



# LDAC recommendations for 2023 ICCAT Annual Mtg.

## 28th Regular Meeting of the Commission (New Cairo, 13-20 Nov. 2023)

**Date of adoption: 8<sup>th</sup> of November 2023**

**Ref. R- 09-23/WG1**

### Fight against Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) fishing

The LDAC expresses a strong support to the fight against IUU fishing which should include:

- Establishing a proper register of vessels actively fishing in the ICCAT's area of competence.
- Further expanding IMO number reporting requirements to include all eligible vessels.
- Increasing transparency about vessels' identities and beneficial ownership.
- Continuing to ask for further accountability for performance of certain flag states that are CPCs of ICCAT at the ICCAT Compliance and Control Committee. This refers to those flag states that are contracting parties and are repeatedly not fulfilling their obligations under of Rec. 08-09 09 to report on investigations taken in relation to allegations of non-compliance and on actions taken to address compliance concerns<sup>1</sup>. In that context, the LDAC recommends the EU to seek clarifications on compliance concerns (including unanswered ones) it raised in 2022 and 2023, including in relation to the lack of action by China vis-à-vis the confirmed Chinese beneficial owner of two vessels listed as "IUU", and examine and act based on any new suitably documented compliance information reported under Rec. 08-09. To this effect, ICCAT should also take full advantage of Compliance Committee's updated rules of procedure adopted in 2022 and further support developing CPCs build their compliance capacity through a dedicated meeting in 2024.
- On the basis of recommendation 18-10 by ICCAT concerning minimum standards for vessel monitoring systems in the ICCAT convention area, implementing a regional VMS for all vessels actively fishing in ICCAT.
- Adopting minimum standards for an ICCAT electronic monitoring program in 2023 along with a comprehensive workplan and ambitious timeline for the implementation of electronic monitoring systems.

---

<sup>1</sup> Consistently with Part VI ("Compliance and enforcement") of the Agreement on the implementation of the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the conservation and management of straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks.

- Establishing a working group to focus on expanding the coverage of electronic Catch Documentation Schemes (eCDS) to cover all ICCAT stocks/species on the basis of an ambitious timeframe. This should be done in coordination with the revised European Control Regulation, which provides for an eCDS targeted only to certain fleets and species, in order to avoid a cumbersome system penalising the EU fleets. Revising Recommendation 18-09 on port State measures to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing to facilitate better information exchange through the development of an ICCAT-managed electronic information exchange system that includes information on denials of port access and inspection results, at a minimum. The LDAC also recommends that the EU works with ICCAT's Compliance Committee to ensure the effective implementation of the existing Recommendations.
- Adopting the IMM-endorsed proposal on high seas boarding and inspection (HSBI) to enable all ICCAT members to work together on vessel inspections to ensure that members are upholding their commitments to oversee the development and capacity building initiatives of a future HSBI scheme. Furthermore, the LDAC welcomes the EU Resolution for the establishment of a working group for such purpose.

### Fishing capacity

- The LDAC is concerned with the growth of fishing capacity in the ICCAT convention area in the last years. The LDAC therefore asks to establish a limited entry through closed vessel registries.

### Transshipments

- The LDAC supports the total elimination of transshipments at sea and welcomes all proposal that will go along this line.
- In the meanwhile, LDAC supports the continuation of the ICCAT Regional Observer Program for fishing vessels 24 meters LOA engaging in transshipment operations at sea.
- Port States must ensure that in-port transshipment operations – including and in particular at anchorage<sup>2</sup> – are appropriately monitored and controlled, in line with Recommendation 18-09 on port State measures to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing or more stringent measures in accordance with domestic and international law. In accordance with Recommendation 18-09 each year CPCs shall inspect at least 5% of landing and transshipment operations in their designated ports as are made by foreign fishing vessels. Recommendation 18-09 should be revised to explicitly mandates CPCs to inspect at least 5% of transshipment operations at anchorage, in designated ports.

---

<sup>2</sup> In accordance with paragraph 1 of Recommendation 18-09 “Port” includes offshore terminals and marine areas of the port, and other installations for landing, transshipping, packaging, processing, refueling, or resupplying.

