



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director-General

Brussels,
MARE/B2/LM

Dear Mr Ivan López,

I thank you for the advice provided regarding the 28th Regular session of ICCAT. The advice came in when the Commission delegation was already in Cairo, but nonetheless we are happy to respond to the main issues you raise in the advice.

- 1) We agree with you that **tropical tunas** remain high on ICCAT's agenda and they are one of the key priorities for the meeting. We will not spare any efforts to ensure that we reach a positive outcome regarding the adoption of a management measure on tropical tunas and a management procedure for Western skipjack. Any TAC for tropical tunas should take into consideration the current level of fishing opportunities for the main fleets, a level of redistribution to developing coastal States and, more importantly, ensure the stock to be in the green zone of the Kobe plot.

We have taken note of your position regarding any increase of the FAD closure period. The EU will not accept any increase in the FAD closure period. Moreover, the focus of our action will be on improving the provisions on biodegradability of FADs and the setting up of a working group on a FAD registry.

- 2) On **albacore**, we underline the reference in your advice that both North Atlantic and South Atlantic albacore are in healthy state with a very high probability of being in the green area of the Kobe plot. The TAC is a result of the MSE in place and it is calculated based on the harvest control rule.

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- 3) As part of our commitment to MSEs, we expect the North Atlantic **swordfish** MSE to be advanced at this year's annual meeting consistent with MSEs adopted for other ICCAT stocks.
- 4) Concerning **sharks**, we agree with you that efforts are needed to ensure the sustainability of the stocks, MSY and the set-up of MSEs. Socioeconomic indicators of the fleets and the livelihood of coastal communities should be also taken into consideration. Fins naturally attached (FNA) is a key element in the EU policy. We have added our co-sponsorship to the FNA proposal, and are doing our utmost in our outreach to ensure that there is a momentum for the adoption of the proposal this year.
- 5) On the specific case of the North Atlantic and South Atlantic stocks of **blue shark**, we support the promotion of MSY as a general principle although we note that the situation is slightly different between the two stocks. For the North stock, while the current annual yield is below the TAC and below the MSY level, harvesting North Atlantic blue shark at levels allowed by Recommendation 19-07 would clearly be unsustainable as it would lead to a very low probability (3%) of maintaining the stock in the green quadrant of the Kobe plot. Hence, we are proposing to align the TAC to the MSY.

Regarding the South Atlantic stock, the current reported catches are exceeding both MSY and the TAC and the stock is estimated to be undergoing overfishing. In this situation, it is advisable to propose a revision of the current management measure to bring any catches to MSY and include an allocation key.

- 6) Last but not least, we also fully support your considerations regarding monitoring and control, the fight against IUU fishing, the promotion of compliance and a level playing field. In this regard, we expect that the meeting will make substantial progress with the adoption of a high seas boarding and inspection scheme and minimum standards for electronic monitoring.

I am looking forward to our continued fruitful cooperation. Should you have any further questions on this reply, please contact Ms Julia Rubeck, our Advisory Councils coordinator, via the functional mailbox MARE-AC@ec.europa.eu.

Yours sincerely,

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