
FROM JANUARY 2023 TO OCTOBER 2023**

SUMMARY

This document provides basic information on the meetings of an administrative and scientific nature at which ICCAT was represented by members of the Secretariat staff or by other persons acting on its behalf. The basic information on each meeting includes the main points of the agenda as well as their major implications for ICCAT.

**RÉUNIONS AUXQUELLES L'ICCAT A ÉTÉ REPRÉSENTÉE
ENTRE JANVIER 2023 ET OCTOBRE 2023**

RÉSUMÉ

Le présent document fournit des informations de base sur les réunions administratives et scientifiques auxquelles l'ICCAT a été représentée par des membres du personnel du Secrétariat ou par d'autres personnes au nom du Secrétariat. L'information de base pour chaque réunion inclut les principaux points de l'ordre du jour ainsi que les principales implications pour l'ICCAT.

**REUNIONES EN LAS QUE HA ESTADO REPRESENTADA ICCAT
ENTRE ENERO DE 2023 Y OCTUBRE DE 2023**

RESUMEN

Este documento presenta información básica sobre las reuniones administrativas y científicas en las que ICCAT estuvo representada, ya sea por miembros de la Secretaría o por otras personas que actuaron en su nombre. La información básica que se presenta para cada reunión incluye los puntos principales del orden del día y sus principales implicaciones para ICCAT.

THE MEETING OF THE REVISED FISHERIES GOVERNANCE AND AQUACULTURE WORKING GROUPS OF THE AFRICAN FISHERIES REFORM MECHANISM (AFRM)

Location: Safir Hotel - Giza, Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt.

Dates: 23-24 January 2023.

Representative: M'Hamed Idrissi, Compliance Officer - ICCAT Secretariat,

Agenda focus items, in the framework of the AFRM' Consultation process (**Evidence generation by WGs** → Policy synthesis by Think Tank → Policy recommendations by Executive Committee → Sectorial Committee on fisheries and aquaculture by Advisory Council → Specialized Technical Committee (STC) on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment (STC-ARDWE/Bureau) → African Union Summit), **were on the very first level of such a process carried out by the Revised Fisheries Governance Working Group:**

- "Expert review of the report on Mechanisms to Facilitate the Domestication of Global Instruments and Initiatives at Continental, Regional and National Levels",
- "Propose further insight or expert perspectives into effective mechanisms for domestications of Global Instruments".

ICCAT participated in the meeting as expert and made several interventions during the discussions of the Revised Fisheries Governance Working Group:

- Highlighting the evolution of ICCAT's mandate that has culminated in the new Convention text, amended in 2019; deposited at FAO, it is currently being ratified by ICCAT CPCs. Appeal made through AU-IBAR for those African countries, among the 22 currently members of ICCAT (out of the 27 bordering the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea) which have not yet ratified it that these would be encouraged to do so.
- Bringing to the attention of participants that any domestication of international instruments, such as the binding ICCAT recommendations (in total 113 Rec. by June 2023), where applied, would require effective involvement in the fishing activities, and compliance with all what these require in terms of reporting (statistics/Science and Compliance). There should be some incentives, socio-economic mainly, that should encourage in investing (qualified human resources and necessary funds) in the incorporation of such international instruments in the domestic legislations.
- Highlighting the importance of the capacity-building of the African countries involved in fishing activities for tunas and tuna-like species, in the ICCAT Convention area, that should seriously be highly considered by the AU's subsidiary organs (IBAR and others). ICCAT, under its Convention, gives full recognition to the special requirements of developing Members of the Commission, including the need for their capacity building in accordance with international law, to implement their obligations and to develop their fisheries (Article IV).

Outcomes of the meeting of the Revised Fisheries Governance Working Group:

The meeting supported the content of the policy briefs for further consideration by the Advisory Council of the AFRM. The two "Governance"-related policy briefs are:

- priority instruments for domestication in African Union Member States for improved fisheries governance.
- Mechanism for the domestication of global instruments.

For indication only: those two policy briefs related to Aquaculture Governance WG were limited to the fresh water (inland), showing that there would be no interest, for the moment, in any open sea aquaculture activities (tuna farming mainly):

- Sustainable Cage Aquaculture for food security and profit in Africa.
- Tilapia Farming: Adapting Egypt Success to the rest of Africa.

Recommendations of the Revised Fisheries Governance Working Group, in terms of:

Identification and analysis of priority instruments for domestication and Mechanism for effective participation in global fora policy briefs and consultancy, through:

- A showcase the countries that have domesticated the international instruments.
- The incorporation of the inter-ministerial collaboration in the proposed organogram.
- The inclusion of the International Labor Organization (ILO) fisheries convention 188 as one of the critical international instruments.
- The enlisting of the identified critical international instruments and their categorization as binding and non-binding.
- The necessity to identify the needs of the AU-MS, Contracting Parties to Regional Fisheries Management Organizations, to inform capacity-building opportunities.

Recommendations to AU-IBAR:

- AU-IBAR to encourage the AU-MS to engage and participate effectively in the negotiation process, implementation and monitoring of recommendations and emerging issues related to regional protocols/conventions and global instruments.
- AU-IBAR to strengthen collaboration with regional and national institutions in the aspects of communication, visibility and exchanges of experiences and knowledge products.

Link to African Fisheries Reform Mechanism (AFRM), through AU-IBAR web site: <https://www.au-ibar.org/au-ibar-news/africa-fisheries-reform-mechanisms-fisheries-governance-and-aquaculture-working-groups>

REPRISE DE LA 5EME SESSION: CONFERENCE INTERGOUVERNEMENTALE SUR UN INSTRUMENT INTERNATIONAL JURIDIQUEMENT CONTRAIGNANT SE RAPPORTANT A LA CONVENTION DES NATIONS UNIES SUR LE DROIT DE LA MER ET PORTANT SUR LA CONSERVATION ET L'UTILISATION DURABLE DE LA BIODIVERSITE MARINE DES ZONES NE RELEVANT PAS DE LA JURIDICTION NATIONALE

Lieu: UN HQ, New York, USA

Dates: 20 février-3 mars 2023 (en présentiel la première semaine, et en ligne la seconde)

Représentant: Camille Jean Pierre Manel, Secrétaire exécutif

Ordre du jour: Poursuite de l'examen du texte révisé d'un accord au titre de la Convention des Nations unies sur le droit de la mer relatif à la conservation et à l'exploitation durable de la biodiversité marine dans les zones situées au-delà de la juridiction nationale.

Faisant suite aux travaux de sa cinquième session tenue en juin 2022, la Conférence a poursuivi l'examen du texte révisé lors d'une reprise de cette même session. Les discussions, sur le fond du projet de texte d'accord révisé, ont concerné tous les quatre points initialement retenus depuis le début du processus en 2011 (ressources génétiques marines, partage des avantages, outils de gestion par zone, y compris les aires marines protégées, les études d'impact sur l'environnement, renforcement des capacités et le transfert de techniques marines). Une faible participation d'experts de la pêche a continué d'être constatée.

