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The Pew Charitable Trusts'
Statement to Panel 1 of the 25th Regular Meeting of ICCAT
14 November 2017

Despite ICCAT having a full agenda of issues to address under other panels, Panel 1 convenes this year with several priorities that require immediate attention. The Pew Charitable Trusts is extremely concerned that there is currently very little time on ICCAT's agenda for Panel 1 to meet, despite the fact that:

- Both the bigeye and yellowfin TACs were exceeded in 2016, causing overfishing on both of these already overfished stocks and reducing the likelihood of bigeye recovery to a mere 38% by 2028, should this catch level continue. There is no indication that 2017 catch will be any lower;
- The independent performance review questioned the low probability of successfully recovering bigeye tuna by 2028 even at catch levels equivalent to the TAC and highlighted bigeye recovery as a key immediate management priority for ICCAT;
- ICCAT's Ad hoc Working Group on FADs made a clear recommendation that Panel 1 could consider management objectives for FAD fisheries and for the tropical tuna stocks as early as this meeting;
- The SCRS provided preliminary thoughts on the FAD time-area closure that imply the closure is not likely to be effective in reducing FAD fishing effort;

In light of the serious issues that should be addressed by this Panel and the Commission, The Pew Charitable Trusts urges Panel 1 to ensure that that the tropical tuna measure is in line with the Convention's commitment to rebuilding or maintaining stocks at B_{MSY} . Also, as FAD fishing is a significant contributor to the undesirable stock status of bigeye, ICCAT should move beyond an information-gathering exercise toward action to reduce FAD fishing effort. Therefore, Panel 1 should amend Recommendation 16-01 to:

- At minimum, reduce the overall catch (including by minor harvesters) of bigeye to 55,000 t, the amount that has a greater than 50% probability of recovering the stock by 2024 and a nearly 70% likelihood of recovering the stock by 2028;
- Strike allowance for any rollover of catch underage for bigeye tuna;
- Add language on FAD management objectives that defines ICCAT's philosophy for managing FADs and FAD fisheries and provides benchmarks for SCRS scientists to test the success of proposed or adopted ICCAT actions;
- Freeze the total number of floating object associated purse seine sets across the Convention Area at the 2016 level, and directly task the SCRS to provide advice in 2018 on a possible range of total number of such sets that would end overfishing in 2019 with 70% probability;
- Add language to schedule a Panel 1 intersessional meeting for early 2018 which could be used to address any outstanding bigeye allocation issues (e.g., with respect to minor harvesters), develop an allocation scheme for yellowfin, and develop draft management objectives for the tropical tuna stocks in order to advance harvest strategies for these fisheries.