

MINUTES

33rd LDAC Working Group 1 Meeting Highly Migratory Stocks (Tuna and Tuna-like) and their RFMOs

Tuesday, 5 March 2024, 09:30-13:00h CET

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

Chair: Michel Goujon.

Vice Chair: Antonia Leroy.

1. Welcome by the Chair.

WG1 Chair, Mr. Michel Goujon, starts the meeting thanking WG1 members and observers, including representatives of EC DG MARE, Member States and AZTI for their presence and participation in this meeting.

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

2. Approval of the minutes of the last WG1 meeting – Brussels, 17 October 2023.

The minutes of the previous WG1 meeting are approved with no changes or comments.

3. Approval of the agenda.

The agenda is approved with no changes or comments.

4. Scientific presentation on the state of tropical tuna stocks in all relevant RFMOs (AZTI)

Mr. Gorka Merino, AZTI, makes a presentation that is available on this link: https://ldac.eu/images/Presentation_Status_of_tropical_tuna_stocks_and_perspectives_2024_Gorka_Merino.pdf

5. IOTC – Indian Ocean Tuna Commission.

5.1. Briefing on LDAC-CCRUP technical preparatory meeting with DG MARE (4 March).

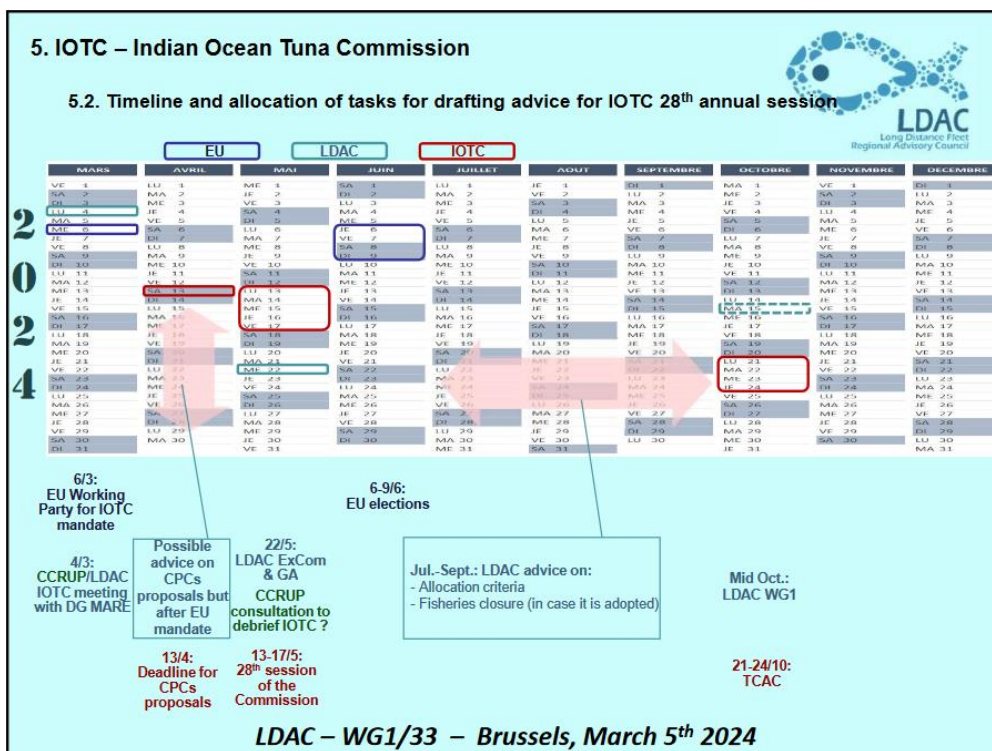
The Chair, Mr. Michel Goujon, summarises the preparatory meeting after the information is explained, and the following **ACTIONS** are agreed:

- **Based on the information compiled in discussions held within the joint LDAC-CCRUP focus group on 4 March and the position documents from member organisations, the LDAC Secretary (Alexandre) will coordinate with the outgoing Chair (Michel) and the incoming Chair (Anne-France) a first WG1 draft advice to be distributed for preliminary comments and feedback among WG1 members. If necessary, one or more focus groups will be convened in a short period of time to fine-tune the content and try to reconcile diverging positions on specific topics (e.g. FADs for tropical tuna, CMM for sharks, etc.).**

- LDAC and CCRUP Secretaries will keep each other informed on the process and set-up of each Advisory Council's advice in order to work in close collaboration in coming years and even draft a joint piece of advice (or at least a consolidated one integrating both) for topics of shared interest.

