

Original: English

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

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

CONSIDERING that in light of the results of the stock assessment of the Atlantic sailfish (*Istiophorus albicans*) undertaken in 2016 and in order to manage this species in a precautionary manner an annual catch limit should be established for the western and eastern stocks of Atlantic sailfish consistent with the scientific advice;

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

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 corresponding to 67 % of the average estimate of their Maximum Sustainable Yield (i.e. 1,271 t for the eastern stock and 1,030 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.
3. 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.

4. In their Annual Reports, beginning in 2017, CPCs shall describe their data collection programmes and steps taken to implement this Recommendation.
5. This recommendation shall be reviewed in light of the outcomes of the next stock assessment for Atlantic sailfish.