



## **DRAFT MINUTES**

### **35th meeting of LDAC Working Group 1 Highly Migratory (Tuna and Tuna-like) Stocks and its RFMOs**

**Tuesday 11th March 2025, 14:30-17:30h CET / GMT+1**

**Venue: Hotel Martin's Brussels EU – Blvd. Charlemagne 80, 1000 Brussels**

#### **1. Welcome by the WG1 Chair and election of WG1 Vice Chair**

##### **1.1. Opening remarks**

The WG1 Chair, Ms. Anne-France Mattlet, starts the meeting thanking WG1 members and observers, including representatives of EC DG MARE, the Spanish Secretariat General for Fisheries (SGP) and AZTI scientists for their presence and participation in this meeting.

She then informed that this is not a hybrid meeting – only a handful of invited experts / members who have provided justified reasons may follow the meeting online; simultaneous interpretation services are available in the room in Spanish, English and French.

The list of members and observers attending the meeting is included in **Annex I**.

##### **1.2. Election of LDAC WG1 Vice Chair**

The WG1 reminds that the elected Vice Chair in 2024, Louis Lambrechts, had left his job in summer 2024 at WWF EPO to join Oceano Azul Foundation. The NGOs proposed at the last meeting in October that Mr. Ignacio Fresco, OCEANA, worked as interim Vice Chair until a final decision was made at the next WG1 meeting.

It is now the time to elect the new Vice Chair. In light of the fruitful and cordial collaboration held in the last months, she proposed to appoint Ignacio as Vice Chair for the remainder of the term of mandate, i.e. until May 2027.

**DECISION: The members endorsed the proposal made by the Chair and appointed by unanimity Mr. Fresco Vanzini as Vice Chair of WG1 until the end of the term of mandate, i.e. May 2027.**

#### **2. Adoption of the minutes from the last WG1 meeting – Brussels, 15 October 2024.**

The report of the previous WG1 meeting was circulated beforehand via email to all WG1. It was adopted without changes.

#### **3. Adoption of the agenda.**

The agenda was adopted with the inclusion under AOB by request of the Chair of an information point on the Code of conduct for EU delegates attending RFMOs meetings.

#### **4. IOTC – Indian Ocean Tuna Commission.**

##### **4.1. Update from DG MARE on state of play of negotiations for IOTC 29<sup>th</sup> Annual session (La Réunion, 13-17 April 2025)**

The Chair regretted the absence of MARE representatives for this item, which repeats the pattern from previous WG1 meeting to cover those items related to preparation of Annual Meetings for Tuna RFMOs.

She proposed to submit a letter to Commissioner Kadis, asking for more transparency and claiming that the LDAC is the legitimate stakeholders' body to advise EC on matters of RFMOs and we are making efforts in submitting the advice in writing well in advance so it can be considered for reflection into the EC's proposal for mandate.

The Executive Secretary read the explanations provided by MARE in writing to all members: *"MARE is not in a capacity to provide information on on-going negotiations. There are dedicated stakeholders meeting organised which are more suitable for such discussions. Colleagues will therefore not comment this point"*.

Iván López, Iris Ziegler, Nikolas Evangelides and backed the proposal for the Chair to require active presence and participation of MARE in LDAC biannual plenary WG1 meetings, including meaningful consultation with LDAC as legitimate consultative body funded by the Commission on their negotiation priorities and giving feedback to the written advice submitted.

The representative of the Spanish Administration (observer) explained that the mandate of the Commission is practically finalized and closed pending of the proposal on management for skipjack, which is under work.