Lors des échanges au sein de plusieurs groupes et en plénière, la question de l'exclusion de la pêche a été plusieurs fois soulevée, certains délégués demandant davantage de clarification sur cette exclusion, eu égard à certaines dispositions de l'Accord relatives notamment aux outils de gestion par zone et à l'évaluation d'impact environnemental. De longues et intenses négociations se sont prolongées de plus d'un jour à la fin prévue de la réunion pour aboutir à l'adoption, malgré quelques réserves, d'un texte. La Conférence soumettra celui-ci à un groupe de travail informel en vue d'établir sa cohérence terminologique et d'harmoniser les versions des six langues officielles de l'ONU.

Lors d'une ultérieure nouvelle reprise de la cinquième session tenue les 19 et 20 juin 2023, la Conférence a adopté le texte harmonisé par le groupe de travail informel, à l'exception d'une délégation qui n'a pas suivi le consensus. Il a été recommandé de transmettre le texte au Président de l'Assemblée générale pour que le Secrétaire général de l'ONU puisse assumer les compétences qui lui incombent en vertu de l'accord. Aussi,

La DOALOS assurera les fonctions de secrétariat jusqu'à l'établissement du Secrétariat prévu par l'Accord qui sera ouvert à la signature, ratification, approbation ou acceptation à partir du 20 septembre 2023. La première Conférence des Parties (CoP) se tiendra dans l'année qui suit l'entrée en vigueur de l'Accord, qui lui intervient après que 60 Parties ont déposé leurs instruments. Cette CoP décidera, entre autres, des instruments clés de l'Accord comme le siège du Secrétariat, son règlement intérieur ainsi que ses règles de gestion financière. Elle devra aussi clarifier la nature de la collaboration, la consultation, la coopération et la coordination avec les organes mondiaux, régionaux, sous-régionaux et sectoriels pertinents.

L'adoption de ce nouvel Accord sur le BBNJ vient s'ajouter à la Partie XI sur les Fonds marins et à l'Accord sur les Stocks de poissons dans le cadre de la CNUDM.

[Copie certifiée de l'Accord
Rapport](#)

CAPAM TUNA STOCK ASSESSMENT GOOD PRACTICES WORKSHOP

Location: Hybrid meeting, Wellington, New Zealand

Dates: 7-10 March 2023

Representative: Ai Kimoto (Science Department)

Agenda items: The agenda covered various main topics in fishery stock assessments; Longline size data, Tag data and modelling, Purse seine species comp and size data, Recruitment, CPUE, Natural mortality, Weight-length, maturity, conversion factors, Growth, Identifying stock structure, Modelling stock structure, Modeling selectivity/fishery structure, Model diagnostics, and Model weighting.

Summary: The CAPAM (Center for the Advancement of Population Assessment Methodology) workshop series has been conducted for about 20 years. In 2012, the CAPAM was established to: (1) improve quantitative methods generally used in stock assessment modeling efforts, whereby research is focused on parameterization and simulation involved in determining good practices for developing robust fishery models; and (2) afford the educational and training opportunities necessary to produce competent researchers and ultimately, the next generation of stock assessment scientists.

The Secretariat participated in the CAPAM Tuna Stock Assessment Good Practices Workshop organized by the National Institute for Water and Atmospheric Research (NIWA), and the International Seafood Sustainability Foundation (ISSF) on 7-10 March 2023 in Wellington, New Zealand. About 40 scientists participated in the in-person meeting, mostly scientists from the Pacific Ocean; CCSBT, IATTC, NIWA, NRIFSF, and SPC. The IOTC and ICCAT Secretariat also were invited. The workshop was led by Drs. Maunder and Hoyle and the participants discussed each topic based on the presentations by invited world expert speakers.

The workshop covered all the main topics in fishery stock assessment by the integrated age-structured models, including the cumulated knowledge through the workshop on Stock Assessment Good Practices in 2022 in Rome, Italy. Most of the presentations were related to tropical tunas stock assessments. Given all the presentations and discussions, the Chair of the workshop provided his initial views on stock assessment good practices on the last day of the workshop (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_CFhMETAhDw). The Chair noted that these views will be updated for the report based on several knowledge sources including the two recent CAPAM workshops, the manuscripts in the special issue presented in the past CAPAM meetings, and recent reviews of tuna stock assessments. In ICCAT, this information was discussed at the meeting of the Working Group on Stock Assessment Method (WGSAM) in May 2023.

Some of the good practices suggested in the workshop have been applied in the ICCAT stock assessments. The main points of the Chair's initial views were to use spatial-temporal standardized CPUE weighted by space, to try estimating stock-recruitment relationship, to use age-specific natural mortality by Lorenzen, to avoid using sex-specific natural mortality, to estimate growth curve inside model (with some cautions, check well the result due to data conflicts), to separate each gear and/or large catch component as fleet, and to estimate double normal selectivity curve (with the possibility of time-blocks). It was also noted that much more work is needed to make diagnostics more useful and objective to accept and eliminate models. It was

also commented that there is not standard practice for model weighting. More information is available at www.capamresearch.org on the CAPAM workshops.

REGIONAL OBSERVER PROGRAMME FOR EASTERN ATLANTIC AND MEDITERRANEAN BLUEFIN TUNA – TRAINING OF TRAINERS

Location: Oliva, Valencia, Spain

Dates: 3-5 April 2023.

Representative: Jenny Cheatle, Aldana Vieito (Compliance Department), Francisco Alemany (GBYP)

Main Agenda items: Review of ROP-BFT (Changes, developments and clarifications); Overview of course materials; Review of reporting forms, database and troubleshooting; Sampling and tag reporting; PNCs, R3s and deployment reporting; Debriefing and quality controls; Memorandum of Understanding

Summary

The programme coordinator presented the main modules which would make up the course for ROP-BFT trainees, with the main aim of the the meeting being to ensure coherency throughout the various regions in which training was taking place.

Several aspects relating to current measures were clarified with the compliance department representatives, and the protocols for the sampling of fish, particularly of tagged fish, were discussed with the GBYP coordinator.

In general it was considered by all that the exercise had been beneficial as it allowed for more discussion and a better understanding by both consortium and Secretariat of the issues involved.

Future actions: The consortium indicated that it would be helpful to continue to have training of trainers in future years, and in addition to the Secretariat, to have CPC participation. This latter could be either through training of trainers meetings or through the organization of a CPC/consortium meeting, which could be either in-person or online. Some specific actions to improve the tags recovery and getting biological samples and data from tagged specimens, as provision of genetic sampling equipment and updating of awareness material and sampling protocols, were agreed between GBYP coordinator and MRAG responsables.

FAO/PSMA SECRETARIAT - FIRST MEETING OF THE PSMA STRATEGY AD HOC AND FOURTH MEETING OF THE PART 6 WORKING GROUP

Location: Roma, Italy/hybrid

Date: 3- 7 April 2023 + 4 April 2023

Representatives: Valérie Samedy, VMS Manager and M’Hamed Idrissi, Compliance Officer (both online).

Agenda items:

- Review of the outcome of the third meeting of the Parties to the Agreement on Port State Measures (PSMA)
- Review of the outcome of the fourth PSMA Regional Coordination Meetings
- Review of the outcome of the third meeting of the PSMA Technical Working Group on Information Exchange
- Strategy to improve the implementation of the Agreement including the increasing the number of Parties, Port State performance, exchange of information, review of the questionnaires for States to assess the implementation of the PSMA and the development a new questionnaire for regional fishery bodies, capacity development and training, assessment and monitoring of compliance.

