

REPORT OF THE SECOND INTERSESSIONAL MEETING OF PANEL 1
(Online, 1-3 September 2021)

1. Opening of the meeting

Mr. Shep Helguilè (Côte d'Ivoire), Chair of Panel 1, opened the meeting. He welcomed the delegates. In turn, the ICCAT Executive Secretary, Mr. Camille Jean Pierre Manel, welcomed the participants and observers to this online second intersessional meeting.

2. Appointment of rapporteur and meeting arrangements

Senegal was appointed rapporteur.

The agenda was adopted without modification and is contained in **Appendix 1**.

This Intersessional Meeting of Panel 1 was held from 1 to 3 September 2021. The Chair recalled the objectives of this second session of the Panel, which follows on from the meeting held in July 2021.

The Executive Secretary described the meeting arrangements and introduced the 23 Contracting Parties in attendance: Angola, Belize, Brazil, Canada, China (P. R.), Côte d'Ivoire, Curaçao, El Salvador, the European Union, Gabon, Ghana, Guatemala, Honduras, Japan, Korea, Liberia, Morocco, Panama, Senegal, South Africa, Trinidad and Tobago, the United Kingdom and the United States. He also noted the participation of three Cooperating Non-contracting Parties, Entities and Fishing Entities (Bolivia, Guyana and Chinese Taipei), and two Non-contracting Parties (Jamaica and Montenegro). Eight non-governmental organisations were also in attendance: Associação de ciencias marinhas e cooperação – SCIAENA; Brazilian Association of Fish Industries – ABIPESCA; Global Tuna Alliance – GTA; International Seafood Sustainability Foundation – ISSF; Marine Stewardship Council – MSC; Pew Charitable Trusts – PEW; The International Pole & Line Foundation – IPNLF and World Wide Fund For Nature – WWF).

The list of participants is contained in **Appendix 2**.

A CPC asked the Chair a question about a presentation by the SCRS of the bigeye tuna stock assessment results that was not included in the meeting agenda. The Chair responded that this point would be addressed under agenda item 4.

3. Review of any issue raised by the Report of the First Intersessional Meeting of Panel 1

The report of the July intersessional meeting was noted.

The Chair recalled documents that had been submitted in advance of this current meeting, including that Japan had submitted a proposal to amend Rec. 19-02 (**Appendix 3**). Korea, six African countries, as well as IPNLF submitted statements which are contained in **Appendices 4 to 6**. The Organization for the Promotion of Responsible Tuna Fishing (OPRT), which registered for the meeting but did not attend, also submitted a statement, which is attached in **Appendix 7**.

Japan explained its reasons for submitting the proposal, recalling that during the first session in July, it was suggested that the SCRS put forward a limitation on FADs as from a certain date. Since historical data on FAD sets have not been provided by all CPCs concerned, it proposed amending paragraph 31 of Rec. 19-02 so as to put back to 31 December 2021 the submission deadline for these data, which would enable the SCRS to review them in 2022.

Several CPCs supported Japan's proposal. Some indicated that the Compliance Committee should review non-submission of these data by some CPCs at the Annual Meeting to be held in November 2021, and should discuss potential measures to prohibit these CPCs from setting on FADs, as provided for in Rec. 19-02. Japan expressed its willingness to amend the proposal based on discussions with the CPCs.

The Secretariat then presented the table of CPCs that had submitted the required data: management plans and historical FAD data.

The Chair noted that several CPCs had supported amendment of paragraph 31 of Recommendation 19-02 during the discussions while some CPCs suggested they would submit comments thereon. The Chair recommended that CPCs engage in bilateral consultations.

4. Review of bigeye TAC for 2022 and beyond, and yellowfin if appropriate

In addressing this item, the Chair asked Dr David Die, Coordinator of the SCRS Tropical Tunas Species Group to present the results of the 2021 bigeye tuna assessment.