5.2. Way forward: timeline and allocation of tasks for drafting advice for the 28th IOTC Annual Meeting (Bangkok, 13-17 May 2024).

The Chair, Mr. Michel Goujon, explains his proposed timeline for work at IOTC for the whole of 2024, that can be found in the following presentation (see the specific slide) https://ldac.eu/images/Presentation_Michel_Goujon_WG1-5Mar2024.pdf



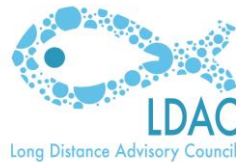
6. ICCAT – Atlantic Ocean.

6.1. Report on outcomes of ICCAT 2023 Annual Meeting (Egypt, 13-20 Nov) – DG MARE

The EC representative, Mr. Seamus Howards, summarises the meeting held in Cairo and highlights that most of the EU proposals were adopted (19 recommendations).

Regarding panel 4, about sharks and other species as by-catches, he informs that in 2023 several EU proposals were adopted, like that to protect rays, whale sharks. However, there is a need for ICCAT SCRS to approve the new practical guidelines to be presented at this 2024 Annual Meeting.

As for blue shark, he informs that a compromise text was reached where a TAC was set at 30,000 tonnes, slightly below MSY. Regarding the southern stock blue shark, a TAC was set at 27,500 tonnes in line with MSY.



As for panel 2 on the bluefin tuna (BFT) exploitation plan, there is a European pilot project for this stock to modify the proposal 22/08 with a view to removing capacity limits.

Regarding panel 1, despite EU efforts, no agreement was reached and the continuation of the current measure was adopted.

Concerning control rules, ICCAT adopted a minimum proposal for EMS on LL and PS and it is the first time that a complete set of rules is adopted within an RFMO.

Moreover, the EC representative informs that panel 1 has a new chair and that they notice a big difference compared to the previous one.

Mr. Edelmiro Ulloa, OPNAPA, thanks the EC for all their efforts and acknowledges the complexity of the meeting. He suggests searching for new initiatives for the fins-attached policy proposal to progress, since Asian countries always block it. He wants more time in 2024 for analyses and discussions with the EC in order to enhance both parties' knowledge.

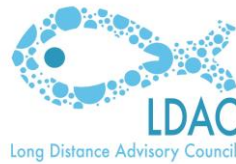
Regarding the Working Group on Social Economy, Mr. Howards, EC, informs that there is a unit devoted to this topic in DG MARE that has conducted studies on the socio-economic impact.

Mr. Michel Goujon, ORTHONGEL, points out that the 72-day closure has a catastrophic socio-economic impact on the European fleet.

Mr. Héctor Fernández, Bolton Food, stresses the importance of giving a new boost to FAD management and requiring that they are non-entangling and biodegradable both at the WCPFC and at the IOCT.

Mr. Alberto Martín, MSC-observer, notes that in recent years, discussions within PA1 have been solely focusing on bigeye tuna (BET), although yellowfin tuna (YFT) had a TAC subject to overfishing. Since 2019, there is a worrying downward trend, although there will be a new assessment this year. In his opinion, a new initiative should be suggested for the scientific advice to be adapted to the catch reality and to promote the multispecies process in progress at ICCAT, which may lead to a robust science-based system.

The EC representative, Mr. Howards, says that biodegradable and non-entangling FADs remain in the Chair's agenda, in fact, last year a proposal was submitted and they are willing to support it. Moreover, he underlines that YFT TAC has been exceeded for more than 10 years. As assessments are not clear so far, there could be more biomass than expected, so there is a need to wait for more data. Discussion focused on BET, but also on YFT. In addition, he informs that the MSE coordination meeting will be held in January. Although there seems to be slight progress, in his opinion it is possible that progress in management procedures will not be seen until 2025.



Mr. Julio Morón, OPAGAC, underlines the lack of compliance by some countries such as Senegal and Ghana in terms of tropical catch underreporting, particularly in the case of bigeye tuna. He stresses that the European fleet is being replaced by Asian fleets which are flagged in African countries. This, together with excessive regulation and a 72-day closure, makes the fleet disappear owing to lack of economic viability. He enquires if there is a way to improve this situation. In addition, Ghana has a canning factory exporting everything to Europe.

Mr. Raúl García, WWF, believes in the promotion of capacity frameworks commensurate with their resources. In fact, he thinks that more could be done to prevent countries like Ghana from exporting all their products to the EU. He understands the frustration of the European fleet.