Summary: Since the adoption in 2009 of the PSMA as the first binding international agreement that specifically targets illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, many States have become Parties (a number of 74 so far) and several others have started the process toward ratification or accession. Effective cooperation and information exchange are necessary among the Parties to the PSMA and relevant States, FAO, other International Organizations and RFBS, particularly RFMOs, to ensure the effective

implementation of the Agreement. Various information exchange tools have been developed, including the Global Record of Fishing Vessels and the FAO Global Information Exchange System (GIES).

The main goal of this meeting was to draft a proposal for a strategy to improve the effectiveness of the PSMA. The PSMA Secretariat prepared a document, but the Parties found it too formal which seems to be drafted like a recommendation, particularly at its preambular section. Five main considerations and interventions were agreed for the structure of this PSMA Strategy draft: 1) Increasing adherence to and participation in the PSMA, 2) Fulfilment of responsibilities of the Parties for effective implementation of the PSMA, 3) Mechanisms for implementation of Part 9 (monitoring, review and assessment), 4) Ensuring efficient and sustainable functioning of the agreement, and 5) Monitoring and review of the strategy.

A roadmap was rather expected with (i) the definition of short-, medium- and long-term objectives, (ii) the identification of the difficulties to implement or comply with the agreement, (iii) the role of RFMOs or the influence at large regional level in order to present the draft PSMA Strategy at the next MoP.

The Fourth Meeting of the Part 6 Working Group helped to report and make recommendations to the Parties on the establishment of a funding mechanism for the purpose of assisting developing State Parties in the implementation of the Agreement, and on priorities for the use of the funding mechanism.

Report: This First Meeting of the PSMA Strategy ad hoc Working Group agreed that, before its adoption by correspondence within one week deadline, this draft document will be cleaned up by the Secretariat and annexed to the report with no changes to the drafting made. A draft report of the Fourth Meeting of the Part 6 Working Group will also be provided.

Future steps: Fourth Meeting of the Parties (MoP) to the PSMA (8 -12 May 2023, in Bali, Indonesia)

EVENT : EUROPEAN TRACKING NETWORK EU COST ACTION FINAL SYMPOSIUM AND FIRST WORKSHOP OF STRAITS (STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURE FOR IMPROVED ANIMAL TRACKING IN EUROPEAN SEAS) EU HORIZON PROJECT

Location: Izmir (Turkiye)

Dates: 1-3 May 2023

Representative: Francisco Alemany, GBYP Coordinator.

Main agenda items:

Day 1 ETN COST Action

- ETN COST action Management Committee meeting
- COST-Action Working Group Meetings
- Hands-on data management workshop (European data management system on acoustic telemetry data hosted by VLIZ)

Day 2 ETN COST Action

- Keynote 1: BRIDGING THE SCIENCE AND ACTION GAP: THE CASE OF BIOTELEMETRY RESEARCH Dr. Vivian Nguyen (Carleton University) Discussion & questions with Vivian
- First session of presentations of results aquatic telemetry studies by research teams
- Keynote 2: TELEMETRY & ICCAT Francisco Alemany (ICCAT) Discussion & questions with Francisco
- Second session of presentations of results aquatic telemetry studies by research teams

Day 3 STRAITS workshop

- Introduction to the STRAITS project: Strategic Infrastructure for Improved Animal Tracking in European Seas
- Discussions, brainstorming, planning, collaborations, etc.

Summary: The meeting consisted in two somewhat independent but related workshops, the final meeting of the ETN action and the first workshop of the new STRAITS EU project, initiated in January 2023.

The ETN (<https://europeantrackingnetwork.org/en>) is a COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology) action focused on the creation of a European research network on aquatic telemetry. Its main tangible output has been an information system to manage acoustic telemetry data in EU waters and the improvement of the existing network of acoustic receivers in the region. This information system is hosted by VLIZ (Flanders Marine Institute, Belgium), which grants its maintenance in a future. The main interest for ICCAT is that different projects can be created within this data management platform, defining who can access the data of each one. So, if in a future ICCAT develop acoustic tagging programs we could take advantage of this system, integrated in its turn into the global Ocean Tracking Network (<https://oceantrackingnetwork.org/>) to manage acoustic data, instead of investing resources in creating a new DB within ICCAT Secretariat. The use of acoustic tags within ICCAT etagging programs is a probable scenario in a near future, mainly considering the deployment of new arrays of receivers in strategic places for large pelagic species, and the fact that acoustic tagging, much cheaper than etagging with archival internal or satellite tags and able to provide long multiannual data sets, can answer some crucial questions about the spatial patterns and biological/ecological traits of ICCAT species, directly applicable to management purposes, which cannot be addressed by other methods.

The ETN COST project have also succeed in the aforementioned second important tangible output, the reinforcement of the marine arrays of acoustic receivers in EU waters, since some of them, of interest for large pelagic species, have been already enlarged or newly deployed, as those in Skagerrak and Irish Channel. It has also succeed in the "intangible output" of consolidating a network of research teams working in fish telemetry, as shown by the fact that such teams have presented together and have been awarded with the new large EU HORIZON project STRAITS (<https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101094649>), under which several curtains of acoustic receivers across straits will be reinforced or newly deployed, including a complete array across Gibraltar Strait, of obvious interest for several ICCAT species, specially bluefin. Regarding this latter one, some pilot studies were carried out last year, deploying temporary several receivers in Gibraltar area. It should be pointed out that these receivers, in spite of being deployed for a short time, recorded several detections of bluefins tagged in USA and Denmark. By the way, DTU etagging team, collaborating with GBYP from 2017, has already deployed more than 600 acoustic tags on bluefin, and that Stanford etagging team is deploying acoustic tags in BFT and other large pelagics from decades ago, and has produced the first direct estimations of natural mortality of BFT based on these data.

In June 2023 new deployments of receivers will be made to test in field conditions its detection capability, and it is planned to deploy the first complete curtain of receivers, between Algeciras and Ceuta (only in Spanish waters to prevent administrative problems) by the end of 2023. Meanwhile, Moroccan authorities will continue being contacted to explore the possibilities of deploying a second array between Spain and Morocco, following the initial plan of deploying the curtain across the line with minimum depths.

One of the main points in the agenda, introduced formally through the first keynote speech by Dr. Nguyen, and which arose many times during the meeting, was the issue of the transfer of scientific knowledge to management. So, I had the opportunity of intervening several times to explain that in some cases, as that of ICCAT, these paths to address the managers are already well established, and that such way should be to present directly the scientific results relevant for management to the scientific bodies in charge of the advice to managers, as SCRS, and participating actively in their species groups meetings.

It is worth mentioning that several presentations of scientific results from studies based on acoustic telemetry carried out in species of interest for ICCAT (blue shark in the Mediterranean, pelagic sharks and rays in the Açores, marine megafauna in marine wind farms) showed that there is relevant information for the management of large pelagic species that is not regularly provided to SCRS. It was also obvious that many scientists working on large pelagic species were not fully aware of the ICCAT etagging programs, and hence the attendants welcomed our presentation on such ICCAT activities (attached document).

On the other hand, VLIZ is planning to develop another DB to integrate information from other types of electronic tags deployed in aquatic animals, but they are still in the initial phases. So, they are very interested in the ETAGS database currently under development in ICCAT, because probably they could use it as the main reference to design its own broader DB.