Dr David Die signalled that the group had held in 2021 a data preparatory meeting and a bigeye stock assessment meeting. The preliminary results of this assessment are based on a number of hypotheses, in particular, revision of the maximum age for the species, which is estimated to be at least 17 years compared to 15 years previously, as well as the method for calculating the natural mortality vector from the maximum age; this modified natural mortality vector, along with two alternatives reflecting the uncertainty in maximum age estimates, affected fishing mortality estimates. However, there is greater uncertainty around mortality. While projections take into account improvements in recruitment this does not mean that the recruitment trend will be confirmed. These preliminary results indicated that if the 2022 TAC is fixed at the current level of 61,500 t, this will enable the stock to be in the green quadrant in 2034.

Some CPCs acknowledged that the stock is showing signs of improvement on account of several factors, but noted that the assessment results are still preliminary and must be confirmed at the next meeting of the SCRS species group, in September 2021. Most CPCs have recommended caution as regards the TAC, since the advice is not yet complete and approved by the SCRS. In response to a question regarding the effects of changes in the treatment of data in the assessment, Dr Die acknowledged that the results of the assessment may appear overly optimistic, given that there were no major revisions to historic data since the 2018 assessment.

A CPC raised a question on collection of the data that had enabled estimation of the juvenile abundance index that was used in the assessment.

Some CPCs called for management measures to be strengthened in 2022, in particular catch limits and the mechanisms enabling compliance with the TAC as well as adoption of a precautionary approach to meet challenges.

Other CPCs considered that the TAC should be maintained at 61,500 t in 2022 and requested that equitable measures for bigeye allocation be taken by the Commission so as to afford fishing opportunities to developing coastal countries. A CPC considered that this allocation must be equitable and take into account the impact of FADs on juveniles and on ecosystems. Panel 1 acknowledged that the Group would not be able to agree to a TAC until the scientific advice to the Commission was finalized, but agreed to work under the assumption that the TAC would remain at 61,500 t for the purposes of discussions at this meeting.

Several CPCs noted that not all the criteria of Res. 15-13 are applied for allocation of bigeye tuna and that only historical catches continue to be the most determining factor, and called for application of all the criteria contained in the resolution.

Some CPCs called for Resolution 15-13 to be revised, but others do not support this view because not only has the resolution already been accepted, but it already covers all the criteria, and it is the allocation system that entails implementation difficulties and requires structural reforms to enable compliance with the adopted TAC.

A CPC considered that it would not be very advisable to open discussions by correspondence on allocation criteria that have been put in place after a lengthy process, and that these discussions would have little prospect of success.

The Secretariat indicated that these discussions by correspondence would generate an additional workload which is not sustainable for its staff.

5. Allocation key for distribution of bigeye TAC and yellowfin TAC if appropriate

A CPC reminded the Panel that yellowfin tuna was also central to the meeting agenda and urged CPCs to focus some time on this issue. The Chair of Panel 1 invited the SCRS to present the 2019 yellowfin tuna assessment results and those of skipjack to inform the discussions, following a request by two CPCs.

Two CPCs requested that Dr Gary Melvin, SCRS Chair, present the results of the 2019 yellowfin tuna assessment. The yellowfin tuna situation presented, shows that this species is not overfished, or subject to overfishing, and that there was a 54% probability of the stock being in the green quadrant compared to a 22% probability of it being in the red quadrant. The SCRS had recommended a reduction of catches of yellowfin and bigeye tuna juveniles.

One CPC requested that the preliminary yellowfin catch data be provided by the Secretariat. The Secretariat presented the table of yellowfin tuna Task 1 data for 2020, on the basis of which, the SCRS Chair signalled that catches have increased since 2018, while indicating that those for 2020 are provisional because they have not yet been reviewed by the SCRS.

A CPC called the attention of the Panel Chair to the need for the Commission to take a decision on yellowfin tuna in accordance with paragraphs 17, 18 and 19 of ICCAT Rec. 19-02.

A CPC asked the SCRS Chair why there is an increase in yellowfin tuna catches and a decrease in bigeye tuna catches, and the SCRS Chair responded that there are several reasons that could account for these differences.

Dr David Die, Coordinator of the Tropical Tunas Species Group, indicated that the two species are different: more yellowfin is caught using surface gear and a significant portion of the total catch of bigeye tuna is caught by longliners and purse seiners with FADs, and that a more complete response could be provided after the next meeting of the Tropical Tunas Species Group.