**ACTION:** It was agreed to draft a letter to Commissioner Kadis taking as starting point the recent non-attendance on ICCAT or IOTC containing some ideas such as (but not limited to):

- ***The LDAC is entitled to be consulted***
- ***The CFP give the LDAC the mandate to advice on RFMOs.***
- ***EC consultation calendar does not match to internal timing of the LDAC.***
- ***Budget efficiency, if only one body is better first to consult the LDAC and then debrief at a broader stakeholder group.***

##### **4.2. Overview of IOTC advice**

The Chair summarised the advice sent to the EC in mid-February – it can be read here:

[https://ldac.eu/images/EN\\_LDAC\\_ADVICE\\_IOTC\\_AM\\_2025.pdf](https://ldac.eu/images/EN_LDAC_ADVICE_IOTC_AM_2025.pdf)

## **5. WCPFC- Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission.**

### **5.1. DG MARE report on outcomes of the 21<sup>st</sup> Regular Session Commission (Fiji, 28 November-3 December 2024).**

#### **5.1.1. Summary report from DG MARE representative**

The MARE lead negotiator on WCPFC, Stamatis Varsamis, summarized the main outcomes from the annual meeting held in early December. The meeting was fairly easy as there were no discussions on the main measure on tropical tuna stocks nor challenging decisions to be made.

He announced that, for first time in any RFMOs, after 3 years of work the CMM on labour standards for vessels operating in their fishing grounds were adopted. This measure includes key provisions such as minimum working conditions, provisions for serious incidents or event such as decease at sea of a crew member or serious injury or illness during fishing operations, as well as prevention of forced labour. The negative side was that this measure will only be enforced and effectively implemented in 3 -years' time. Labour standards there are lower than those in EU but overcomes resistance from CPCs such as China.

Another highlight was the adoption of minimum standards for electronic monitoring, being the last tuna RFMO to adopt this. As a first step, there is a need to adopt implementing measure to operationalize those standards which only apply to longliners and not to purse seiners.

There was also a provision adopted to strengthen monitoring, control and surveillance on Pacific bluefin tuna (BFT), both in WCPFC and IATTC with analogue provisions requiring Pacific coastal states to have in place clear requirements.

There was also adopted a new rebuilding plan for North Pacific Swordfish.

On South Pacific Swordfish, agreement was reached to engage in a management strategy evaluation (MSE) framework and in time develop a management procedure (MP) for this stock. 60% of total catch of this fishery is a by-catch of tropical tuna longliners, so only 40% will be subject to MSE. Assessment of compliance at vessel level will be done by the flag states, with expected improvement over time.

Stamatis took the opportunity to highlight some topics on what is coming for 2025 for consideration in the deliberations leading to a future advice of the LDAC, namely:

- Stock assessments for two key species for EU fleet: Skipjack for Western and Central Pacific, and South West Pacific SWO (possible revision of CMM that some members are pushing forward).
- Develop a MSE for South Pacific SWO
- Review of CMM for WCPFC – many countries of Pacific have signed the FAO PSMA.
- Intersessional work on regional observer programme.
- Intersessional work on FADs that influence on revision of tropical tuna measures for 2026.

#### 5.1.2. Questions and answers by members from the floor

Juan Manuel Trujillo (ETF) stated that labour standards in WCPFC and IATTC are against the standards of the EU which are based on ratification and implementation of ILO C188 (9 of 27 EEMM) as main legal basis. The measure adopted by WCPFC clearly dilutes and plays down ILO C188 do not favour fair play and undermines level playing field white washing the activity of the Asian fleets despite countries such as Korea or Thailand have already ratified ILO C188. In this sense, as the EU we should follow the example of US in closing our market to fish coming from lower standards and not meeting international standards.

Julio Morón and Anne France (Europeche Tuna Group) agree on the reflections from Juan Manuel and reiterate that ILO C188 is the minimum to comply with that only benefits PNA countries to do business as usual with Asian fleets. They warn that this proposal should not be exported to IOTC and shown as progress. The EU has the market power and retailers that are committed to the social part of sustainability, so we must avoid “social labels” linked to access to the markets based on a weak measure such as this one from WCPFC.