## Regional Observer Scheme

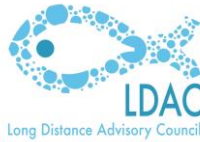
- The LDAC strongly supports the increase of scientific observation coverage for all fleets, recalling that the minimum coverage recommended by the SCRS for ETP species. The LDAC notes that ICCAT already requires observer coverage at 100% for purse seiners, 20% for bluefin and 10% for tropical tuna vessels for LL. However, these requirements are found in the multi-annual conservation and management plans for tropical tunas (Rec. 22-01) and bluefin tuna (Rec. 22-08). Noting that Recommendation 16-14 on minimum observation standards was due for revision in 2019, it has nevertheless remained unchanged and outdated. The LDAC therefore suggests updating and aligning the provisions of Rec. 16-14 with those in the multi-annual plans (100% observer coverage for PS and 20% for all LL and PL). In addition, LDAC supports the adoption of minimum standards to enable countries to use this electronic monitoring to increase observer coverage.
- The LDAC is supporting the development and harmonisation of National observer programs and, when missing or proved inefficient, the development of Regional Observer Schemes for all fishing vessels 24 meters LOA. This is essential for effective monitoring of the fleet as well as for the accuracy of the data transmitted to the ICCAT secretariat.

## Management strategy evaluation

- The LDAC supports the development of the management strategy evaluation (MSE) process within ICCAT and grasps this opportunity to advocate for increased exchange between scientists, policy makers and stakeholders to encourage buy-in from the fishing industry into the process. The recent example of the development of the Bluefin tuna harvest strategy in ICCAT with inter alia a series of ambassadors' meetings should certainly be a model that could be followed for tropical tuna stocks.
- Along with support for developing a harvest strategy for all tropical tunas, the LDAC also advocates for a multi-annual and multi-stocks approach for both tropical tunas and sharks to bring stability to the management framework for the sake of the resources' state and the needed visibility for the fishing industry.

## Data collection

- The LDAC shows its support to the EU on its request to MS and its intention to ask other CPCs to improve data collection and submit CPUEs from EU purse seine (PS) and longline (LL) fleets for scientific purposes.



- In line with the new EU Control Regulation, LDAC recall the need to establish and strength data collection of tuna and tuna-like recreational fisheries across convention area in order to estimate mortality produced by this sector and improve robustness of stock assessment and associated management advice.

### ICCAT and GFCM Cooperation

- The LDAC further encourages the EU to put forward initiatives aimed at fostering enhanced cooperation between ICCAT and the GFCM on the implementation of resolutions related to driftnet ban and usage. This cooperation should bolster oversight, strengthening implementation of the resolutions and actively contributing to more accurate reporting of relevant data, and improve control and monitoring.

### Labour Standards

- The LDAC welcomes the discussions at the ad hoc working group on labour standards and recommends that the EU supports formalising the outcomes through the adoption of a resolution on core principles for labour standards in ICCAT fisheries that also calls for CPCs to report on their implementation.
- The LDAC supports establishing a permanent ICCAT working group on this topic.


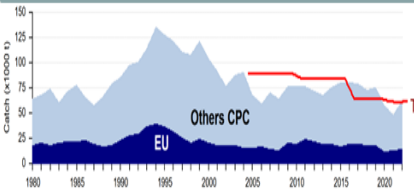
### Climate Change

- The LDAC welcomes the ICCAT Climate Change Experts meeting that took place on 11-12 July 2023 and notes EU's presentation on "EU Fisheries and Climate change". The EU has been in the forefront of climate change adaptation and mitigation having made ambitious commitments in investing significant resources for the years to come.
- The LDAC recommends that the EU prioritises the adoption of an ICCAT plan of action on climate change along with the UK proposal for the creation of a standing joint experts' group on climate change at this year's annual meeting, that would also help level the playing field internationally.

## ICCAT Panel 1 – Tropical tuna fisheries

### LDAC recommendations on a multi-annual management plan for tropical tunas

The LDAC is concerned by the difficulty in recent years to progress on the revision of Recommendation 16-01 on the management of Bigeye Tuna. The EU fleets have assumed a wide share of the fishing effort's and catch reduction in the last years (i.e., about 20% reduction in fishing effort and 30% reduction in catch since 2018). Despite this effort, the LDAC regrets that no progress has been made during the intersessional meetings of PA1 in 2023, despite the improvement in the situation of the stock acknowledged by the SCRS and the reasonable perspective of a TAC increase.