Future actions:

- Monitor closely the deployment of the new arrays of acoustic receivers
- Keep the direct communication with VLIZ data management responsible, informing them about the progress on our ETAGS DB and asking them for further info about the use of the ETN DB for acoustic data
- Keep the contact with ETN network researchers working in species of interest for ICCAT

Report availability: (including link if available).

I asked for a copy of the meeting report when available.

BERMEO TUNA FORUM

Location: Bilbao, Bermeo (Vizcaya, Spain)

Dates attended: 2-3 May 2023

Representative: Camille Jean Pierre Manel, ICCAT Executive Secretary

Agenda items: sustainability regarding the tuna sector alliance of tuna cities, labour rights of seafarers and the fight against IUU fishing

ICCAT participated on the occasion of the celebration of World Tuna Day (2 May) at the first Bermeo Tuna Forum organised by the Association Bermeo Tuna World Capital (BTWC), a public-private association composed of the key players in the tuna value chain. The event gathered institutional representatives at the global level, as well as specialised bodies of the UN System, scientific bodies and European representatives of the fishing sector, among others.

The Forum held various panels on governance, tuna sector's challenges, tuna cities, tuna ambassadors, and sustainability regarding the tuna sector. The issues of social and labour rights of seafarers and the fight against IUU fishing were also discussed, in addition to the promotion of an International Declaration for Tuna Sustainability by the UN General Assembly, which seeks to "protect this precious resource and its ecosystems for present and future generations, as well as to guarantee the human rights of all those involved in its supply chain".

On the second day of the Forum, seven founding cities, Manta (Ecuador), Port Victoria (Seychelles), General Santos (Philippines), Bermeo (Basque Country), Pago Pago (American Samoa), Majuro (Marshall Islands) and Concarneau (France), signed in Bermeo, the International Alliance of Cities for Tuna Sustainability, which is the initiative of the BTWC.

GFCM: WORKING GROUP ON VMS AND RELATED CONTROL SYSTEM; WORKING GROUP ON IUU; COMPLIANCE COMMITTEE

Location: Rhodes, Greece

Dates: 2-5 May 2023.

Representative: Jenny Cheadle, (Compliance Department)

Main Agenda items: Progress on the implementation of the GFCM pilot control systems; Relevant tools and instruments to strengthen the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in the context of the GFCM; Compliance clarification and identification process; IUU list; Advice on compliance to be presented to the Commission.

Summary: At the first workshop, the Secretariat put forward the findings of the VMS pilot study. The Working Group on IUU considered each Contracting party on a case by case bases. The Compliance Committee considered the findings of the IUU working group which had identified possible issues of non-

compliance with GFCM conservation and management measures and considered the needs for future technical assistance to members. The Committee also considered the draft GFCM IUU list, noting the complexities of cross-listing processes and the need to work with other organisations on this. The committee agreed to advise the Commission on the need for Joint Inspection and Vessel Sighting schemes, and draft measures would be put forward to the next Commission meeting. Another major innovation to be implemented is the GFCM VMS system, and the consideration of a catch documentation system.

Future actions: Secretariat to maintain contacts with GFCM, regarding relevant issues and particularly IUU cross listing, and ICCAT Commission to consider a joint workshop on sea turtles with GFCM.

Report availability: Not yet published

MRAG-COFREPÊCHE OBSERVER TRAINING COURSE

Location: Valencia, Spain

Dates: 15-19 May 2023

Representative: Valérie SAMEDY, VMS Manager/Technical Officer, ICCAT Secretariat

Main agenda items:

Five days training course for new observers in order to provide the objectives of the ROP-BFT program, the management of BFT and role of ICCAT, the role of observers with monitoring tasks.

Summary: MRAG instructed this course for new BFT observers before to start the 2023 BFT fishing season. The agenda was divided into around one to three items per day (depending on the topic) combined with some activities and questionnaire in the afternoon. Some of the exercises were corrected the following day by the consortium trainers; others shown their answers at the end of the exercise.

One of the main aims of this course was to introduce to future observers the ICCAT environment and familiarising them with its concepts: its Recommendations and Resolutions and how to use them; where to find important information on the ICCAT website and what is expected from them once they were deployed in a vessel, farm or trap. One important point also was not only their duties as observers but their behaviour.

On Wednesday 17th, Francisco Alemany, the coordinator of ICCAT Atlantic wide Research Programme for Bluefin Tuna offered a presentation for two different groups about the GBYP program and how to recover and manage tags.

For the last day, the MRAG team has given an interesting talk about ICCAT and MRAG support to all observers regarding safety, discrimination, and harassment. We also get the feedback from experimented observers. The applicants finished this training by passing an exam (40 questions with a multiple-choice answers).

Future actions: No further action by ICCAT is necessary, although the Secretariat maintained an exchange of information with the consortium, particularly in relation to the observer pool and the suggestion of amplifying such pool, given the increasing number of deployments requested the latest years.

Documentation: the training manuals, PDFs of the PowerPoints presented during the course and more relevant information has been saved in ICCAT.

CONFERENCE DE REVISION DE L'ACCORD AUX FINS DE L'APPLICATION DES DISPOSITIONS DE LA CONVENTION SUR LE DROIT DE LA MER DU 10 DECEMBRE 1982 RELATIVES A LA CONSERVATION ET A LA GESTION DES STOCKS DE POISSONS DONT LES DEPLACEMENTS S'EFFECTUENT TANT A

L'INTERIEUR QU'AU-DELA DE ZONES ECONOMIQUES EXCLUSIVES (STOCKS CHEVAUCHANTS) ET DES STOCKS DE POISSONS GRANDS MIGRATEURS

Lieu: Nations Unies, New York, USA

Dates: 22-26 mai 2023

Représentant: Camille Jean Pierre Manel, Secrétaire exécutif

Ordre du jour: Rapports des dernières séries de consultations, état du Fonds d'assistance, évaluation de l'efficacité de l'Accord, examen et adoption des recommandations de la Conférence de révision.

Poursuivant son mandat d'évaluer l'efficacité de l'Accord des Nations unies sur les stocks de poissons et proposer des moyens de renforcer sa mise en œuvre. La Conférence de révision a repris ses travaux suspendus depuis sa dernière session en 2016, et une faible participation des États ainsi que des ORGP a été notée. Elle a élu un nouveau Président, M. Joji Morishita du Japon, à la suite du décès de Pr. Fabio Hazin à qui un hommage a été rendu pour sa contribution aux travaux ces dernières années.

La Conférence de révision a continué de rappeler l'importance de la CNUDM ainsi que l'Accord de 1995 sur les Stocks de poissons comme *le cadre juridique pour la conservation et la gestion des stocks de poissons chevauchants et des stocks de poissons grands migrateurs, en tenant dûment compte des autres instruments internationaux pertinents*. Abordant le point de la performance dans la mise en œuvre des recommandations de la dernière revue, la Conférence de révision s'est satisfaite des progrès réalisés dans certains domaines tout en exprimant sa préoccupation dans d'autres comme la lutte contre la pêche INN, les échanges d'information, la situation des écosystèmes. Elle a aussi noté que la situation globale des stocks de poissons chevauchants et grands migrateurs ne s'est pas améliorée depuis 2016 malgré une évolution positive de certains stocks dans certaines zones.

