Pew

The Pew Charitable Trusts' Opening Statement
to Plenary of the 25th Special Meeting of the ICCAT Commission
November 2026

On the eve of ICCAT's 60th year anniversary, Pew recognizes members for the progress made toward sustainable tuna and swordfish fisheries in the Atlantic. We welcome this opportunity to address the Plenary session and express gratitude to the Secretariat for its important work in preparing for this meeting. This meeting presents a critical milestone for ICCAT to strengthen its ecosystem approach to management and to align its work with evolving international commitments. To that end, Pew highlights the following:

1. **Ratify the Palma protocol:** Recognizing that the 2019 Convention Amendments have only been ratified by a few members, Plenary should review each CPC's efforts to advance ratification domestically and chart a path forward on any potential barriers. The amendment expands ICCAT's mandate to include elasmobranchs, and CPCs should be working to improve data reporting by increasing submissions for dead and live discards. The Palma Protocol is not just a procedural update; it is essential to the evolution of ICCAT's core mandate and should be operationalized accordingly.

2. **Adopt MoU with NAFO and advance MoUs with NEAFC and OSPAR:** In 2025, ICCAT agreed to develop an MoU with the North Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO). This year, ICCAT should adopt that MoU to strengthen cooperation on the long-term conservation and sustainable use of living resources of mutual interest. Coordination is also underway for an MoU with the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (OSPAR) and North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) - per PLE_106. These efforts to advance international collaboration with neighboring RFMOs to enhance data collection and sharing in the region should be completed as soon as feasible. An MoU can promote greater transparency beyond sector-specific goals to provide a more holistic picture of ecosystem health. Moreover, these MOUs provide an important mechanism for strengthening coordination between RFMOs which can also help support effective implementation of the BBNJ Agreement. With this in mind, we urge all members to adopt a NAFO/ICCAT MoU this year and support MoUs with NEAFC and OSPAR for 2027.

3. **Prioritize BBNJ readiness:** Pew welcomes the updates on the BBNJ Agreement and the next steps highlighted, including the call for greater participation in BBNJ meetings. Now that the BBNJ treaty has entered into force, ICCAT should develop a more comprehensive framework for engagement on BBNJ-related issues building on its existing measure (25-15). Other RFMOs, such as IOTC, have adopted BBNJ measures with clear definitions and participation expectations that ICCAT could

mirror. ICCAT should also prioritize completion of EcoCards to provide valuable ecosystem-level information that can help inform identification and consideration of potential area-based management tools in the region.

4. **Adopt Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM):** ICCAT should adopt the Draft Recommendation concerning the implementation of EAFM. Between NEAFC, IATTC and now ICCAT, there is clear momentum towards EAFM instruments in fisheries bodies across the world. While each organization will inevitably approach this challenge differently, ICCAT can operationalize the framework outlined in this measure to recover biodiversity and improve fisheries management on the water. This includes setting clear management objectives, explicitly outlining connections between EAFM and Management Strategy Evaluations, and the EcoCard process.

5. **Align with the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies:** Similar to the BBNJ measure adopted at the 2025 Commission meeting, ICCAT should develop measures in alignment with the WTO fisheries agreement that entered into force in September 2025. This will provide an opportunity for ICCAT to aid CPCs in the implementation of this international agreement, particularly when it comes to the prohibition of subsidies that contribute to IUU fishing, for overfished stocks, and for fishing in waters beyond ICCAT's purview.

6. **Update the MSE Roadmap**: Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) is a central pillar of modernizing fisheries governance at ICCAT. The MSE roadmap provides an overview of the ongoing work and timelines to progress MSE for key stocks, yet most of these deadlines tend to be delayed. Over the last few years, ICCAT has had opportunities to streamline its MSE efforts and should now avoid delays and endless MSE testing on species with MPs already adopted. For example, an early 2027 Panel 1 meeting should re-evaluate the benefits of a multistock versus individual tropical tuna MSEs considering its continued deviation from the MSE roadmap timeline.

7. **Establish dedicated compliance meetings:** As an NGO working across ten RFMOs, Pew fully supports the position paper - PLE_116 - on the organisation of the ICCAT Compliance Committee to align ICCAT with other RFMOs that have dedicated annual compliance meetings. The change would provide more focused compliance discussions and prevent overlap with Commission deliberations.