SCIAENA

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Sciaena's Opening Statement to Panel 2

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

Sciaena welcomes the opportunity to contribute to Panel 2's deliberations and recognizes its leadership in advancing science-based management frameworks at ICCAT. To safeguard the credibility and effectiveness of those frameworks, we urge Contracting Parties to prioritize the following issues:

Adopt the Updated MP for North Atlantic albacore and refocus SCRS capacity

Building on the 2021 Management Procedure (Recommendation 21-04), the SCRS has completed a revised MSE incorporating the 2023 stock assessment and improved stock-status estimation models. Following Panel 2's recommendation earlier this month, Sciaena urges CPCs to adopt the "Updated MP" in Chair's Proposal PA2-612, which meets all agreed management objectives. Because this marks the third round of MSE work for North Atlantic albacore (*Thunnus alalunga*), Panel 2 should avoid requesting further testing for this stock once adopted, freeing SCRS capacity for other priority species on the MSE roadmap.

Uphold the integrity of the Atlantic bluefin tuna Management Procedure

Last year's decision to override the adopted Management Procedure (MP) by setting the western Atlantic bluefin tuna (*Thunnus thynnus*) Total Allowable Catch (TAC) 20% above the prescribed level undermines the core purpose of Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE). An MP only delivers long-term sustainability when CPCs respect its outputs consistently, especially when catch reductions are required, rather than treating scientific limits as optional.

With the scheduled health check completed and the MP review now underway under Recommendation 23-07, Panel 2 must seize this opportunity to incorporate western close-kin mark-recapture results and new stock-mixing data into the operating models. Sciaena urges managers to engage actively in this review so the refined MP governs the third management cycle starting in 2029.

Given downward trends in eastern abundance indices pointing toward a likely TAC cut in 2029, CPCs must commit unequivocally to implementing the MP's prescribed catch limits, even where substantial reductions are required in eastern fisheries.

Sciaena looks forward to constructive discussions and firm, science-driven decisions in Panel 2 throughout this meeting.