Parmi les sujets clés que la Conférence de révision a discutés, figurent en bonne place les questions relatives à la coopération, au rôle des ORGP notamment dans le cadre des instruments globaux nouvellement adoptés ou en phase de finalisation (en particulier, l'Accord de l'OMC sur les subventions à la pêche, le Cadre mondial de la biodiversité de Kunming-Montréal, l'Accord sur le BBNJ). Elle a en conséquence appelé, avec un écho particulier, à une action coordonnée à l'échelle globale et régionale pour l'atteinte des objectifs de ces instruments en relation avec les dispositions pertinentes pour la pêche, considérant que ces derniers instruments auront un impact sur la pêche et devraient être considérés avec attention.

La Conférence de révision a, en outre, réitéré l'importance du Fonds d'assistance (Partie VII de l'Accord) qui était proche de l'épuisement et qui a pu bénéficier d'un récent apport de l'Union européenne aux fins de renforcement de la mise en œuvre de l'Accord.

Des thèmes comme le changement climatique, le renforcement de la lutte contre la pêche INN, le renforcement de capacité des États en développement ont aussi retenu l'attention de la Conférence de révision.

Dans leurs déclarations finales, plusieurs délégations ont regretté l'absence de l'inclusion, dans le texte des recommandations, de références relatives à l'Accord sur le BBNJ, le Cadre mondial de la biodiversité de Kunming-Montréal, et à l'impact du changement climatique sur la pêche. Le Président a aussi regretté la faible participation des États en développement à cette revue.

En marge de la réunion, la FAO a organisé un événement parallèle : « *Un cadre régional pour les organismes régionaux de pêche : renforcer la coopération et la coordination pour une pêche durable* » auquel l'ICCAT a participé et a présenté les résultats des consultations de la réunion organisée par la FAO à Accra (Ghana, novembre 2022) sur la coopération au niveau de l'Océan Atlantique Centre-Est.

Le programme ABJN2 a également organisé un événement parallèle. L'ICCAT y a notamment apprécié l'apport du ABNJ dans sa phase 1 et a noté que cette seconde phase du programme constituait une nouvelle opportunité pour davantage renforcer la coopération entre organisations, en particulier les ORGP thonières sur les thématiques d'intérêt commun à travers les activités qu'elle réalisera dans le cadre du Projet thonier dudit programme.

[Rapport](#) de la réunion

OSPAR'S 6TH MEETING OF THE COLLECTIVE ARRANGEMENT

Location: Online

Dates: June 7th-9th, 2023

Representative: Nathan Taylor, ICCAT Secretariat

Main agenda items:

Exchange of information regarding ongoing initiatives of relevance to the collective arrangement
Areas notified to the collective arrangement.
Scientific information and environmental assessment

Summary: OSPAR intends to include any competent international organizations to participate in its collective arrangement. It intends to be a collaborative platform for all such organizations with competence in the North Atlantic by which there would be expanded coordination and cooperation. Other organizations including ICES and International Seabed Authority provided a summary of their activities. There was some mention of ICES recommending a non-zero catch for porbeagle shark. ICCAT noted that note that ICCAT's SCRS did not agree with the ICES recommendation on POR so for ICCAT parties ICCAT Rec 15-06 remains in effect i.e., that there be no fishing for porbeagle should be permitted and that landings of porbeagle should not be allowed. The meeting largely focused on the use of marine protected areas and so-called Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs). The new [Draft BBNJ Agreement](#) was the subject of a lengthy conversation. It was noted that a key element of the BBNJ Agreement was not to undermine (Article 4(2)) any competent organization; an important element is this part of the agreement was that the competent organization such as ICCAT would have to agree to and/or propose new measures under BBNJ. Accordingly, the Group noted the new [BBNJ Agreement](#) would mean that collaboration between relevant RMFOs (including ICCAT) would be needed to cooperatively develop their spatial management plans. The participants reviewed OSPAR and NEAFC cooperation on generating better knowledge on deep sea elasmobranchs and collaboration with CBD on identifying Ecologically and Biologically Significant Areas (EBSA) and implementation of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

Future actions: A key message for ICCAT is that it should be attentive to various spatial management measures being proposed by other competent authorities in the ICCAT areas. These include CBD, NEAFC, NWAFC, and OSPAR's. OSPAR's data repositories are located at: <https://odims.ospar.org/en/>

Documentation: <https://www.ospar.org/meetings/archive/collective-arrangement-1>

FIRST PROJECT STEERING COMMITTEE (PSC) OF THE COMMON OCEANS PROGRAM PROJECT: SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF TUNA FISHERIES AND BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION IN THE ABNJ

Location: Hybrid/Rome, Italy

Dates: 11 – 14 July 2023

Representative: Camille Manel, Nathan G. Taylor, ICCAT Secretariat

Main agenda items:

- Election of the chair. The partners will be invited to propose a Chairperson who is expected to carry out functions related to the PSC until the next regular meeting, which is approximately for one year.
- Adoption of terms of reference for the Committee
- Project progress
- Presentation by Project Partners

- Thematic discussions
 - Operationalizing EAFM in t-RFMOs
 - Developing ecosystem indicators for EAFM, including Climate Change
 - Regional standards for EM/ER implementation in t-RFMOs
 - Compliance training and support
 - Identify possible topics and collaboration for joint t-RFMO working groups
- Knowledge Management and Communication, Monitoring & Evaluation, and Gender mainstreaming
- Monitoring & Evaluation
- Workplan and budget

Summary: An update of the approval process by FAO of the ICCAT's Letter of Agreement with FAO for ICCAT's four projects conducted under this initiative (for a total of approximately 1.4 million Euros was made and ICCAT was informed that the final steps were being finalized. The other project partners are listed below. The meeting achieved the following:

- It elected Chairperson who is expected to carry out functions related to the PSC until the next regular meeting, which is approximately for one year
- It formally adopted the Terms of Reference for the Project Steering Committee
- It reviewed project progress to date (where applicable) and reviewed the status of outstanding LOAs
- It had a series of thematic discussions including operationalizing EAFM in t-RFMOs, developing ecosystem indicators for EAFM, including climate change, regional standards for EM/ER implementation in t-RFMOs, compliance training and support, identifying possible topics and collaboration for joint t-RFMO working groups.
- Management and communication, monitoring & evaluation, and gender.
- Monitoring & evaluation of project results
- Annual workplan and budget
- Discussed other business including cooperation with other Projects under the Common Oceans Program, cooperation with other FAO activities and international initiatives, GEF related developments and events, as well as the ongoing BBNJ process.
- It discussed time and place for the 2nd PSC meeting (to be determined later by project partners)

Tuna Project Partners (executing* and non-executing)

Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna*

Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission*

International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas*

Indian Ocean Tuna Commission*

Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission

Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP)

BirdLife International (BLI)

Conservation International (CI)*

INFOPECSA*

International MCS Network (IMCSN)*

International Pole and Line Foundation (IPNLF)*

International Seafood Sustainability Association (ISSA)

International Seafood Sustainability Foundation (ISSF)*

International Whaling Commission (IWC)*

Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)*

Mercator Ocean international (MOI)*

Pacific Community (SPC)*

Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA)*

PEW Charitable Trusts

Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)

The Nature Conservancy (TNC)

The Ocean Foundation (TOF)*

US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF US + WWF Pakistan)*

Future actions: The LoA for the ICCAT project to be signed in August. To execute ICCAT's four projects under the agreement and to continue participation in the Steering Committee.