Stock	SSB	F	C <sub>2022</sub>	State of stock & SCRS advice
 <b>BET</b>	0.94	1.00	62 513  <MSY ~TAC	<b>Stock overfished &amp; not subject to overfishing (MSY=86 833 t, PRK=49%).</b> Current catch levels have a high <b>PMG<sub>2033</sub>&gt;95%</b> but projection proba. to be interpreted with caution. The SCRS recommends a TAC with a high <b>PMG<sub>2034</sub></b> and a reduction of fishing mortality of small bigeye tuna.
				<b>Management measures:</b> <b>TAC = 62 000 t [Rec. 22-01]</b> <b>72 days FAD moratorium all Atlantic + non-entangling FADs + no discards</b> <b>+ 300 operational FAD buoys/boat + mandatory observers for FAD fishing</b>

### Bigeye tuna catch limits

- Provided that the EU fleets can benefit from the TAC increase, the LDAC can support the compromise of 73 000 tons, a level that has met with broad support during the last Panel 1 intersession.
- The LDAC supports the harvest control rules (HCR) discussions and proposal from this same Panel 1 intersession, noticing that the consensual TAC=73 000 t fits with the HCR.

### Bigeye tuna TAC Allocation

- Considering that the Commission wants to maintain its tropical tuna fleet activity in the Atlantic Ocean, LDAC support the European Commission in negotiating for an equitable system of allocation that ensures level playing field between EU and non-EU vessels.

- The LDAC supports the categories established for the allocation but suggests that developed CPCs (such as USA, Canada, France St Pierre et Miquelon) should not benefit from the TAC increase as much as developing CPCs: ICCAT should consider attributing them individual catch limits as other developed CPC.
- The LDAC strongly opposes that any overshoot of a CPC/category already subject to a quota could be compensated by other CPC/categories. This would be unfair for CPCs respecting their catch limits, including EU fleets, and would prevent the economic stability of the established fisheries.
- Regarding the TAC utilisation, the LDAC recommends:
  - o requiring real-time monitoring from all CPCs.
  - o prior information to ICCAT of fishing management plan for developing CPCs that are planning to develop their fisheries to anticipate needs for quota transfers.
  - o progressive disposal (permanent redistribution) of unused quotas to a reserve/per equation quota for developing states.
- the LDAC takes note of the draft recommendation by ICCAT on Senegal's Bigeye Tuna Payback Plan consecutive to the country's total negative balance for 2020 of 1,377.77t to be paid back at a rate of 137.77 tons per year from 2023 to 2032 (inclusive). The LDAC recommends the EU to position itself in favour of a more ambitious pay back that reflect the dynamic of the country's industrial fleet and significantly positive balance recorded in 2021 and 2022 for this fishery and is consistent with ICCAT's conservation and management measures (including Recommendation 22-01). The LDAC finally notes that the EU identified that Senegal exported for several years quantities of swordfish and albacore tuna that also exceeded the quota allocated to Senegal – a situation which remains to be addressed by that flag state.
- The LDAC recommends that any future fishing opportunities for European tuna purse seiners are not compromised in the future as a result of reallocation issues.

### FAD closure

- Considering the FAD closure, the LDAC members have divergent positions, namely:
  - o The tuna fishing sector considers that both the geographical coverage (the whole Atlantic area) and temporal duration (72 days) of the FAD closure is putting a disproportionate burden and pressure on concerned purse seine fleets, creating severe and adverse socioeconomic impacts (i.e., loss of income and employment) on their activity, as there is no possibility or redistribute the effort in the Atlantic Ocean. Furthermore, given the substantial reduction in catch reported for BET this year in line with the TAC and the preliminary indications from SCRS of improvement of the stock, the tuna fishing sector wishes to request that SCRS actively works on a proposal for a reduction of the time duration of the closure.