The MARE representative replied that labour aspects is not an exclusive competence of the EU, so they have been working jointly with MS in negotiating a proposal that did not come by the EU but under the leadership of New Zealand and Indonesia. This is the result of intersessional work to fight slavery on vessels of certain coastal states. We are coming from very far end of impunity, so it is not very straightforward to make a comparison with ILO C188 at this stage. The EC remains committed with the social sustainability.

Iris Ziegler (Seas at Risk) supported proposal of EU of adopting a fins naturally attached (FNA) policy without exceptions as the only way to ensure that shark finning will cease in all the oceans. Dr Ziegler showed appreciation to the EU work but regretted that Asian fleets keep trying to weaken out year after year such measure with other alternatives but not equally effective such as fins artificially attached, bagging, tagging...

The MARE representative answered that the EU was frustrated to not be able to go faster. As message of hope, he mentioned that a big part of Asian fleets are already requiring their vessels to follow a FNA policy and this is good news for the conservation of species. Furthermore, we will have more info on next WCPFC 2025 on data on vessels using alternative measures and assess their efficacy. Even if FNA is not the only option in the table, we are making slow but steady progress in the number of countries supporting this, even if the pace is not often fast or ambitious enough.

**ACTION – The LDAC will resume work in the coming months on this subject by creating a Focus Group tasked with preparing a draft advice for discussion at next WG1 meeting in October. The topics presented by the negotiator will be taken into consideration in the draft.**

#### 5.2. Overview of WCPFC advice

The Chair summarised the advice sent to the EC in November 2024.

- LDAC advice: [https://ldac.eu/images/EN\\_LDAC\\_Advice\\_WCPFC21\\_Nov2024.pdf](https://ldac.eu/images/EN_LDAC_Advice_WCPFC21_Nov2024.pdf)
- EC reply: [https://ldac.eu/images/EC\\_Reply\\_to\\_LDAC\\_WCPFC21\\_advice.pdf](https://ldac.eu/images/EC_Reply_to_LDAC_WCPFC21_advice.pdf)

## 6. ICCAT – Atlantic Ocean.

### 6.1. DG MARE Report on outcomes of ICCAT 24<sup>th</sup> Special Meeting of the Commission (Limassol, November 2024) and work priorities to 2025

The EC informed the Secretariat via email that “CC-RUP has also requested such a point of information on ICCAT in its agenda and that they were thinking of adding an update during the inter-AC second day on 9th April. Presence in Brussels will be limited but there will be a remote connection possible with the usual languages for all members. This would allow a wider range of AC members to be updated and would allow our B2 colleagues to deliver the information only once”.

The MARE representative from B2, Seamus Howard, presented the key outcomes of the 2024 Annual Meeting held in Limassol (Cyprus) on November 2024.

#### Tropical tuna

There were several important proposals with good results for the EU, as most of its 12 proposals were adopted. There was a landmark agreement on tropical tuna after 6 years, with a new TAC at 73011t for SKJ. There was also a comprehensive allocation key for BET, and a reduction of FAD closure from 72 to 63 days. The measure included an increased scrutiny for developing coastal states catching above 500t with a requirement to submit their capacity and management plans to be checked by PA1.

#### North Atlantic Swordfish

A robust MSE framework was developed.

#### Sharks

Several proposals were made on MSE for blue shark MSE.

However, the sharks’ conservation proposal promoted by the EU did not fly.

#### What is coming on 2025 - Main highlights/agenda items for 2025 Annual Meeting:

- Bluefin tuna year: new TAC expected for Eastern Atlantic stock, with allocation to be discussed. A strong case from EU when it comes to our claim to reject the need to reopen allocation in favour of smaller harvesters. BFT PA2 held last week saw a table allocation proposal by Chair and others by UK, with very little traction. The EU is not in favour to reopen this discussion this year.
- One MP for BFT very heavily regulated, but “legal blackhole” for Western Atlantic, with only rudimentary and basic regulatory elements such as list of vessels, ports due to strong push back from big harvesters in the West.
- Ongoing MSE for tropical tuna.
- Exceptional circumstances protocol for North Atlantic SWO, the EU will suggest using templates for BFT and ALB for inspiration.
- Stock assessment for bigeye tuna (HCR)
- Review of management measures for Atlantic shortfin mako and white marlin.
- Scoping exercise for Blue Shark MSE (request from SC as out from roadmap)