As for Ghana and Senegal, the EC representative, Mr. Howards, notes that his colleagues from the unit against IUU fishing are aware of these issues and requests that any information regarding illegal fishing be conveyed to them so that they can share it with the compliance committee.

6.2. Report on attempts to establish an Inter AC joint approach for 2024 and beyond.

The General Secretary, Mr. Alexandre Rodríguez, summarises the meeting held by the four Advisory Councils with interests in ICCAT (CCRUP-MEDAC-SWWAC-LDAC) and mentions a draft proposal containing short, medium and long-term objectives.

The final draft proposal is available on the following link: https://ldac.eu/images/FINAL_CLEAN_Proposal_for_Inter_AC_Collaboration_on_ICCAT_13_march2024.pdf

The SWWAC representative, Mr. Sergio López, is grateful for the efforts made to try and coordinate this issue in order for the EC to take more account of advice.

The Secretary General of CCRUP, Ms. Daniela Costa, thanks Mr. Rodríguez for having led this initiative with a view to seeking common ground and reaching an understanding, bearing in mind the different perspectives and points of view.

6.3. Way forward: timeline and allocation of tasks for drafting advice.

The following **ACTIONS** are agreed:

- The LDAC will start the preparatory work to compile information in order to draft a piece of advice on ICCAT to be adopted in early October. These are some of the topics to be included:

- o Review of Recommendation 22-01 for tropical tuna**
- o Measures to implement a fins naturally attached (FNA) policy for sharks.**
- o Measures to strengthen the fight against IUU fishing**
- o Control and surveillance, including transshipments at sea**

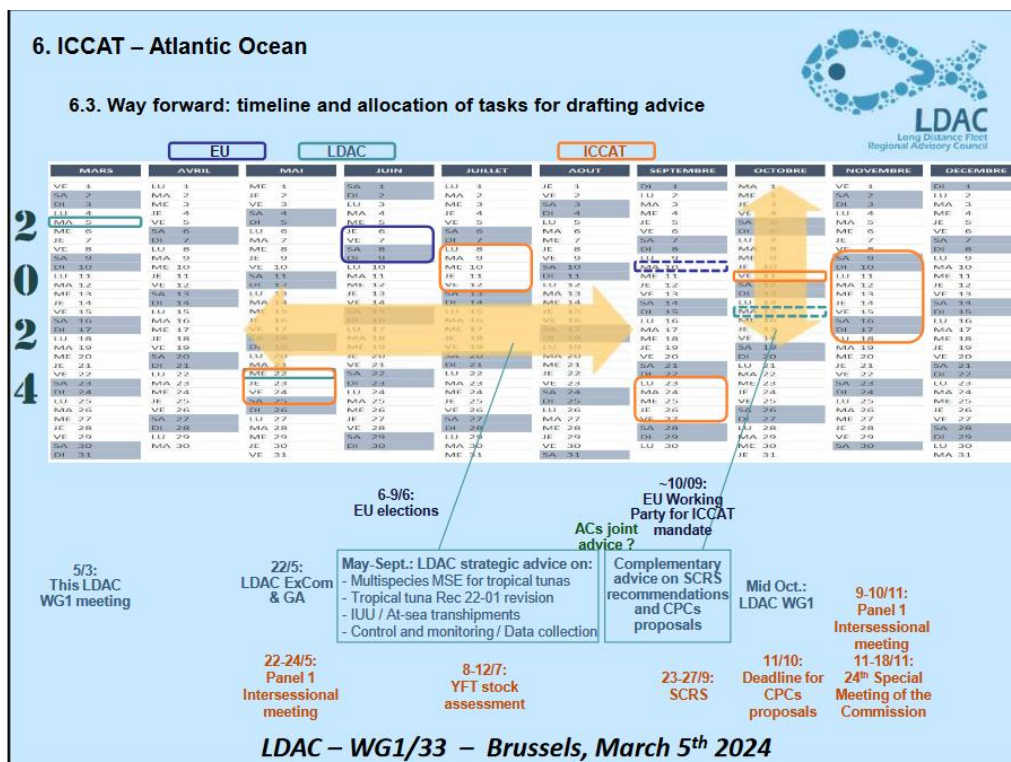
- Once they are adopted by all the Working Groups of the Advisory Councils concerned (MEDAC WG2 will meet on 20 June), the LDAC Secretary will distribute, for adoption by the Executive Committee, the ToR to set up a cooperation agreement on ICCAT among the LDAC, SWWAC, MEDAC and CCRUP. These ToR include a series of short, medium and long-term actions, as well as a clear meeting schedule for joint cooperation.