- The environmental NGO group think that the current FAD closure measure should be maintained as it stands as it is showing positive impacts on the state of the stock. As recently discussed in the IOTC working party on dFADs, time closures for dFADs do provide conservation benefits for yellowfin tuna protecting specifically juveniles.
- Given the fact that the impact of the FAD closure has not yet been assessed by the SCRS and the measurable socio-economic impacts that this management measure has had over the last 4 years, the LDAC would like to see the EU proposing the creation of a Working Party on socio-economics in ICCAT, similarly to those in other tuna RFMOs, which would have the objective of assessing the impacts on the economic and social dimensions of sustainable management of fisheries under the ICCAT mandate.
- The LDAC also recommends that the SCRS continues its analyses on the effects of the FAD closure and complete a fully-fledged impact assessment of its effectiveness, i.e., if the 72 days' duration is proportional and adequate for required catch reduction. This should be ideally completed before or in time for ICCAT PA1 meeting in November.

### Biodegradability of FADs

- The LDAC recommends the alignment with the measure recently adopted in IATTC, establishing a roadmap towards a 100% biodegradability of (all types of) drifting aggregating devices (dFADs and aFADs) in 2029.
- The LDAC also recommends including the most recent discussions on the benefits of fully non-entangling FAD designs without netting or meshed materials, leaving operators discretion to choose the type of materials and designs used as far as they meet the require objective (e.g., jelly and others) using the IATTC model of resolution for biodegradable FADs.
- The LDAC is in favour to develop and adopted fully transparent FAD-recovery policy, FAD marking scheme, clearer rules for FAD ownership, and stronger rules for FAD buoy activation and deactivation.

## Yellowfin tuna (YFT) and Skipjack tuna (SKJ) management

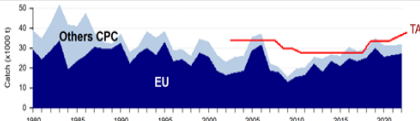
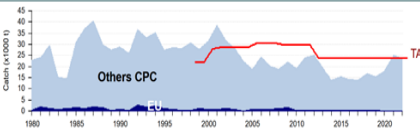
Stock	SSB	F	C <sub>2022</sub>	State of stock & SCRS advice
<b>Last eval. 2019</b>  <b>YFT</b>	1.17	0.96	148 211	<b>Stock close to MSY (121 298 t). PGK=54%.</b> Catch of 120 000 t/yr are expected to further degrade the condition of the yellowfin stock. <b>PMG<sub>2033</sub>=66%</b> . The SCRS recommends to reduce fishing mortality of small yellowfin tuna. <b>Evaluation planned in 2024.</b>
				<b>Management measures:</b> <b>TAC = 110 000 t [Rec. 22-01]</b> <b>72 days FAD moratorium all Atlantic + non-entangling FADs + no discards + 300 operational FAD buoys/boat + mandatory observers for FAD fishing</b>

Stock	SSB	F	C <sub>2022</sub>	State of stock & SCRS advice
<b>Last eval. 2022</b>  <b>SKJ East</b>	1.60	0.63	271 371	<b>Stock with a PGK=78%.</b> Constant catches at the MSY level (216,617 t) have a <b>PMG<sub>2028</sub>=55%</b> but notes that the provisional catches for 2022 are clearly higher than the MSY.
				<b>Management measures:</b> <b>No TAC</b> <b>72 days FAD moratorium all Atlantic + non-entangling FADs + no discards + 300 operational FAD buoys/boat + mandatory observers for FAD fishing</b>

- On yellowfin tuna, the LDAC requests that a new scientific assessment will be carried out urgently in 2024 and trust this will give a better basis for management decisions on the YFT stock.
- On skipjack tuna, there are two divergent positions:
  - o The tuna fishing sector of the LDAC acknowledges the advice of the SCRS and envisages that, following a multi-stock approach, a MSE for the three tropical tuna species should be carried out. Once this MSE is completed, ICCAT should develop a harvest strategy for all tropical tuna stocks, replacing the existing allocation of BET and YFT catch limits. The tuna fishing sector of the LDAC does not support the individual adoption of a MSE for Western Atlantic Skipjack.
  - o The NGO group acknowledges the MSE work completed on Western Atlantic Skipjack Tuna stock (WSKJ) and recommends that the Commission works closely with other CPCs to adopt a WSKJ management procedure at this year's annual meeting.



