ASSOCIATION OF NATIONAL ORGANISATIONS
OF FISHING ENTERPRISES IN THE EU

EUROPECHE DECLARATION
Priorities for the 25th extraordinary meeting of ICCAT

(16th – 23rd November 2026, Vilamoura, Portugal)

Permanent Working Group for the improvement of ICCAT Statistics and Conservation Measures (PWG)

Brussels, 28 September 2026

1. Improving transparency and data accuracy

- **Ensuring compliance with reporting obligations**

Europêche recommends that CPCs agree on:

- Improving ICCAT's compliance scheme, especially by including a **sanctioning regime and by requiring CPCs to submit action plans that address identified non-compliances**. CPCs with persistent or serious non-compliance should be required to submit such plans without further delay, which must:
    - Include a hierarchy of infractions.
    - Provide a sanctioning mechanism to deal with non-compliance, and that it is consistently applied.
- **Taking action against contracting parties that are repeatedly failing to fulfil their obligations to report on investigations taken in relation to allegations of non-compliance and on actions taken to address compliance concerns**.

Regarding the FAD moratorium, CPCs having registered vessels under Asian interests[1] have increased their total catches, all fleets included, by 68%. In the case of Ghana for example, the number of purse seiners flying their flag is unknown but they increased their total catches 80% between 2016 and 2022, while not increasing proportionally bigeye catches[2].

- **Increasing observer coverage for all fleets**

[1] Ghana, Senegal, Republic of Guinea, Liberia, Belize and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
[2] From document SCRS/2024/038 « Estimation of Ghana tasks 1 and 2 purse seine and bait boat catch 2019 – 2022: data input 2024 yellowfin stock assessment

Reliable and accurate data collection is paramount to sustainable fisheries management. To achieve this, Europêche calls CPC to:

- **Implementing a regional observer program**, integrating existing observer programs, for all fishing vessels, in a realistic timeframe to ensure all CPCs will be able to comply.
- **Increasing, for fisheries targeting tropical tunas, the observer coverage up to 20% (on-board human and/or electronic) for all longliners and pole and liners**, considering that purse seiners already apply 100% coverage.
- **Promoting the use of electronic monitoring** to achieve this goal, now that Electronic Monitoring Standards have been adopted.

For fisheries targeting tropical tuna, the minimum coverage recommended by scientists for ETP species is 20%. Currently, the recommended observer coverage for longliners is only 10%[3], which is insufficient to ensure data reliability. ICCAT requires higher observer coverage on specific cases only: 100% for purse seiners and 10% for tropical tuna vessels for longline. The management of tropical tunas (Rec. 22-01) shall be revised to reach those levels for all vessels.

2. Enhancing Control, Monitoring, and Surveillance Measures

- **Improving vessels monitoring**

To ensure effective control, monitoring and surveillance, Europêche strongly supports increasing transparency and accountability across all fishing fleets, particularly in the context of fighting against IUU (Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated) fishing. This includes:

- Extend the **fleet register of active fishing vessels to smaller vessels: from 15m decked onboard, including IMO number for all eligible vessels**.
- Implementing a **regional Vessel Monitoring System (VMS)**.
- Establishing a **high sea boarding and inspection (HSBI) scheme**.
- Forbidding at sea transhipments.

Only a regional VMS tool would allow to verify vessels' activity and their correct registration in the ICCAT vessels' register, in order to ensure applicability and monitoring of tuna conservation measures, such as fisheries closures or capacity limitations.

High sea inspections are also required to ensure that vessels comply with ICCAT conservation and management measures (CMMs), as required by the United Nations Agreement relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks[4].

[3] Recommendation 16-14 on minimum observation standards

[4] In force as from 11 December 2001; Article 21 on Subregional and regional cooperation in enforcement provides that "1. In any high seas area covered by a subregional or regional fisheries management organization or arrangement, a State Party which is a member of such organization or a participant in such arrangement may, through its duly authorized inspectors, board and inspect […] fishing vessels flying

- **Fighting IUU through market directed measures**

Europêche encourages CPCs to actively engage in the Catch Document Scheme Working Group and **extend the electronic Catch Documentation Schemes (eCDS) to cover all ICCAT stocks and species** as soon as possible.

This expansion should be aligned with the revised European Control Regulation[5], which currently limits eCDS to certain fleets and species, and with the introduction of CATCH IT, to prevent the creation of a burdensome system that would disproportionately impact EU fleets.

the flag of another State Party to this Agreement" and that "2. States shall establish, through subregional or regional fisheries management organizations or arrangements, procedures for boarding and inspection […]".

[5] Regulation (EU) 2023/2842 of 22nd November 2023 amending the "control regulation": Article 4, points (7) and (8) on Catch certification scheme for fishery products, to modify article 12 of regulation (EC) N°1005/2008