- WG1 Chair suggests to start work in the summer (June-September) to prepare a strategic piece of advice from the LDAC to the ICCAT SCRS including topics such as:

- o Improved compilation of scientific data
- o Development of a multispecies MSE for tropical tuna

For more information on the schedule proposed by Michel Goujon, click on this link: (see the specific slide on item 6-ICCAT)

https://ldac.eu/images/Presentation_Michel_Goujon_WG1-5Mar2024.pdf

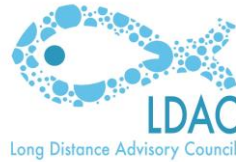


7. Conservation and Management Measures for Sharks at Tuna RFMOs

7.1. Presentation on NGO views and proposals for discussion in future advice - Dr. Iris Ziegler (Deas at Risk)

Ms. Ziegler's presentation is available at:

https://ldac.eu/images/Presentation_Commercially_exploited_sharks_should_be_managed_sustainably_at_RFMO_level_Iris_Ziegler.pdf



7.2. Longliners' views on conservation and management measures and restrictions on shark trade.

Ms. Juana Parada, ORPAGU, highlights the fact that RFMOs' management measures ought to be based on science. In fact, the sector is pioneering many measures, self-regulating itself for years in order to set as an example, although they do not succeed in doing so. The fleet has been adapting to the fins-attached policy, making large investments onshore, as well as a FIP 5 years ago that has allowed for improvement in data compilation, for instance.

Besides, blue shark was added to the CITES Appendix II, although there were opinions against this inclusion, but it was listed as look-alike species. In addition, the sector has installed cameras on board and these are initiatives that have come from the sector itself.

As for the initiative open until 16 May regarding the consultation on sharks, she highlights that this would only affect European operators, and insists on the fact that the European fleet duly complies with the fins-attached policy while Asian fleets conduct the illegal practice of finning. In fact, in the Atlantic Ocean only blue shark is caught, which is in good state.

In her opinion, if the proposal goes ahead, it will lead to a decrease in profitability. In fact, the global demand of products will continue to exist, the only thing is that respectful operators ensuring traceability will disappear and will be replaced by malpractising operators.

She notes that the sector agrees with NGOs on some of these issues and that work should be done on initiatives such as "Stop Finning - Stop the Trade".

7.3. Questions and discussion from the floor.

Mr. Michel Goujon, Chair, underlines the importance of having this kind of arguments noted down in a document.

8. WCPFC- Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission.

8.1. DG MARE report on outcomes of the 20th Commission Regular Session (4-8 Dec. 2023): key actions and priorities for the EU in 2024.

The EC representative, Mr. Stamatis Varsamos, summarises the outcomes of the Annual Meeting held in December and some joint tasks.

He highlights that the measures on tropical tuna were reviewed and this took up large part of the meeting that lasted until the early hours of the morning, until they managed to achieve a solution in this regard.

The positive news is that there are no changes in the EU fishing opportunities for PS, there is even a desire to expand them.

Regarding FADs, the contribution of the EU is important in terms of management arrangements, the number, the biodegradability, etc. Although this year not a lot of points were included in the agenda regarding this topic. However, as soon as there is any indication in this respect, the authorities and the sector will be contacted to collaborate in this regard.



As for work on the review of measures related to sea birds, participation in a technical meeting has been requested. In addition, on the implementation of existing mitigation measures for sea birds and sea turtles, indications have been received from coastal states and the authorities to implement measures related to sea turtles.

Regarding observers data, there is a 100% coverage for PS, but only of 5% for the LL fleet, this percentage being too low.

8.2. Analysis of LDAC advice submitted in December 2023 – feedback.

This matter was not addressed since all LDAC members knew the advice.

8.3. Future actions: work plan for 2024.

The following **ACTIONS** are agreed:

- **To start compiling information from the members to prepare a proposal on conservation, management and enforcement measures for the WCPFC Annual Meeting to be held in December 2024.**
- **The Secretariat will compile the preliminary issues put forward by the DG MARE negotiator, Mr. Varsamos, (for instance, measures for tropical tuna, increasing the observer coverage for LL fleets targeting sharks) to be able to address them.**

9. IATTC – Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission.

9.1. DG MARE update on follow up on outcomes of the 101st Meeting of IATTC (August 2023) and subsidiary bodies: pending actions and meetings calendar for 2024.