## ICCAT Panel 2 – Albacore tuna fisheries

Stock	SSB	F	C <sub>2022</sub>	State of stock & SCRS advice
<b>Last eval. 2023</b>	<b>2,19</b>	<b>0.45</b>	<b>31 654</b>	<b>Stock not overfished &amp; not subject to overfishing (MSY=41 995 t, PGK&gt;99%).</b> HCR adopted by the Commission in 2021 : management objective with <b>PMG<sub>y</sub>&gt;60%</b> while maximizing long-term yield. No exceptional circumstances detected, the SCRS recommends a TAC for 2024-2026 of 47 251 t (+25%).
<b>ALB North</b>			<b>&lt;MSY</b> <b>&lt;TAC</b>	
				<b>Management measures:</b> TAC = 37 801 t for 2022-2023, according to HCR [Rec. 21-04] Limitation of the number of vessels to 1993-95 level [Rec. 98-08]
<b>Last eval. 2020</b>	<b>1.58</b>	<b>0.40</b>	<b>23 544</b>	<b>Stock not overfished &amp; not subject to overfishing (MSY=27 264 t, PGK&gt;99%).</b> Projections with the catch at the level of MSY showed that <b>PMG<sub>2033</sub>=90%</b> . However, the SCRS recommends a reduction in TAC after 2033 to prevent overfishing.
<b>ALB South</b>			<b>&lt;MSY</b> <b>~TAC</b>	
				<b>Management measures:</b> TAC = 28 000 t for 2023-2026 [Rec. 22-06]

- The LDAC is pleased to note that both North Atlantic and South Atlantic albacore are in healthy state with a very high probability (99% for the NA and 90% for SA) on being in the green area of the Kobe plot.
- The LDAC notes that the MSE/HCR have proven to deliver both biological stability and economic certainty for the long-term management of the stock.
- The LDAC supports work progress made by EU scientists on advancing a new MSE framework using the new Stock Synthesis model developed for the assessment.
- The application of the management strategy (MS) to the current biomass estimate to set the next TAC for the 2024-2026 period for the North Atlantic stock suggests a recommended TAC of 47 251 t, which represents a 25% increase of the previous TAC, with respect to the Recommendation 21-04.
- For North Atlantic albacore, the LDAC supports the recommendation of the South Western Waters Advisory Council (CC-Sud) adopted in May 2023<sup>3</sup>, summarised as follows: The LDAC would like to see the MSE process evolve to allow the F-Target value of the exploitation rule to be raised to 90% of MSY. It considers that capping the TAC at the current F-Target value (80% of MSY) constitutes an excess of precaution compared to the management of other EU stocks and to the MSY approach (TAC set at the fishing mortality level associated with MSY), as provided for by the CFP. Such a change in the harvesting rule would have no impact on the TAC level over the 2024-2026 period but should make it possible to secure fishing possibilities over the long term and limit the return to a situation of flagrant under-exploitation of the stock.

<sup>3</sup> <https://cc-sud.eu/images/img-ccs/avis/Avis-2023-2024/Avis165-Germon-0523/Avis165-Germon-0523-FR.pdf>

- Furthermore, according to the SCRS 2023 report (table 19.6.1), increasing the value of target F would not compromise the sustainability objective for this stock. The probability of the stock being in the green quadrant of the Kobe matrix would be 61.65%, thus respecting the 60% risk threshold".

*Divergent position from Pew Charitable Trust Europe on North Atlantic Albacore:*

*While PEW would be willing to support the increase in TAC to 47 000 tons, a revision of the management objectives within the MP itself should not be considered. The foundational concept of management procedures is to agree on management objectives, and then allow for the model to adopt an optimal management strategy. By amending these objectives mid-stream, a poor precedent would be set for CPCs pushing to re-opening an approach that was formally agreed in order to increase catch opportunity, and thereby undermining the effectiveness to the MP itself.*

- For South Atlantic albacore, the LDAC acknowledges that the current TAC of 28 000 t for the period 2023-2026 (Rec. 22-06) is fit for purpose and catches are well below 28000 t since 2004.

