

Position statement to Panel 4 by Costa Rica

The Republic of Costa Rica would like to express to you the highest consideration and respect, and would like to refer to the situation of the national commercial multi-species fishery that catches North Atlantic swordfish (SWO-N), which my country has developed for decades, in its Exclusive Economic Zone, with small-scale fleets (<20 m in length). It is important to mention the correlation between this fishery and the vital needs for the socio-economic development of our depressed Caribbean community of Costa Rica.

The fishery for this species has been recorded since before Costa Rica began to participate in ICCAT in 2016; in fact, our records of SWO-N landings date back to 1999¹, this species being of great importance for national food security.

The Costa Rica Institute of Fisheries and Aquaculture (INCOPESCA), as the competent national authority, collects fishery statistics, which are submitted to ICCAT each year, in compliance with its data reporting requirements, which include fishery statistics that contribute to SWO-N stock assessments. These data show that the number of national vessels engaged in this fishery has declined in recent years; however, management measures remain in place such as:

- Licences register closed (no new licences issued),
- Mandatory satellite monitoring with VMS,
- Inspections of 100% of landings of surface longliners catching this species,
- Implementation of Fishing Operation Record Books, which are completed by captains,
- Restrictions on fishing gear and catch of species,
- Fishery biological sampling on landing,
- Time or geographical closures,
- Development of industrial fisheries for SWO-N is not authorised,
- Among other management measures

Moreover, my Delegation has expressed its interest to the SCRS in participating in the SWO-N biology programme, contributing national experience and data from species associated with our waters, in particular, the Caribbean Sea which has been identified as an information gap area.

In accordance with Recommendation 23-04, conservation and management measures will be established for SWO-N at the 2024 meeting, and for this, the Commission will consider the development/management plans of developing coastal CPCs and the fishery/management plans of other CPCs so that adjustments to existing catch limits and other conservation measures can be made, as appropriate.

In this regard, my country has detailed in its fishing plan² its limited fishing effort; in fact, the limited fishing possibilities imposed by ICCAT irreparably harm our communities, generating consequences contrary to the human rights of our society.

For this reason, and considering that:

- a. Recent stock assessments of SWO-N have determined that it is in good condition, as it is neither overfished nor experiencing overfishing,
- b. The average annual nominal catch for the period 2018 to 2022 (5 years) for this stock was 9,980.18 t, while its total allowable catch (TAC) was set at 13,200 t, therefore leaving, on average, 3,219.82 t of the TAC per year uncaught and,

¹ Lara Quesada, N., Pacheco Chaves, B. y Carvajal, J. M. 2022. Revisión de las estadísticas históricas de desembarque de pez espada (*Xiphias gladius*) por parte de la flota de mediana escala en el Caribe costarricense, Colección de Documentos Científicos de ICCAT, 79(2), 180-185. https://www.iccat.int/es/pubs_CVSP.html.

² Development or fishing / management plan for northern swordfish (attached).

- c. The needs of my country, based on its historical participation in the fishery, as well as the provisions of Article 61, paragraph 2; Article 62, in particular paragraphs 1, 2, 4; Article 119, paragraph 1.a and 3, and related provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, as well as Article II of the International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas and ICCAT Resolution 15-13.

Costa Rica requests to be allocated the non-discriminatory catch limit of 302.15 t, which will be very useful to meet its current needs and develop its fishery in the Atlantic in its coastal communities with a small-scale fleet.

These considerations may be expanded upon at the request of the Commission. Costa Rica appreciates the positive response to our request and renews its unwavering spirit of cooperation within the framework of ICCAT for the sustainable utilization and long-term conservation of the resources under the administration of this organization.