- Stereoscopic cameras and AI for tropical tunas.
- Paper on driftnets, definition not clear as scope is for Mediterranean and should cover also Atlantic.
- Trap lines for SWO fishery, define what they are, agenda of STECF at end of March.
- High Seas Boarding Inspection Scheme.

**ACTION – The LDAC will try to develop a comprehensive advice on ICCAT for 2025 Annual Meeting including also labour issues making reference to ILO C188 and measures against forced labour as minimum bar.**

## 6.2. Questions by members from the floor

Nikolas Evangelides (Pew) said that he was happy to hear that HSBI is high on the agenda and asked whether there was any update on catch documentation schemes (CDS) on BFT. He also mentioned that UK presented a white paper on improving port state measures in ICCAT and expects they will introduce something at IMM. He ended up asking for how diplomatic relations are with the new US administration.

Iris Ziegler (Seas at Risk) said that the approval of FNA policy felt really closed and it was a missed opportunity for a narrow margin. She expects that Japan will come back with a proposal this year advised by what WCPFC has just decided. She asked to merge individual sharks' regulations into a single omnibus regulation.

Ignacio Fresco (Oceana) asked about work and proposal on driftnets – in the LDAC advice this year we suggest that EC propose a resolution to formalize work with GFCM on this subject. This could be done by creating a WG together to have a specific ICCAT binding resolution banning driftnet across the whole Atlantic.

The MARE representatives replied that they are not sure on what proposal Japan will make as alternative to FNA but they will keep an eye on what happens in WCPFC to ensure level playing field with EU fleets. On driftnets, this issue will be tabled on a working group on GFCM in June.

The Chair thanked Mr. Howard for his attendance and feedback.

## 6.3. Overview of LDAC advice submitted in September 2024

The WG1 Chair summarised the LDAC advice sent to the EC in September 2024:

LDAC advice: [https://ldac.eu/images/LDAC\\_Advice\\_ICCAT\\_AM\\_2024\\_13Sept2024.pdf](https://ldac.eu/images/LDAC_Advice_ICCAT_AM_2024_13Sept2024.pdf)

EC reply: [https://ldac.eu/images/Reply\\_CV\\_to\\_LDAC\\_2024\\_ICCAT\\_advice\\_.pdf](https://ldac.eu/images/Reply_CV_to_LDAC_2024_ICCAT_advice_.pdf)

#### 6.4. Update on Inter AC work cooperation for 2025: actions agreed at joint LDAC-MEDAC-CCS-CCRUP coordination mtg (Zoom, 7<sup>th</sup> February 2025)

The Executive Secretary gave a summary of Inter AC work and cooperation in ICCAT. The LDAC coordinated on 7 February the first coordination meeting of the year between the Chairs, Vice Chairs and Secretaries of the four Advisory Councils dealing with ICCAT (LDAC-MEDAC-CC-S-CCRUP) to plan work ahead on ICCAT for 2025. This meeting was held online; and the agenda and the summary list of actions agreed were circulated on 27<sup>th</sup> February.

The aim of this meeting was to reflect on work made at the last quarter of 2024 and inform of our work plans on ICCAT for 2025 - we also identified collaborative paths and specific actions to engage in pursuit of the [cooperation agreement signed in July 2024](#).

One of the short term actions agreed was to draft a letter asking MARE for more information on the calendar and processes for Management Strategy Evaluations (MSE) and Candidate Management Plans (CMP) for selected ICCAT stocks for 2025, and ask for meaningful stakeholder (AC) involvement on it. As a result, a draft was prepared by the SWWAC (Pelagics WG Chair/Executive Secretary) with comments from several participants that has been now pre-agreed for wider circulation. The deadline finalised on 7<sup>th</sup> March.