## ICCAT Panel 4 – Sharks

### General considerations

- The LDAC supports efforts at ICCAT to establish effective, sustainable management for the stocks of sharks (in particular Blue shark) to provide the basis of scientifically viable Non-Detrimental Findings (NDF) certificates for Member States in the case of exporting to international markets in line with CITES requirements.
- While recognizing the need to adopt the necessary measures to ensure stock are restored to levels above those capable of producing MSY in line with art 4.2 of the CFP, the LDAC urges the EU to consider in their proposals and deliberations the socio-economic considerations and assess impact on EU longline fleets and their dependent coastal communities of further stringent measures related to conservation and management of the Atlantic blue shark, shortfin mako and swordfish stocks.
- The LDAC supports the development of harvest strategies including harvest control rules for all commercially exploited sharks (blue shark and shortfin mako) in order not to compromise their viability and risk losing a valuable fleet providing consistent data on total removals, which are key for sound scientific assessments. In this respect, it is worthwhile to mention the work of many Longline Spanish and Portuguese fleets in the FIP BLUES, with voluntary measures including self-limitation of catches and spatial and temporary avoidance of catch of spawning sharks' aggregations in certain fishing grounds.

- Whereas the LDAC is concerned by the constant lack of compliance from other CPCs as regard to the application of the REC 11-15 (on data reporting) and recognizes the need to strengthen data collection and adopt additional measures necessary to mitigate by-catch and reduce post-release mortality.
- However, it wishes to underline that the lack of compliance and overfishing of shark stocks by several CPCs in the past must be ended immediately to prevent stocks from collapsing and to allow rebuilding of overexploited stocks This must be committed to by all CPCs and not only by EU fleets.
- In addition, the LDAC reminds that ICCAT REC 06-13 allows trade measure to be taken to address issues of non-compliance. For this reason, it appears of paramount importance for the LDAC to increase collaboration with CITES and encourage further interaction between shark' biology experts and ICCAT SCRS and PA4 and avoid negative interactions between both organisations.

### Fins Naturally Attached Policy


- The EU has been a pioneer in ensuring full utilization of sharks through the adoption of its Regulation (EU) No 605/2013 (so-called “Shark Finning Regulation”).
- At past ICCAT meetings, the EU has either sponsored or co-sponsored several proposals to replace the outdated ICCAT Rec 2004/10 measure by a ban on the removal of shark fins at sea, requiring that all sharks be landed with their fins naturally attached. Unfortunately, these proposals so far have failed due to the opposition from Japan and China.
- The LDAC welcomes the EU Commission has coordinated with other CPCs for a joint proposal for Fins Naturally Attached but recommends to also start bilateral negotiations with Japan and China ahead of the ICCAT Meeting to identify common grounds for an adoption of fins naturally attached at this year’s ICCAT Commission meeting. This will be an important step to provide a level playing field for EU fisheries and stop the possibility for other CPCs that do not have national FNA regulations in place to take advantage from the inadequate ICCAT measure.

## Blue Shark (*Prionace glauca*)

### General considerations

- The LDAC request the EU to present a proposal for the SCRS is tasked to develop a harvest strategy for blue sharks by 2025 including harvest control rules, with the “associated limit, target, and threshold reference points” – as already proposed in the respective 2016/12 and 2019/07 and 2019/08 ICCAT recommendations and as already common practice for tuna and other target species.
- The LDAC urges the EU and MS to address the issues with the statistical estimation methodology for discards despite genuine efforts made by Spanish and Portuguese longline fleets to collect comprehensive biological and fisheries data in recent years and encourage the research and feasibility of mitigation measures.
- The LDAC notes the proposal from Spanish and Portuguese surface longline fleet to support the setting of a management process including the specific TAC for the Northern and Southern Atlantic stock to better manage and regulate these fisheries. The LDAC notes that these fleets have also made considerable efforts to record and submit to their national administrations relevant catch, discards, and biological data (e.g., size, sex, no of females pregnant).


### North Atlantic Blue Shark

Stock	SSB	F	C <sub>2022</sub>	State of stock & SCRS advice
Last eval. 2023  BSH North	1.00	0.70	22 057  >TAC	Stock not overfished & not subject to overfishing (MSY=32 689 t, PGK=50%). As the TAC of 39 102 t established by Rec. 21-10 for North Atlantic blue sharks has a $PMG_{2033}=3\%$ , the SCRS recommends a reduction of the TAC at a level with a high $PMG_{2033}$ (67% for 30 000 t, 80% for 27 500 t).