Documentation: [Published on the FAO website](#)

EVENT : 6TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON FISH TELEMETRY

Location: Sète (France)

Dates: 11-16 June 2023

Representative: Francisco Alemany (GBYP Coordinator)

Main agenda items:

Day 1: Workshop European Tracking Network

Day 2: Plenary talks, oral presentation of scientific works, poster session (including interaction with companies providing equipment and services), side event (presentation and round table) organized by tags manufacturing companies.

Day 3: Plenary talks, oral presentation of scientific works, poster session (including interaction with companies providing equipment and services)

Day 4: Oral presentation of scientific works

Day 5: Plenary talks, oral presentation of scientific works, poster session (including interaction with companies providing equipment and services), side event (presentation and round table) organized by tags manufacturing companies.

Day 6: Plenary talks, oral presentation of scientific works, poster session (including interaction with companies providing equipment and services)

Summary: ICCAT representative attended all the Plenary talks, Oral presentations and poster sessions to gather information about the state of the art in fish telemetry, maintaining talks with the representatives of the teams working on telemetry, some of them not attending ICCAT, to look for further potential synergies and promoting the submission to ICCAT of relevant information. Moreover, in deep talks were maintained with the representatives of the companies manufacturing tags to inform them about the potential improvements in electronic tags to better match the scientific needs, to gather information about future technological developments and to agree on ways to compensate ICCAT and ICCAT collaborators for the failures in data transmissions experienced along the last two years.

Future actions:

- Maintain the contacts with research teams working on telemetry of species managed by ICCAT
- Monitor the performance of the new models of electronic tags within ICCAT etagging programs
- Follow up the accomplishment of the agreements to compensate pop up tags failures
- Follow up the development of the EU STRAITS project, under which arrays of acoustic receivers have been or will be deployed in strategic areas for ICCAT managed species migrations, as the Strait of Gibraltar
- Maintain the collaboration with the European Tracking Network to take advantage of potential synergies in the field of etags data management systems

Report availability: (including link if available).

Agenda and book of abstracts available at:

https://icft2023.sciencesconf.org/data/Programme_SETE_ICFT_2023_3.pdf

GFCM/ICCAT Collaboration – Inspection training for Israel

Location: Tel Aviv, Israel

Date: 26 – 29 June 2023

Representative: Valérie Samedy - VMS Manager

With Nicola Ferri (GFCM), Roberto Emma (GFCM) and Estrella Fernandez (Spanish Inspector)

Agenda item:

- 1) Coordination meeting between GFCM, Ministry Of Agriculture (MOAG), INPA/Marine Rangers Force (MRF) and ICCAT
- 2) Presentation from Israel:
 - Inspections in Israel - Marine Ranger Force capacity and activity
 - National framework governing inspections
 - Interactive Q&A session and exchange of views on inspections, including sanctioning systems when infringements are detected in the course of inspections
 - MOAG – GFCM/ICCAT meeting about the scientific projects
- 3) GFCM and ICCAT
 - The big picture: institutional/legal framework of the RFMOs and on MCS / inspections
 - National inspection procedures, with a focus on PSMA, national sanctioning systems in place and joint inspection schemes in place
 - Demo on the MCS system in place and VMS related arrangements by GFCM
- 4) Port Visit

Summary: Under the Letter of Agreement of the GFCM under the umbrella of the Agreement between the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and ICCAT approved in November 2022, during the ICCAT Annual Commission in Portugal, the objectives of the agreement are to cooperate in areas of mutual interest to the respective organizations, including data collection, research, and the provision of technical assistance to enhance cooperation to advance common goals with regard to the sustainable use of living marine resources and the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. As over 80% of GFCM Members are already ICCAT Members, we took the opportunity to call on Israel, member of GFCM, and known to be catching ICCAT species, to cooperate with ICCAT and to become a Contracting Party: in this case, it was interesting to show how the regulations are similar and the efforts is identical for countries with fishing interests in a common geographical area. Even if Israel does not allow the entrance of foreign vessels in their waters, the presentation focused on the PSMA and inspections. The feedback from Israel was very positive and are encouraging.

Future steps: Administrative / technical support to Israel if needed to assist them in their process of becoming an ICCAT Contracting Party. An estimation of the cost to become a member have been already sent to Israel (July 5th, 2023)..

Report availability: No

EVENT : EU RCG-LP ANNUAL MEETING

Location: Saint Julian (Malta)

Dates: 26-28 June 2023

Representative: Francisco Alemany (GBYP Coordinator)

Main agenda items:

Day 1

- Feedback from EU Commission on DCF
- ISSG Tropical Tunas
- Status and Future of the RCGs Secretariat
- ISSG Metiers and Transversal Issues
- Approval of new metier codes
- ISSG Large Pelagics regional database development

Day 2

- ISSG Bluefin tuna

- ICCAT feedback
- Commission update on control regulations
- ISSG Recreational fisheries
- Fish'nCo feedback
- RDBES
- Fish genome

Day 3

- RCG LP moving forward
- ISSG RWP
- Other matters

Summary: The EU Commission representatives gave a presentation on DCF topics relating to the RCGs, including the submission timelines for the Regional Work plans an updates of National Working Plans; the DCF Platform; Commission support for RCG Secretariat WebB; the Marine Action Plan; grants for scientific advice on fisheries and published outcomes of previously funded studies. Separate presentations were provided on Fish Genomics, the draft political agreement of the revised Control Regulation and the integrated web system developed by the EC for marine recreational fisheries.

RCG Secretariat informed about its last achievements in relation to support to the 6 RCG, the development of RCG website, the funding possibilities to continue providing these Secretariat services and the development of an RCGs stakeholders data base.

The different RCG subgroups (tropical tunas, bluefin tuna, large pelagics regional database) presented its main achievements along the last year. In relation to the development of the future RCG Large Pelagics database , its links with other broader databases which are being developed under EU projects, as RDBES (<https://github.com/ices-tools-dev/RDBES/tree/master/Documents>) and RDBFIS were discussed. Moreover, a presentation was given on presented the last state of play regarding the future Large Pelagics Regional Work Plan and a summary of the project Fishn'Co was made.

Regarding the ICCAT feedback section, the Secretariat representative remembered the sampling activities carried out within ICCAT special programs and presented the results of a review of the Large Pelagics sampling activities carried out under the EU DCF, highlighting some problems affecting the current DCF development and reporting in relation to Large Pelagics, as the lack of a DB integrating the information contained in the AR, the lack on precise information on the location of the samples collected under DCF the results obtained from its analyses, as well as the insufficient representativity of the current DCF LP samples cover properly the ICCAT stock assessments needs. Consequently, some recommendations to improve the current DCF LP reporting were proposed, as to complete ASAP the implementation of a functional information management system, include in the AR more precise information on the location of the samples and to develop a system to update the information on the use and availability of these samples.

The RCG LP members discussed in depth these issues, concluding that it should be considered the possibility of launching a data Call to get more precise info on existing DCF samples of interest for ICCAT, that the DCF sampling scheme in relation to large pelagics should be updated and optimized, and that the new information system on DCF, currently under development, should include more detailed metadata on the storage of DCF samples and its analyses, and be linked to the DB containing the data obtained from these samples. It was also mentioned that if ICCAT decides to implement the Close Kin Mark Recapture approach to improve the management of some stocks, this will require the design and implementation of new sampling schemes that should be carried out by the ICCAT contracting Parties, particularly the EU, given that ICCAT special research programs cannot assume the massive genetic sampling required by this methodology.