### **7. WG1-WG2 draft advice on promoting level-playing field across RFMOs**

#### 7.1. Presentation from WG1 and WG2 Chairs

Anne-France provide an update on this pending action to produce a draft advice titled “Level Playing field in RFMOs: Sustainability and Competitiveness of the EU External Fisheries Model”.

The WG1 Chair presented a document with a SWAT analysis (Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities and Threats) that can be found here: [https://ldac.eu/images/Level Playing field in RFMOs - FINAL.pdf](https://ldac.eu/images/Level_Playing_field_in_RFMOs_-_FINAL.pdf)

#### 7.2. Q&A/discussions from the members

Daniel Voces suggest that the LDAC needs to find an interpretation on what this EU competitiveness means

Julio Morón asks to add as opportunity the review of the EU marketing standards.

**ACTION – Anne France will update the SWAT table with the input received and circulate a first draft version of advice with the assistance of the Secretariat, who will call for a Focus Group to kick-off with discussions.**



## **8. Transversal work on CMMs for sharks on tuna RFMOs**

### **8.1. Update on actions agreed at last WG1 and work plan for 2025**

The WG1 Chair and the Executive Secretary gave an introductory presentation with the history, context and aim of this initiative, and also included a proposal with a tentative timeline and suggested way forward with different options to work for discussion among WG1 members. The proposal can be read here:

[https://ldac.eu/images/EN\\_Proposal\\_to\\_work\\_on\\_sharks\\_across\\_RFMO\\_AFM.pdf](https://ldac.eu/images/EN_Proposal_to_work_on_sharks_across_RFMO_AFM.pdf)

Dr Iris Ziegler (Seas at Risk), in her capacity as main proponent of this initiative, presented the background and rationale: all tuna RFMOs deal at higher or lesser extent with conservation and management of sharks. If we could have a holistic approach and address some cross-cutting topics in a coordinated manner, we could raise the profile of sharks and have a solid and coherent basis to add to all our individual RFMO advice in terms of quality of stock assessments and science; mitigation and technical measures to reduce mortality; fins naturally attached policy.

The presentation from Dr Ziegler is available here:

[https://ldac.eu/images/Presentation\\_Joint\\_Shark\\_Advice\\_across\\_RFMOs\\_October\\_2024\\_Iris.pdf](https://ldac.eu/images/Presentation_Joint_Shark_Advice_across_RFMOs_October_2024_Iris.pdf)

The common denominator is to have a proactive approach to conservation and management of commercially exploited shark stocks and have them differentiated from other shark stocks that cannot sustain such activity as they are sensitive or endangered species.

### **8.2. Q&A / exchange of views by members from the floor**

Juana Parada (ORPAGU) advised that this work should be very basic and low hanging fruit as have an in-depth discussion would be more difficult due to differences among species and fishing areas subject to RFMOs. We know what our basic lines for agreement and disagreement are. She suggested to focus on FNA, better data collection and reporting, and precautionary measures for sensitive and endangered species as a first step. She also warned to be cautious to not over simplify and create confusion in mixing measures for stocks that are in different stock status and health (e.g. Blue Shark, Shortfin Mako) and continue working on management of the commercial species separately and individually to have a more refined approach.

Angela Cortina (OPPC-3) supported the suggestion from Juana and showed willingness to start working in this direction.

Emil Remisz, WG2 Chair, found this topic very interesting and complex. Looking at timeline and work plans, we would all benefit gathering more info with aim to revisit this topic at later stage when we have all information that can help us to prepare a well-informed document.





Iris Ziegler thanked the interventions and responded that for the EU the two main commercial and target species are blue shark and shortfin mako. Other species such as silky sharks are still targeted by non-EU fleets at IATTC, so we need a level playing field and stricter requirements in the context of RFMOs.

