November 14, 2026

Sciaena's Opening Statement to Plenary

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

Sciaena welcomes the opportunity to address the Plenary of ICCAT's 25th Special Meeting and thanks the Secretariat, the SCRS, and all CPCs for their work. To strengthen science-based and ecosystem governance across the Convention Area, we urge Contracting Parties to prioritize the following overarching goals:

Modernize ICCAT's mandate and strengthen ecosystem governance

Ratify the Palma Protocol: Broadening ICCAT's Convention mandate to explicitly cover elasmobranchs is essential to modernizing the Commission's conservation framework. Sciaena urges CPCs that have not yet ratified the 2019 Protocol to accelerate domestic ratification processes and improve species-specific data reporting, including live and dead discards.

Operationalize an Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management: Sciaena calls on the Commission to adopt the Draft Recommendation on EAFM, establishing clear ecosystem objectives that link directly to Management Strategy Evaluations and the EcoCard process to support biodiversity recovery across the Convention Area.

Advance regional cooperation and BBNJ readiness: With the BBNJ Agreement now in force, ICCAT must build upon Recommendation 25-15 by establishing a framework for engagement and prioritizing the completion of EcoCards to inform management tools. To strengthen cross-sectoral coordination and data sharing, CPCs should adopt the NAFO–ICCAT Memorandum of Understanding at this meeting and advance parallel MoUs with NEAFC and OSPAR (PLE 106) for 2027.

Align with the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies: Following the entry into force of the WTO Agreement, ICCAT should adopt supportive measures to assist CPCs in eliminating subsidies that contribute to overfishing, IUU activities, and unregulated high seas fishing.

Sciaena looks forward to constructive deliberations and decisive, science-driven outcomes across all panels and working groups throughout this meeting.