

2016 COM

International Pole & Line Foundation Statement to Panel 1

Thank you Chair, as this is the first time taking the floor, I'd like to thank the everyone for welcoming the International Pole & Line Foundation as an observer, and specifically thank the host for the hospitality.

We with small-scale tuna fisheries throughout the world – those using baitboat, handline, and troll gear – catching tuna one-at-a-time - while supporting communities, livelihoods, and food security.

With regard to the tropical tuna CMM proposal, we recognize this is a complex issue but encourage additional action, in line with the latest performance review and the SCRS advice. While there are some positive elements of the current proposal, we are still worried that it does not go far enough, and it is the small-scale and artisanal fishing communities that bear the consequences. These fisheries cannot reflag. These fishers cannot go to other oceans.

We work with many fisheries around the Atlantic, including the baitboat fishery of the Azores whose catches of tropical tunas have been at historic lows for the last three years. The issue of bigeye overfishing is not merely academic. It is a serious threat to small businesses, and more importantly, an issue of food security and livelihoods.

For this year, we hope to see something that will effectively reduce catches of juvenile bigeye, but based on current fishing effort, it is likely that fishing mortality will continue to increase. If overexploitation is a problem, then better controls of drifting FADs and supply vessels can be part of the solution, and as a start, there could be at least a freeze on current levels of use.

Mr Chair, we are fully supportive of responsible management that allows for **all** stakeholders to benefit, and ask that this Commission take the current situation of bigeye tuna seriously by taking meaningful steps this year.