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The Pew Charitable Trusts'
Statement to Panel 2 of the 20th Special Meeting of ICCAT
15 November 2016

Panel 2 has made laudable progress in rebuilding the stocks under its purview. However, the scientific advice calls for precaution to avoid reversing recent gains, including by maintaining current catch levels for northern albacore and both bluefin stocks. With the goal of long-term fishery sustainability, important progress has also been made for Panel 2 stocks on harvest strategy development based on management strategy evaluation (MSE) in accordance with Recommendation 15-07.

The Pew Charitable Trusts urges Panel 2 to build upon these recent advancements in Vilamoura by:

- Maintaining bluefin tuna catch limits, in accordance with the scientific advice, by rolling over Recommendation 14-05 for one year and leaving Recommendation 14-04, which already grants a 20% quota increase for 2017, as is. The quotas should not be revisited before next year's benchmark stock assessment, especially since four of the six updated western abundance indices and both of the updated eastern indices show declines.
- Maintaining the northern albacore quota, as recommended by the SCRS, adopting the performance indicators proposed at the July 2016 Panel 2 intersessional, and confirming the SCRS-recommended 2017 deadline for harvest control rule (HCR) adoption for the stock.
- Discussing management objectives for Atlantic bluefin tuna, as a step toward HCR adoption in 2018 in line with the timeline proposed in the 2016 SCRS report. To ensure these management objectives are consistent with best practices and relevant international and domestic agreements to which ICCAT members have committed, they should include the following:
 - A requirement to maintain the stocks in the green quadrant of the Kobe plot, with at least 75% probability, while avoiding breaching SSB_{LIM} with at least a 95% probability¹;
 - A requirement that rebuilding plans be designed to have at least a 75% chance of success, within as short timeline as possible, but not longer than 1.5 generations;
 - A limit on inter-annual change in quota to no more than 10% upwards or downwards, unless scientific evidence is presented that demonstrates the stock is in a state of emergency, in which case more significant decreases in quota shall be approved.

When designed appropriately, pre-agreed harvest strategies increase the predictability, transparency and efficiency of management, and contribute to the sustainability and profitability of fisheries. The second independent review of ICCAT also calls for movement toward harvest strategies as “a more pro-active policy of developing comprehensive long term management strategies for the main stocks” and states that “ICCAT, with its vast experience in tuna fisheries management, is ideally placed to be the pioneer in the rapid introduction of long term management strategies to ensure the sustainability of individual stocks and consistency of management approach across the range of stocks.” Panel 2, with the substantial work done to date on MSE for northern albacore and bluefin and its dedicated intersessional held recently in Sapporo, is poised to continue to lead this work at ICCAT by making further progress here in Vilamoura.

¹ Regarding ICCAT's current practice of requiring low probability of success (i.e. between 48 to 60 percent, depending on the stock), the second independent review states: “The Panel questions whether such low levels of probability are consistent with the precautionary approach and effective management.”