For the first time, the EU has led the introduction of the issue of FADs.

It is highlighted that Asian fleets reject increasing observer coverage from 5% to 20%.

Besides, it is pointed out that certain control and monitoring measures need to be taken for the US, as well as for Japan, on BFT in the Pacific Ocean, so the EU will propose them if there is an increase in the level of catches.

At the next meeting measures for tropical tuna will have to be discussed again, knowing that the state of stocks is not as good as it used to be, particularly for BET and eventually for YFT as well.

The results of the Scientific Advisory Committee will be analysed and the role of the "honest broker" will be attempted. This is not expected to be easy this year.

9.2. Open discussion and questions from the floor.

After some discussion, the following **ACTION** is agreed:

- **The LDAC will wait to receive the official document from the EC towards the end of June or early July. The Secretariat will then check with DG MARE whether the proposals made are consistent with those prepared for other RFMOs, such as the FNA policy, observer coverage, MCS related to the fight against IUU fishing, etc.**

10. Election of WG1 Chair and Vice Chair (1 June 2024-31 May 2027).



Mr. Alexandre Rodríguez, General Secretary, explains the election procedure informing afterwards about the expressions of interest received in good time and appropriate manner: Ms. Anne-France Mattlet's (Europêche Tuna Group) for the position of Chair and Mr. Louis Lambrecht's (WWF) for the position of Vice Chair.

DECISION:

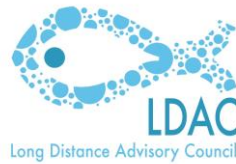
The members who are present and represented unanimously approve the appointment of the mentioned candidates, Ms. Mattlet and Mr. Lambrecht, for the positions of WG1 Chair and Vice Chair, respectively. They will have a 3-year mandate starting on 1 June 2024 and ending on 31 May 2027.

The LDAC Chair, Mr. Iván López, thanks the outgoing Chair and Vice Chair, Michel Goujon and Antonia Leroy, for their dedication and work over the years. He then welcomes the incoming Chair and Vice Chair.

CLOSURE OF THE MEETING (13:00h)

WG1 Chair, Mr. Michel Goujon, closes the meeting reminding attendees that the next WG1 meeting will be held in October 2024.

-END-



ANNEX 1. LIST OF ATTENDEES

LDAC Working Group 1 Meeting Tuesday, 5 March 9.30-13:00h

WORKING GROUP MEMBERS

1. Michel Goujon. ORTHONGEL
2. Iván López. AGARBA/CEPESCA
3. Edelmiro Ulloa. Opana / OPP3/ Acemix / Agarba
4. Julio Morón. OPAGAC
5. Julien Daudu. EJJ
6. Marc Ghiglia.UAPF
7. Béatrice Gorez. CFFA-CAPE
8. Joelle Philippe. CFFA-CAPE
9. Thomas Jong. CFFA-CAPE
10. Iris Ziegler.Seas at Risk
11. Marc Ghiglia.UAPF
12. Despina Symons.EBCD
13. Ignacio Fresco. OCEANA
14. Héctor Fernández. Bolton Food
15. Sergio López. OPP-Puerto Burela
16. Anertz Muniategi. ANABAC
17. Daniel Voces. Européche
18. Rosalie Tukker. Européche
19. Anne-France Mattlet. Européche tuna group (Zoom)
20. Juan Martín Fragueiro. OP ANACEF
21. Raúl García. WWF
22. Antonia Leroy.WWF
23. Maximilian Schwarz.EBCD
24. Juan Manuel Trujillo.ETF
25. Juana Parada.ORPAGU

OBSERVERS

26. Stamatis Varsamos. DG MARE
27. Marco Valleta. DG MARE
28. Seamus Howard.DG MARE
29. Gorka Merino. AZTI (Zoom)
30. Rita Santos. EFCA
31. Carla Baz. MarInnLeg (Zoom)
32. Ismael Yagüe.SGP
33. Carlos Aldereguía.SGP
34. Chloé Pocheau. SWWAC (Zoom)
35. Daniela Costa. CC RUP (Zoom)
36. María José Rico. SWWAC (Zoom)
37. Bertrand Wendling. MEDAC (Zoom)

LDAC SECRETARIAT

38. Alexandre Rodríguez. LDAC
39. Manuela Iglesias. LDAC