



The Pew Charitable Trusts'

Position Statement for the 24th Special Meeting of ICCAT

November 2024

The Pew Charitable Trusts looks forward to a productive 24th Special Meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT). We appreciate the efforts of the Secretariat and chairs in hosting the many intersessional discussions that have helped set up this meeting for success. Building on the advancements from last year, we highlight the following opportunities to improve fisheries management in the Atlantic:

1. Endorse the [Climate change plan of action](#) and adopt updated terms of reference for the Standing Working Group on Dialogue between Fisheries Scientists and Managers (SWGSM)

Members should address the urgent need to incorporate climate change considerations into the management of Atlantic fisheries, by: adding climate change to the SWGSM TOR's to implement the plan of action, as proposed in [PLE-119](#); coordinating climate change related activities across ICCAT; and engaging external stakeholders, such as other RFMOs and the FAO. SWGSM should also consider how to scale up existing tools like climate-integrated MSE for more ICCAT species and embrace an ecosystem approach to fisheries management. As per the proposed plan of action, climate change should be added as a standing item to the Commission, STACFAD and SCRS plenary agendas.

2. Prepare for the entry into force of the Agreement on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ)

Last year, ICCAT adopted [Resolution 23-23](#) on the implementation of biodiversity conservation instruments, adding these international agreements as a standing agenda item for SCRS and the Commission meeting. This year, ICCAT should take next steps to prepare for this engagement with the BBNJ treaty by tasking the SCRS with the development of a process to review potential proposals for new area-based management. Noting the need for improved regional coordination, ICCAT can also take proactive steps by putting in place agreements and mechanisms (e.g., MOU between NAFO and ICCAT similar to that between ICCAT and SEAFO), that would promote greater knowledge and data sharing, allowing for monitoring to expand beyond sector specific goals to provide a more holistic picture of ecosystem health.

3. Commit to MSE as the future of fisheries management

ICCAT began a transition to a management procedure-based approach nearly a decade ago with the adoption of Recommendation 15-07. Of the eight stocks prioritized for MSE, as few as three will remain

in initial MSE development following this meeting. It is therefore a good time to reflect on ICCAT's progress to date, lessons learned, and strategies to streamline future MSE processes, including for additional stocks of interest not specified in Rec. 15-07. We urge the Plenary to add North and South Atlantic blue sharks, south Atlantic albacore and south Atlantic swordfish to the MSE roadmap (PLE-108) To support these efforts, the Commission should hire a full-time MSE technical expert to join the ICCAT Secretariat as soon as possible. Such a position would add much needed MSE capacity to the SCRS, ensure consistency in the various MSE developments across ICCAT, and help to guide the review and implementation of the MSE roadmap. Note that other tuna RFMOs, such as IATTC have also hired an MSE coordinator to join the Secretariat staff and progress similar efforts.

4. Progress toward entry into force of the ICCAT Convention Amendments

Recognizing that the 2019 Convention Amendments have only been ratified by a few members, Plenary should discuss CPCs' barriers to ratification and chart a path forward, including by providing capacity assistance where necessary. Noting the Amendments include an expansion of ICCAT's mandate to include elasmobranchs, CPCs should also work to improve data reporting, including by increasing submissions of data for dead and live discards.

5. Broaden compliance capacity building initiatives

And finally, recognizing ICCAT's efforts to improve compliance, Pew recommends that ICCAT expand its compliance capacity building missions to include all CPCs requesting support. These missions can help multiple CPCs improve data submission by identifying and addressing specific needs and how to build the necessary legal domestic framework to ensure that their fleets are following the Commission's rules.