Future actions:

- Maintain the continuous support of ICCAT to the RCG LP activities
- Monitor the development of RCG LP database, providing advice and feedback about ICCAT data needs
- Provide feedback to RCG LP about biological sampling requirements for ICCAT managed species, aiming at the improvement of the EU DCF

Report availability: (including link if available).

Consolidated report not available yet

TUNA COMPLIANCE NETWORK

Location: Tokyo, Japan

Dates: 27-30 June 2023

Representative: Jenny Cheadle, (Compliance Department)

Main Agenda items: Updates from tRFMOs and IMCS/JAC regarding novelties since 2019; Joint TCN and PPFCN meeting; consideration of the Report on Advancing RFMO IUU Vessel List Utility; Review of TCN and future work plan.

Summary: The officers responsible for compliance from the five tuna RFMOs met in-person for the first time since 2019, although several online meeting had been held during the pandemic. The main topics discussed were the difficulties in IUU cross listing and possible solutions; recent developments in transshipment programmes and possible joint efforts with the PPFCN (Pan Pacific Fisheries Compliance Network) if appropriate. The meeting was hosted by NPFC, and the Executive Secretary and the Compliance manager of that body also joined for some of the deliberations. All participants agreed on the usefulness of the network and agreed on the need to continue into the future.

Future actions: The Head of Compliance Department of ICCAT was elected Chair. Therefore, it is vital that the Secretariat fully engage in the work of the TCN in 2024. It is expected that two members of the department will attend the next meeting, which is foreseen either for the first quarter of the year or for June 2024, TBD once all tRFMOs have set their calendars. The Commission is also invited to consider making available funding for the maintenance of the CLAV and of supporting future initiatives to reduce the burden of IUU cross listing.

Report availability: Not available.

INTERSESSIONAL WORKSHOP OF THE SUSTAINABLE OCEAN INITIATIVE (SOI) GLOBAL DIALOGUE WITH REGIONAL SEAS ORGANIZATIONS AND REGIONAL FISHERY BODIES

Location: Online (Zoom)

Dates attended: 1-3 August 2023, 7-10 am (EDT)

Representative: Camille Jean Pierre Manel, ICCAT Executive Secretary

Agenda items: updates after the 3rd SOI Global Dialogue meeting in Busan, 2022; regional collaboration in the context of recent developments of Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, Agreement BBNJ adopted text, next fourth meeting of SOI Global Dialogue.

Representatives of regional seas organisations, regional fishery bodies, global and regional organisations and initiatives, national governments and NGOs participated in the workshop.

Born at the margins of COP 10, the SOI initiated its Global Dialogue in 2016. The SOI Global Dialogue, which was developed with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and FAO, provides a regular forum for regional organisations to exchange experiences and identify options and opportunities for enhancing cross-sectoral collaboration at the regional scale, with a view to facilitating the achievement of global goals for the ocean.

The CBD organised this workshop following the 3rd SOI Global Dialogue in Busan last year. Some organisations updated the workshop on their actions in contributing to the implementation of the adopted regional roadmap, insisting on their cooperation with other organisations. The participants also exchanged

on the role of the organisations in light of the new global context marked by the recent adoption of texts of worldwide scope, i.e. the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the BBNJ Agreement, and the WTO Fisheries Subsidies. The participants raised the importance of discussing these issues within their respective organisations to ensure better integration of the relevant measures of these instruments and encourage cooperation among members and organisations for effective contribution to the objectives of these instruments. A strong call was made for more cross-sectoral coordination within member countries between the various departments involved in addressing the biodiversity issues in the global fora.

The workshop also noted the importance of capacity-building as an essential support for the management of biodiversity. To this end, it encouraged the strengthening of cooperation and synergies. The meeting also encouraged the emergence of Champion States for their role as promoters within the organisations of which they are members.

While encouraging a larger participation, the CBD informed that the fourth SOI Global Dialogue meeting will be held in 2024.

(No report available yet.)

19ÈME SESSION OF THE WESTERN CENTRAL ATLANTIC FISHERY COMMISSION (WECAFC)

Location: Bridgetown, Barbados, 6-8 September 2023, Hybrid

Dates attended: 6-8 September 2023 (online)

Representative: Camille Jean Pierre Manel, ICCAT, Executive Secretary

Agenda items: annual meeting agenda; cooperation with ICCAT; Strategic reorientation of the WECAFC

The WECAFC Executive Secretary updated the meeting on the situation of the cooperation framework, which has been prepared since 2019. She recalled that, following the adoption of the Letter of cooperation by ICCAT in November 2022, FAO reviewed it, and the ICCAT Secretariat was informed of the changes incorporated. She went on to inform that the ICCAT Secretariat circulated to its CPCs the new changes, but the proposed language was not accepted. The WECAFC Executive Secretary ended her update, mentioning that, after some exchanges between the WECAFC and FAO, the latter finally proposed an Exchange of Letters between the two Secretariats that mirror the initial proposal of ICCAT. The WECAFC Session adopted the Exchange of Letters, with two changes on the listed specific activities, aiming to further clarify the content; the changes are as follows: Point 2: *“Improving data collection and access to data for use in informing stock status determinations and fisheries management, including data collection for relevant artisanal fisheries ~~on shared stocks~~, and sharing scientific analyses and expertise”*; Point 5: *“Exchanging views on the role ~~RFOs~~ RFOs might play in relevant regional fisheries management organizations (e.g., BBNJ....etc.) of the RFBs in relation to cooperation and coordination with relevant global processes and agreements (e.g., Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction, Global Biodiversity Framework, etc.) and, as appropriate, coordinating with respect to their engagement in these fora.”*

ICCAT confirmed the process described by the WECAFC Executive Secretary and informed that the Commission will review for adoption this proposal of Exchange of Letters in November, which would then conclude a long development for a formalization of the cooperation with the WECAFC.

The WECAFC also discussed a document on its strategic reorientation, but it still needs to conclude, as some members requested more deliberations. It would be of great interest for ICCAT to follow this question on the evolution of the WECAFC.

ICES ANNUAL SCIENCE CONFERENCE

Location: Bilbao, Spain

Dates: 11-15 September 2023

Representative: Nathan G. Taylor, ICCAT Secretariat

Main agenda items:

- Ecosystem science needed to support a new era of offshore marine renewable energy
- Towards climate-informed ecosystem-based fisheries management
- Managing fisheries bycatch of threatened species
- Future of fisheries-independent surveys - progress in design, technology, estimation and management
- Environmental risk assessment of aquaculture
- Integration of molecular tools for biodiversity, risk assessment, ecosystem advice within a changing climate
- Diversity, equity, and inclusion in marine science and related sectors
- Future Integrated Ecosystem Assessments
- Towards an improved global fisheries management through genomic solutions
- Joining forces for the better assessment of highly migratory and other wide-ranging species
- Small-Scale fisheries under global change – threats and opportunities
- Advancing scientific support for evaluating trade-offs in ecosystem-based management
- Putting more science in: stakeholder engagement in marine research and policy processes
- An unexpected journey - continuing the pathway for oceanography in ICES science and advice.
- A region to be managed: the case of the Bay of Biscay and the Iberian Coast under environmental and socio-economic stressors
- Stock assessments: from fundamentals to improvements – latest developments and applications

Summary: Dr. Taylor provided summaries of analyses conducted during the 2022 joint ICES-ICCAT stock assessment of porbeagle sharks on the effect of different data inputs on Management Procedure performance for porbeagle sharks, on the effects of assessment frequency on Management Procedure Performance, on the effects of non-representative bycatch indices on Management Procedure performance, and on new techniques for explicitly modeling management procedure performance when there are interactions between bycatch and target species. The meeting provided a rich series of topics and highly relevant science developments that would benefit ICCAT.

