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PLE_128/2026

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

COPACO
Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission

WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WESTERN CENTRAL ATLANTIC FISHERY COMMISSION (WECAFC)

25th Special Meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT)
Vilamoura, Portugal | 16–23 November 2026

Draft for consideration by the WECAFC Executive Committee

The Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC) extends its appreciation to the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) for the opportunity to indicate interest in strengthening cooperation between both organizations in support of sustainable fisheries and effective regional governance.

WECAFC welcomes the cooperative framework established through the Exchange of Letters of Agreement between ICCAT and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), on behalf of WECAFC, formalized in March 2024. This framework provides a valuable basis and platform for promoting and advancing scientific and technical cooperation, strengthening regional capacities and avoiding duplication of efforts, in accordance with the respective mandates of both organizations.

WECAFC also recognizes the progress achieved through the first joint WECAFC–ICCAT technical workshop on fisheries statistics and data reporting, held in Panama in May 2025. That initiative represents an important step towards improving the availability and quality of fisheries information and identifying opportunities for further technical collaboration.

Building on these achievements, WECAFC wishes to highlight four priorities for continued cooperation in 2027 and beyond:

First with the aim to build strong and credible stock assessments, strengthening scientific information and fisheries data. WECAFC encourages continued collaboration to improve fisheries data collection, quality and reporting, including information from small-scale and artisanal fisheries noting this is of utmost importance

Second, promoting capacity development. WECAFC supports joint training initiatives, technical exchanges and knowledge-sharing activities, particularly to strengthen the capacities of developing countries in the region.

Third, enhancing cooperation on monitoring, control and surveillance. Within their respective mandates, both organizations could strengthen the exchange of experiences and relevant information to support efforts to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

Fourth, strengthening institutional coordination and complementarity. WECAFC encourages regular dialogue between the Secretariats, participation in relevant technical activities and closer coordination on matters of common interest, including relevant international processes, while respecting the mandates and responsibilities of existing regional fisheries bodies.

Looking ahead, WECAFC supports the identification and initiation of a limited number of practical joint activities for 2027 including those of a technical and/or analytic nature; building on existing initiatives and taking into account Members' priorities, available resources and institutional capacities.

WECAFC reaffirms its commitment to constructive cooperation with ICCAT and looks forward to further strengthening this partnership through practical, coordinated and results-oriented actions that contribute to sustainable fisheries and effective regional cooperation.