SCIAENA

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Sciaena's Statement to Panel 1

25th Special Meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT)

Sciaena is grateful for the opportunity to contribute to ICCAT's Panel 1 proceedings and acknowledges the work carried out by the Secretariat, the SCRS, and the CPCs throughout the year to strengthen the management of tropical tunas and mitigate impacts on juveniles and vulnerable bycatch species. As negotiations begin, we urge Contracting Parties to prioritize the following issues:

Yellowfin tuna TAC and allocation table

For fifteen years, ICCAT has maintained a 110,000 t Total Allowable Catch for yellowfin tuna (*Thunnus albacares*) without an allocation mechanism to enforce it, which has resulted in catches exceeding the limit in nearly every single year since 2011.

Sciaena urges Panel 1 members to engage constructively on a fair, binding allocation table that guarantees total removals fall within a newly agreed TAC, one that maintains **at least a 60% probability of the stock remaining in the green quadrant of the Kobe plot** until 2034. While a tiered approach similar to that used for bigeye tuna (*Thunnus obesus*) offers a practical starting point, it must not be structured in a way that inflates catches beyond the scientific limit. In particular, the allowance for minor harvesters should be capped at no more than 1,000 t so that it remains proportionate to small-scale and developing coastal fisheries and helps prevent overfishing.

Ensure responsible FAD management and monitoring

Sciaena urges the Commission to reject proposals to remove or shorten the FAD closure and await a full SCRS evaluation, as biological benefits take time to manifest due to delays in spawning stock biomass response. Additionally, CPCs must accelerate the transition to fully non-entangling, biodegradable FADs and strengthen management by:

- Requiring near **real-time FAD position** and biomass data;
- Adopting a **comprehensive FAD marking scheme** (covering structure and buoy) with clear rules for ownership, activation, and deactivation;

- Establishing a clear timeline for developing an **ICCAT FAD register**.

Ensure long-term resilience for western Atlantic skipjack by adopting an ECP

Following the adoption of the western Atlantic skipjack (*Katsuwonus pelamis*) Management Procedure at the 2025 Commission meeting, setting a 30,844 t annual TAC for 2026–2028, Panel 1 must now complete this management framework by adopting a clear Exceptional Circumstances Protocol (ECP). In line with established best practices across ICCAT and building on the SCRS-endorsed framework in proposal PA1_510, an ECP is essential to detect and respond promptly to biological, environmental, or fishery conditions falling outside the parameters tested in the MSE. Adopting this safeguard will ensure the MP remains precautionary, resilient, and credible over the long term.

Advance the tropical tuna multistock MSE toward adoption by 2027

Sciaena welcomes ongoing technical progress on the tropical tuna multistock Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE). While a Management Procedure (MP) will not be adopted this year, Panel 1 must work towards a timeline that allows the SCRS to complete its scientific work thoroughly for adoption no later than 2027. To ensure a precautionary MP, CPCs should strengthen the interim management objectives in Resolution 24-02 to match other ICCAT MSE standards:

- **Stock status:** Raise the minimum probability of stocks remaining in the Kobe green quadrant (PGK) from 50% to 60% or greater, applied to each individual stock rather than averaged across all three.
- **Safety:** Limit the probability of any stock falling below BLim to no more than 10% over the 30-year projection period, aligning with Recommendation 25-02 for western Atlantic skipjack (*Katsuwonus pelamis*).

Finally, we urge CPCs to hold dedicated intersessional and high-level consultations ahead of final decisions to resolve trade-offs around multispecies yields, fleet effort, gear dynamics, and allocation flexibility.

Sciaena looks forward to constructive discussions and meaningful progress in Panel 1 throughout this year's meeting.