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COLLABORATION WITH OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

(ICCAT Secretariat)

FAO Common Oceans/ABNJ Tuna Project

At the 2015 ICCAT Commission meeting, it was decided to continue to cooperate with this programme provided that there are benefits to ICCAT. To this end, since the previous SCRS plenary, the ICCAT Secretariat has participated in several FAO Common Oceans/ABNJ Tuna Project initiatives. These include participation in the following meetings that were funded or partially funded by the project:

1. Joint tuna RFMO MSE meeting held at the Secretariat office, Madrid (1-3 November 2016);
2. Joint Meeting of tuna RFMOs on the Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management, which took place in FAO HQ in Rome, Italy (12-14 December 2016);
3. 1st Regional Seabird By-catch Pre-assessment Workshop held at the Kruger Park, South Africa (23 February – 1 March 2017);
4. Tuna compliance network meeting held in Vigo, Spain (27-31 March 2017);
5. 1st Joint T-RFMO FAD Working Group Meeting, held in Madrid Spain (19-21 April 2017)
6. Meeting of the Port Inspection Expert group for Capacity and Assistance, held in Madrid Spain (9-10 October 2017).

In addition, ICCAT has been coordinating a feasibility study on the development of an online reporting system (FORS). This includes both a feasibility study to determine the resources, costs, technologies required to implement an online reporting system, as well as the production of a demo online reporting tool. Due to the requirements of the ABNJ project, this study and demo are generic and could potentially be applied across the tuna RFMOs. This activity has been managed directly by the FAO Common Oceans/ABNJ Tuna Project team as regards hiring the experts. The work is being performed in straight coordination with the ICCAT Secretariat.

In 2017 ICCAT also presented several proposals to the FAO Common Ocean/ABNJ Tuna Project steering committee for future collaboration. So far, ICCAT's attempts to increase collaboration with the project have not been completely successful. Final decisions on funding the proposals made (listed below) are still pending:

1. Proposal for the 1st meeting of the Technical Working Group on FADs and a 2nd Joint T-RFMO FAD Working Group Meeting
2. Proposed meeting of the t-RFMO MSE Working Group (and associated activities);
3. Lead and coordinate an Ecosystem Component: Common Oceans ABNJ tuna project, including a follow up meeting to that held in December 2016;
4. Capacity Building Workshops on Compliance issues.

As of today we have no confirmation that these proposals were accepted. Further information regarding ICCAT's involvement in the FAO Common Oceans/ABNJ Tuna Project are provided in **PLE_108/2017**.

Kobe process

Mr. Stefaan Depypere (EU) 1st Vice-Chair of ICCAT is the Chair of the Kobe Steering Committee since early 2017. The Technical Working Group (TWG) on Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) has been lead since its establishment by ICCAT. While initially the TWG made most of its work virtually, it had its first official meeting in Madrid from 1-3 November 2016, with experts from all t-RFMOs. Within the Kobe process ICCAT Secretariat has also taken leadership of the Joint t-RFMO FAD Working Group, which held its 1st meeting in Madrid between 19 and 21 April 2017. The meeting allowed scientists, managers and other stakeholders from ICCAT, IATTC and IOTC to discuss issues related to FAD management and research and enhance cooperation between the three t-RFMOs. It should be noted that WPCFC has decided not to participate in the latter meeting. The meeting was funded by the European Union and the FAO Common Oceans/ABNJ Tuna Project.

CITES

In 2017 ICCAT representatives from ICCAT (SCRS Chair and Sharks Species Group Chair) attended a meeting entitled “The Cooperation on implementing CITES for marine species: achievements, lessons learned and future opportunities” that was held in Geneva, Switzerland from the 13-15 March 2017. This continued the beneficial cooperation established between ICCAT and CITES in recent years.

The Secretariat also acknowledged that a recommendation had been made by the Sharks Working Group for the ICCAT Secretariat to make an official request to CITES to facilitate the sampling of CITES listed species for the purposes of scientific research conducted under the auspices of ICCAT research programmes. The Secretariat agreed that it would establish contact with the CITES secretariat to seek a solution to this concern and report back to the sharks working group in 2018.

ICES

Considering the fruitful experience ICCAT and ICES have had in recent years with regard to scientific collaboration, there is the willingness of both organisations to strengthen this cooperation and explore new initiatives and discussions have commenced between the Secretariats. In 2017 was agreed that it is appropriate and desirable to improve collaboration between ICCAT SCRS-ICES, particularly in the areas of by-catch and sharks issues, through our Sub-committee on Ecosystems and by-catch and the Shark species group. Specifically, it would be convenient to keep the participation of ICES scientific experts in ICCAT shark stock assessments and vice versa. It is envisioned that following the joint ICCAT/ICES training courses that have been held in the past, ICCAT could continue to work with ICES on areas of capacity building.

WECAFC

On the 17th of July 2017, the ICCAT Secretariat received a communication from Dr. Lionel Reynal, WECAFC Chairperson (**PLE_115/2017**). The communication referred to the 16th session of WECAFC, held in Guadeloupe in June 2016, where the Commission agreed to launch a process to establish a Regional Fisheries Management Organization (RFMO) in the WECAFC area of competence. The Executive Committee of WECAFC requested the ICCAT Secretariat to send specific questions related to the matters mentioned in Paragraph 55 of the WECAFC 2016 report or on the RFMO establishment process before Friday 18 August 2017 to the WECAFC Secretariat. On the 26th of July, the ICCAT chairman sent an official response to Dr Lionel Reynal, expressing some concern regarding this communication, particularly the implications with regards to budgets, areas of competence, demarcation of objectives, coverage of species, and the mandate of ICCAT as defined in Article 1 of the ICCAT Convention. This letter is included as (**PLE_115/2017**). On the 11th of August, Raymon van Anrooy (Fishery and Aquaculture Officer and Secretary of WECAFC) responded that he would share the matters raised in the ICCAT chair’s letter with the WECAFC membership and try to address them in a discussion paper that is being prepared for the 1st Preparatory meeting for the establishment of a non-tuna RFMO in the WECAFC area. He also noted that they will continue to invite the ICCAT Secretariat to participate in the WECAFC reorientation process. (**PLE_115/2017**).

ACAP (The Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels)

In 2016, ICCAT signed guidelines for cooperation with ACAP. This cooperation is a non-binding agreement that covers such issues as participation as observers in each other’s meetings, as well as consultation, cooperation and collaboration on issues of common issue.

ISSF

The International Seafood Sustainability Foundation (ISSF) continues providing the Secretariat with detail catch (by vessel trip, species and commercial size category) for all purchases made ISSF-participating companies. These correspond to unloading of Atlantic catches from tropical tunas (bigeye, yellowfin, and skipjack) and albacore to canning plants around the world. This information has previously been used by the SCRS scientists to complement and improve the Ghanaian Task II statistics. It has been noted that the submissions have been made in a diverse range of formats. As such, ISSF agreed in 2015, to look into standardising the data submissions. As such, the data received are still being stored by ICCAT, but have not been made available for use to the SCRS at this stage.