#### **ACTION**

**A drafting/focus group formed by Anne France, Ignacio Fresco, Iris Ziegler, Angela Cortina, Juana Parada and Emil Remisz will work together, with the assistance of the Secretariat, to gather available information and prepare some position on sharks that can be discussed in future WG1 meetings.**

#### **9. AOB (information points only)**

The WG1 Chair informed on the recent exchange of correspondence between DG MARE and the LDAC on interpretation of certain provisions embedded in the Code of Conduct for EU delegates participating in RFMOs meetings.

- Code of conduct:  
[https://ldac.eu/images/Code\\_of\\_conduct\\_EU\\_delegates\\_at\\_RFMOs\\_meetings.pdf](https://ldac.eu/images/Code_of_conduct_EU_delegates_at_RFMOs_meetings.pdf)
- LDAC letter asking for clarification of certain provisions (5th November 2024):  
[https://ldac.eu/images/LDAC\\_letter\\_on\\_clarification\\_Code\\_of\\_Conduct\\_for\\_EU\\_delegates\\_at\\_RFMO\\_meetings\\_5Nov2024.pdf](https://ldac.eu/images/LDAC_letter_on_clarification_Code_of_Conduct_for_EU_delegates_at_RFMO_meetings_5Nov2024.pdf)
- EC reply to LDAC letter (7th November 2024):  
[https://ldac.eu/images/EC\\_Reply\\_letter\\_Ch\\_Vitcheva\\_to\\_LDAC\\_-\\_code\\_of\\_conduct\\_nov\\_24.pdf](https://ldac.eu/images/EC_Reply_letter_Ch_Vitcheva_to_LDAC_-_code_of_conduct_nov_24.pdf)

#### **Closure of the meeting**

With no other issues to address, the meeting is closed by the Chair thanking everyone for their attendance, and the interpreters and the secretariat for their work. She recalls that the next WG1 meeting will be held in October 2025 in Brussels, with date to be confirmed by the Secretariat.

**END**



## **Annex 1. LDAC Working Group 1 on Tuna RFMOs**

**Brussels, 11 March 2025**

### **MEMBERS**

1. Anne-France Mattlet. Européche Tuna Group. WG1 Chair.
2. Ignacio Fresco. OCEANA. WG1 Vice Chair.
3. Angela Cortina. Opana / OPP3/ Acemix / Agarba.
4. Michel Goujon. ORTHONGEL
5. Iván López. AGARBA/CEPESCA
6. Julio Morón. OPAGAC
7. Juana Parada. ORPAGU
8. Héctor Fernández. Bolton Food
9. Anertz Muniategui. ANABAC
10. Marc Ghiglia. UAPF
11. Emil Remisz. High Seas Fish Producers Organization. WG2 Chair.
12. Rob Banning. Dutch Pelagic Freezer Trawler Association (PFA)
13. Juan Manuel Trujillo / Andrea Albertazzi. ETF
14. Vanya Vulperhorst. OCEANA
15. Julien Daudu. Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF)
16. Iris Ziegler. Seas at Risk
17. Despina Symons. EBCD
18. Laure Guillevic. WWF EPO
19. Nikolas Evangelides. The Pew Charitable Trusts

### **OBSERVERS**

20. Mr Stamatios VARSAMOS – MARE B.2 (WCPFC)
21. Mr Séamus Howard - MARE B.2 (ICCAT)
22. David Wodlund. SGP (Spain)
23. Mirella Roncero. SGP (Spain) (Zoom)
24. Ernesto Ortiz. SGP (Spain) (Zoom)
25. Benoit Guerin. BG Sea Consulting
26. Stephanie Czudaj. GIZ (Germany)
27. Maximilian Schwarz. EBCD
28. Camille Maisoneuve. EBCD

### **LDAC SECRETARIAT**

29. Alexandre Rodríguez. LDAC
30. Manuela Iglesias. LDAC
31. Marta de Lucas. LDAC (Zoom)