- Regarding science and biological state of the stock, the SCRS states on its 2023 stock assessment that there is neither overfishing occurring, nor the stock is overfished. However, the stock is now in the limit between the green (49.7% probability of recovery) and the yellow area (49.6%) of the Kobe Plot. The MSY level is determined to be around 32 700t, and current TAC (39 102 t) is above it, resulting in a low probability of being in the green quadrant by 2033. The LDAC also notes the level of underutilisation of the TAC, with reported catches estimated around 22 000 t in 2021 and 2022.

- Regarding management measures, the LDAC has divergent positions, namely:
  - o The fishing sector supports the proposal of the EU to concentrate its efforts this year in the Southern Atlantic stock, given that the situation of North Atlantic is relatively stable.
  - o The NGO group recommend reducing the TAC for the North Atlantic to below than or at least not exceeding the mean catches of the last three years, i.e., a level that will keep the stock in the green quadrant with a high probability, over the next ten years.

### South Atlantic Blue Shark

Stock	SSB	F	C <sub>2022</sub>	State of stock & SCRS advice
Last eval. 2023  BSH South	1.29	1.03	31 727 <b>&gt;TAC</b>	Stock not overfished but subject to overfishing (MSY=27 711 t, PGK=45%). Because recent catch are above the TAC of 28 923 t established by Rec 21-11 and not sustainable in the long term, the SCRS recommends a TAC of 27 711 (MSY) that have a PMG <sub>2033</sub> =54%.


- Regarding science, the stock assessment finds that this stock is in the orange quadrant (46% probability) of the Kobe plot, with overfishing occurring and the TAC agreed as precautionary measures in 2019 but not allocated has been exceeded by 10-15% every year. The MSY level is established at 27 711t with recent average catches above the TAC at near 35 000 t. This contributes to low chance (less than 29%) of bringing the stock back to the green quadrant of the Kobe plot.
- Regarding management measures, the LDAC has divergent positions, namely:
  - o The fishing sector proposes the EU to introduce a proposal on allocation to tackle overfishing by non-EU fleets resulting in a negative impact on the stock.
  - o The NGO group recommends setting a TAC for the South Atlantic stock that should not exceed 25 000 t and is fully allocated.

## Atlantic Shortfin Mako (*Isurus oxyrinchus*)

### General considerations

- The LDAC supports the European Commission in seeking a science-based recovery plan for this population, recognising the need to reduce by-catch mortality to sustainable levels and encouraging the urgent adoption of mitigation measures. Any future measures should be discussed with all EU stakeholders / operators.
- The LDAC asks to the EU to ensure that the decision of ICCAT workplan to run new scientific assessments for MSE in 2024 both for the North Atlantic and Southern Atlantic stocks is maintained and agreed at the Annual Meeting.
- The LDAC supports greater efforts by ICCAT CPCs in data collection (including tagging programmes) to improve biological knowledge of stocks and factor in in future assessments.
- The LDAC is concerned that, despite efforts from Spanish and Portuguese to note by-catches and discards on e-logbook for ASM including if they are dead or alive, software issues related to inaccurate reporting of discards remain coupled with issues with statistical estimation and methodology. To support scientists in evaluating total removals, the timely submission of these data to the SCRS should be improved as late reporting of EU data has been a concern in past years.
- The LDAC supports the proposal from the European Commission in seeking an electronic monitoring program (EMS) and/or onboard observers to better understand how many specimens of shortfin mako are discarded back at sea alive or dead.


### North Atlantic shortfin mako

Stock	SSB	F	C <sub>2022</sub>	State of stock & SCRS advice
Last eval. 2017  SMA North	0.6 - 0.9	1.9 - 4.4	831 >sci rec	<b>Stock overfished and subject to overfishing (PRK=90%).</b> Given the vulnerability of this stock and uncertainty in assessment results, the SCRS urges the CPC to report all sources of mortality and recommends a non-retention policy in the North Atlantic.

- Following SCRS advice and taking into account all mortality sources, no retention of shortfin mako has been allowed for the North Atlantic in 2023 and this will be replicated in 2024.


