IPNLF POSITION STATEMENT

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

16-23 November 2026 Vilamoura, Portugal

The International Pole and Line Foundation (IPNLF) is an international NGO working to develop and demonstrate the value of one-by-one tuna fisheries to thriving coastal communities and ocean ecosystems. Working across science, policy, and the seafood supply chain, our principal aim is to improve the wellbeing of coastal fisheries and the people and seas connected with them through environmentally and socially responsible one-by-one fishing methods, such as pole-and-line, troll, and handline.

This year the Commission must agree a yellowfin allocation, respond to a new assessment for South Atlantic albacore, and decide whether to weaken its main measure for protecting juvenile tropical tunas. Each decision is a chance for ICCAT to prioritise the needs of small-scale, low-impact coastal fisheries while protecting Atlantic tuna stocks.

IPNLF urges the Commission to take the following steps:



South Atlantic albacore

The current TAC of 28,000 t expires this year, and the revised stock assessment model in 2026 indicates that the stock is overfished and less productive than previously thought. IPNLF welcomes the expected adoption of a Management Procedure in 2027 but stresses the need to **adopt an interim measure** until the Management Procedure can take effect. Such an interim measure must protect the stock by **reducing the TAC**. Any allocation reductions must give **special consideration to fishing communities in developing coastal States**, especially to fleets using low-impact fishing methods.



Yellowfin tuna

Despite catches falling just below the 110,000 t TAC in 2025, the SCRS again advises that existing measures appear insufficient to limit harvest and recommends a mechanism to keep catches within any adopted TAC. In addition, juveniles now make up over 90% of yellowfin catches by number, which the SCRS links to MSY falling to a near-historic low. ICCAT must **adopt a binding allocation mechanism** to keep catches within the TAC, including paybacks

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for overcatch. This allocation must be **equitable and inclusive, safeguarding the interests of developing coastal States and fleets using low-impact fishing methods**.

Drifting FADs

Drifting FADs (DFADs) remain a significant concern for stock health and the wider marine ecosystem. Strong measures are needed. To this end, IPNLF urges the Commission to:

- **Maintain the existing DFAD closure** to ensure impacts on juvenile bigeye and yellowfin tuna are minimised as far as possible.
- Set an **annual cap on DFAD buoy acquisitions**, without which DFADs can be deployed and deactivated freely, rendering the adopted DFAD limits ineffectual.
- Noting the entry into force of the IOTC DFAD Register and recalling paragraph 74 of Rec. 24-01, set out a **clear timeline** for the Working Group on Integrated Monitoring Measures (IMM) to discuss **establishing an ICCAT DFAD Registry**, including rules on ownership and buoy activation and deactivation.
- To protect coastal communities from beached and stranded DFADs, strengthen rules surrounding DFAD loss and abandonment and adopt a measure to **increase DFAD recovery** efforts.
- Adopt an effective **FAD marking scheme** for both structures and buoys.
- Maintain adopted timelines on FAD biodegradability.

Western Atlantic skipjack

The Western Atlantic skipjack fishery is a positive example for ICCAT, with an important share of catches taken by one-by-one methods, chiefly Brazil's pole-and-line fleet. These methods are **highly selective** and **support coastal livelihoods**. To keep the Management Procedure (Rec. 25-02) working as intended, IPNLF urges the Commission to **adopt a robust exceptional circumstances protocol** at this meeting.

Good governance

IPNLF calls on the remaining ICCAT Contracting Parties to **ratify the Protocol amending the ICCAT Convention**, adopted in Palma de Mallorca in November 2019. This will modernise the Commission and provide a clear mandate over sharks and rays. Additionally, IPNLF supports the adoption of an **ICCAT Code of Conduct**, as proposed by the UK.