Future actions: None

Documentation: <https://www.ices.dk/events/asc/2023/Pages/default.aspx>

2023 ASFA ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

Location: Bangkok, Thailand

Dates: Octubre 3th-6th, 2023

Representative: Pablo Herranz, ICCAT Secretariat

Main agenda items:

- Revisión del nuevo Partnership agreement, que no ha sido modificado desde hace 20 años y presenta limitaciones legales para la entrada de nuevos socios.
- Estudios regionales del impacto de OpenASFA y posibles nuevas estrategias de financiación y comunicación.
- Presentación de mejoras en la aplicación y training

Summary:

La ASFA Advisory Board Meeting del año 2023 se conforma con la firme idea de establecer las bases de un acuerdo a largo plazo que elimine las barreras tanto legales como operativas del acuerdo actual y que no se regula desde hace casi 20 años. Entre los puntos más importantes del nuevo acuerdo, se elimina la barrera discriminatoria entre National/International Partner y se fija dos organismos nuevos para coordinar los proyectos y la relación FAO-ASFA Partners. Después de varios días de deliberaciones y modificaciones al texto, se aprueba por unanimidad el nuevo ASFA Partnership agreement y la Bangkok Statement.

Por otra parte, se explica la situación financiera de ASFA (Trust Fund) y su evolución desde inicio de la década de 2000 hasta hoy. Se advierte de que, en el caso de no corregir la relación ingreso/gasto; el programa podría verse obligado a cesar su actividad en 2026. Para ello se debate 3 nuevos proyectos para la región de Europa, Latino America y Africa que ayude a atraer nuevos partners y sponsors. También se solicita a los socios la separación en grupos de trabajo por regiones y que se elabore tanto un cuadro de identificación de la baja actividad en los registros de Open ASFA, así como posibles vías de financiación que alivien los problemas de tesorería. Después de varias discusiones, se proponen diversos planes de acción que han de ser estudiados por ASFA-FAO para cada región.

En la misma línea se dedica otra jornada para estudiar las diferentes estrategias de comunicación aplicables a cada región para ampliar el impacto de OpenASFA. Se facilita un listado de cuestiones a corregir en comunicación y se desarrollan otros planes comunicativos pendientes de estudio.

Finalmente, se dedica varios espacios para acercar las nuevas aplicaciones de OpenASFA y las mejoras que vendrán en el futuro y que se espera que sirvan para atraer nuevos socios a través de una Base de Datos más atractiva.

Future actions: En las próximas fechas se espera facilitar el Partnership Agreement para que sea refrendado por los socios, previo estudio por el departamento jurídico de ASFA. Una vez aprobado el plan, los socios tendrán un mes para refrendarlo y, una vez dado el OK, se enlistará al socio.

Con la lista final de socios, se procederá a crear un Steering Committee que dirigirá las principales actividades de ASFA en 2024, como la convocatoria de las reuniones virtuales, planes de comunicación, planes de financiación, planes de mejora del thesaurus, mejoras en programación de la aplicación y cualquier asunto relacionado con la actividad diaria de OpenASFA

Documentation: <https://www.fao.org/asfa/2023-asfa-advisory-board-meeting/es>

MEDITERRANEAN ADVISORY COUNCIL MEDAC

Location: Hybrid Meeting (Rome/Online)

Dates: 12th October 2023

Representative: Ai Kimoto, Mauricio Ortiz

Agenda items: Presentation on the status of the Mediterranean large pelagic species according to the results of the ICCAT Scientific Committee meeting and Presentation of the Management Procedure for Atlantic bluefin tuna.

The Mediterranean Advisory Council, MEDAC role includes the preparation of opinions on fisheries management and socio-economic aspects in support of the fisheries sector in the Mediterranean, to be submitted to the Member States and the European institutions to facilitate the achievement of the objectives of the European Union Common Fisheries Policy. The ICCAT Secretariat was invited to attend the meeting and Drs. Ai Kimoto and Mauricio Ortiz provided a presentation on the recent findings of the SCRS on the status of the stocks of Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean Bluefin Tuna, Mediterranean Albacore, and Mediterranean Swordfish. The presentation included the status of the Atlantic Bluefin tuna Management

Procedure (BFT MP), Exceptional Circumstances, the adopted MSE schedule, and TAC recommendations for 2023-2025.

It was informed that, following the SCRS management recommendation in 2022, the ICCAT Commission adopted the Management Procedure for Atlantic Bluefin tuna Rec 22-08 and a TAC recommendation of 40,570 t for the 2023-2025 period calculated based on the adopted BFT MP. It was also indicated that in 2023 the SCRS concluded that no exceptional circumstances exist that would warrant deviating from the TAC advice under the BFT MP.

For the Mediterranean Albacore, it was indicated that in 2022 ICCAT implemented a Rebuilding Plan for this stock [Rec 21-06] with the specifications that the stock will recover with a 60% probability of being in the green quadrant of the Kobe plot by 2032. It was indicated that catches on the order of 2,500 t will reach this objective, catches in 2022 were 2,295 t. Finally, it was informed that the SCRS recommended conducting a stock assessment of this stock in 2025.

With regards to Mediterranean swordfish, it was indicated that ICCAT had conducted an assessment in 2020, of which the results indicated that the stock was overfished but not experiencing overfishing. The Mediterranean swordfish is currently under a rebuilding plan and projections indicated that TACs of 10,000 t or lower will allow the recovery of the stock by 2028 with at least a 60% probability, the reported catch for 2022 was 7,169 t. ICCAT is planning the next stock assessment of Mediterranean swordfish in 2025.

Stakeholders reiterated that the increase in bluefin tuna populations in several areas of the Mediterranean has augmented their predation impact on the small pelagic stocks and their effects on local fisheries. They indicated the need for studies that take into account the trophic interactions among species and wider ecosystem approach evaluation for better management of the Mediterranean fisheries resources. Also, it was noted the high mortality of bluefin tuna associated with catch and transfer to cages of fish destined for farming operations. It was requested a scientific analysis of the maximum density of fish in transport cages to reduce this mortality, and the need to report such mortalities.

For Mediterranean swordfish, it was reiterated that catches of juvenile swordfish continue to be high, requesting an evaluation of their impact on the stock recovery and stakeholder expressed their regret that the next evaluation of this stock has been postponed to 2025.

Finally, several participants commented on the need to consider climate change and its impact on fish stocks in the Mediterranean. It was informed on the ICCAT workshop on climate change in 2023 and the SCRS research priority to include potential effects of climate change within the current MSE processes and stock assessment evaluations of ICCAT species. The Group concurred that the Mediterranean Sea would be a priority case study for this research.