

Original: English

**DRAFT RECOMMENDATION BY ICCAT ON MANAGEMENT MEASURES
FOR THE CONSERVATION OF ATLANTIC SAILFISH**

Proposal by the European Union, Guatemala, United States and Venezuela

CONSIDERING that in light of the results of the stock assessment of sailfish (Istiophorus *albicans*) undertaken in 2016, the SCRS recommended that eastern and western Atlantic sailfish catches should not exceed current levels;

RECALLING the provisions of the Recommendation by ICCAT on the Principles of Decision Making for ICCAT Conservation and Management Measures (Rec. 11-13);

FURTHER CONSIDERING that in order to manage Atlantic sailfish in a precautionary manner, an annual catch limit should be established for each stock consistent with the scientific advice;

NOTING that the western and eastern Atlantic stocks of sailfish are caught in a variety of ICCAT fisheries (e.g. longline, purse seine, recreational, and artisanal surface fisheries);

RECOGNIZING that SCRS has highlighted that recent research has demonstrated that in some longline fisheries the use of circle hooks resulted in a reduction of billfish mortality, while the catch rates of several of the target species remained the same or were greater than the catch rates observed with conventional J hooks;

ACKNOWLEDGING that catches of sailfish are likely under-reported, and according to the SCRS, this is one of the main sources of uncertainty in the assessment;

RECOGNISING the importance of the ICCAT Enhanced Research Programme for Billfish and the need to improve catch data reporting for sailfish;

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE CONSERVATION
OF ATLANTIC TUNAS (ICCAT) RECOMMENDS THAT:

1. Contracting Parties and Cooperating non-Contracting Parties, Entities or Fishing Entities (CPCs) whose vessels catch Atlantic sailfish (Istiophorus albicans) in the Convention Area shall ensure that management measures are in place to support the conservation of this species in line with ICCAT's Convention objective by undertaking the following:
 - (a) If the total catch of either stock of Atlantic sailfish exceeds in any year the level reported for 2015 (i.e. 1271 t for the eastern stock and 892 t for the western stock), the Commission shall review the implementation and effectiveness of this recommendation.
 - (b) To prevent catches from exceeding this level for either stock of sailfish, CPCs shall take or maintain appropriate measures to limit sailfish mortality. Such measures could include, for example: releasing live sailfish, encouraging or requiring the use of circle hooks or other effective gear modifications, implementing a minimum size, and/or limiting days at sea.
2. CPCs shall enhance their efforts to collect data on catches of sailfish, including live and dead discards, and report these data annually as part of their Task I and II data submission to support the stock assessment process. The SCRS shall review these data and determine the feasibility of estimating fishing mortality by commercial fisheries (including longline, gillnets and purse seine), recreational fisheries and artisanal fisheries. The SCRS shall also develop a new data collection initiative as part of the ICCAT Enhanced Program for Billfish Research to overcome the data gap issues of those fisheries, in particular artisanal fisheries of developing CPCs, and shall recommend the initiative to the Commission for its approval in 2017.
3. This recommendation shall be reviewed in light of the outcomes of the next stock assessment for Atlantic sailfish.