- The LDAC requests that stakeholders should be able to discuss with scientists on the effective implementation of measures such as the gear selectivity, time, or area closures, and demonstrated best practices by fishing fleets should be taken into consideration.
- In relation to this request, the longline fishing sector highlights that these technical and management measures must be relevant and based on scientific advice. The NGO group believes that this argument should not end in a “statu quo” situation where now measures are implemented now under the basis that more data is required. In this case, precautionary approach must prevail based on best available science and existing knowledge and experience from commercial fleets to reduce mortality and adopt catch avoidance technique in certain areas.
- The NGO group is also concerned that despite the agreed objective to limit total mortality in the North Atlantic to not more than 250 t, fishing mortality in 2022 has exceeded this limit by at least a factor of five. Spain has only reported around 35% live releases, while other CPCs have achieved live releases of 70-80%. At the current mortality neither overfishing will be stopped, nor rebuilding can be started. Therefore, the NGO group recommends that the EU intensifies efforts to implement measures effective in decreasing shortfin mako bycatch and reducing bycatch mortality. When evaluating potential mitigation measures such as gear selectivity, time, or area closures, demonstrated best practices by other fishing fleets should be taken into consideration and a precautionary approach applied to management measures taking the state of the North Atlantic Shortfin Mako population into account.


### South Atlantic shortfin mako

Stock	SSB	F	C <sub>2022</sub>	State of stock & SCRS advice
 Last eval. 2017 <span style="background-color: yellow; border-radius: 50%; padding: 2px;">2024</span> SMA South	0.6 - 1.7	0.8 - 3.6	2 686 >sci rec	Stock possibly overfished & subject to overfishing (ie close to MSY, PGK=38%, PRK=28%). Given the uncertainty in stock status and vulnerability of this stock, the SCRS urges CPC to report all sources of mortality and recommends a TAC of 2 001 t (average 2011-2015).

- The LDAC expresses concern about the SCRS’ advice not being followed. The NGO group is concerned on the reporting of dead discards and live releases not having been complied with by the majority of CPCs.
- The LDAC supports the European Commission in seeking a science-based recovery plan for this population, nevertheless stakeholders should in any case be able to discuss the said measures.

## North and South Atlantic Swordfish (*Xiphias gladius*)

Stock	SSB	F	C <sub>2022</sub>	State of stock & SCRS advice
Last eval. 2022  <b>SWO North</b>	1.08	0.8	10 349 <MSY <<TAC	Stock not overfished & not subject to overfishing (MSY=12 819 t, PGK=63%). SCRS recommends the adoption of Management procedures. A TAC of 13 200 t will result in PMG <sub>y</sub> >60% however with uncertainty due to unreported discards, quota carryovers and quota transfers across the 2 stocks.
				<b>Management measures:</b> TAC = 13 200 t [Rec. 22-03] + 125/119 cm LJFL minimum size [Rec. 17-02]

Stock	SSB	F	C <sub>2022</sub>	State of stock & SCRS advice
Lats eval. 2022  <b>SWO South</b>	0.77	1.03	8 743 <MSY <TAC	Stock overfished & subject to overfishing (MSY=11 481 t, PRK=56%). The SCRS indicates that the current TAC has a PMG <sub>2033</sub> =3% and recommends catches below 10 000 t to accelerate rebuilding. Same uncertainty than for the Northern stock.
				<b>Management measures:</b> TAC = 14 000 t [Rec. 22-04] + 125/119 cm LJFL minimum size [Rec. 17-03]

- The LDAC supports the progress of work on developing a MSE for Swordfish (SWO). This is a common goal shared between all the members of the LDAC as it would provide better visibility to the sector in stabilizing fishing opportunities. In this respect, the LDAC calls on the Commission to support the adoption of a Management Procedure for Atlantic Swordfish at this year's annual meeting.
- The LDAC encourages the EU to look carefully at the biological and socio-economic trade-offs of each of the 5 selected scenarios for CMPs in terms of performance and to fulfil the management objective while moving towards adoption of an MP this year.
- The LDAC supports the EU position of including in the model the total removals (i.e., landings + discards) in the TAC fixation; and encourages the EC to table this for discussion at the forthcoming PA4 to try and, if not possible, provide clear explanations on the reasons.
- The LDAC supports the PA4 recommendation to request discard data from all CPCs.

**END**