As regards the skipjack stock, Dr Die indicated that there has not been a full skipjack assessment since 2014, but that the work on MSE has been carried out, recalling that there are two stocks: the eastern stock and the western stock. The skipjack catches table presented by the Secretariat shows a decrease in skipjack catches for 2020, which can be explained by the decrease in catches under FADs, and which could have affected yellowfin and bigeye catches.

A CPC requested that the SCRS update the decision support tool from 2018 that demonstrated the impact of various gears on spawning stock biomass and MSY, before the 2021 annual meeting, if possible. Dr. Die responded that it should be possible for the SCRS to update that table before the 2021 annual meeting, and if not it could be done in 2022.

Dr David Die indicated that this information was presented in Bilbao in response to a Commission request and provided the catches of small bigeye tuna for 2015-2017 and 2010-2014. He signalled that during the first period 2010-2014, most gears, except longliners, catch small bigeye tunas while for the period 2015-2017, there are significant catches of bigeye juveniles by western handline gears of the Brazilian fisheries and purse seiners.

A CPC asked if these catches of bigeye tuna by these gears continued in 2018 and 2019.

Dr Die confirmed this and indicated that the available information was incorporated into the bigeye and yellowfin tuna assessment models through a breakdown of the proportion of juveniles by gears.

The CPC with handline gears fishing for bigeye tuna informed that it has proceeded to freeze the number of its vessels and to close the fishery.

The Panel Chair considered that priority must be given to bigeye tuna for which he recommends redirecting the discussions in particular the allocation issue by highlighting that 78% of bigeye catches are taken by the large scale fisher CPCs contained in the table of paragraph 3 of Rec. 16-01, compared with 22% for the other CPCs.

The Secretariat signalled that it could present the bigeye tuna catches reported by CPCs on the last day of the meeting, and indicated that not all CPCs report their catches and that some CPCs report them monthly, and others quarterly.

Several CPCs signalled that the bigeye tuna allocation is not equitable and that no connection should be made between stock improvement and reallocation for the benefit of developing CPCs. For this reason, they do not support the view of some CPCs that consider improvement in the bigeye tuna stock as a condition for reallocation.

The SCRS Chair raised the issue of how to resolve the bigeye tuna allocation issue. A CPC asked if the allocation table could be provided and another CPC asked what criteria would be used for this purpose. A CPC asked for suggestions concerning CPCs that are not included in the table be reconsidered.

A CPC stated that it did not agree with applying the allocation criteria contained in Res. 15-13 which are numerous and not always fully taken into account in allocation, citing the example of criteria 11) and 12) of this resolution, related to the socio-economic contribution of the fisheries for the CPC and dependence of coastal States on these stocks, and it requested that they be taken fully into consideration upon allocation of bigeye tuna.

Several CPCs signalled that the ICCAT criteria are global and that it is necessary to take into account the rights and obligations of developing countries and particularly for the artisanal fishery. A CPC indicated that a threshold catch level should be set for inclusion in the table.

The Secretariat presented the document "Quick overview of information contained in tropical tuna fishing plans". Several CPCs thanked the Secretariat for quickly pulling this information together. Some CPCs proposed corrections and modifications to the table to support further allocation discussions. Some of them emphasized that the basis or starting point of the discussions on the bigeye tuna allocation issue should be Rec. 16-01. It was agreed that the Secretariat and CPCs would work to further refine this document so that it could be used to informally guide continued allocation discussions, but that it would not be considered a formal document or part of the record. A CPC added that the Commission must take into account the interests of developing countries but that all countries must make efforts to reach agreement.

The Secretariat suggested that CPCs make observations or provide modifications for the table and indicated that it could make available a revised table on the second day of the meeting in order to define the structure, and that this would be circulated to members of Panel 1 for completion before the Annual Meeting.

A CPC expressed concern that Panel 1 had not made more progress on discussions on yellowfin tuna but another CPC considered that the discussions on yellowfin tuna would not be very useful in the absence of new information on the stock.

In his summary of agenda item 5, the Panel Chair indicated that the new assessment indicates that bigeye tuna is in a better situation, and concluded that the bigeye tuna allocation must take into account all the criteria contained in Res. 15-13, including historical catches among other criteria, to respond to the aspirations of developing countries, coastal ones in particular, as well as the impact of gears on ecosystems.

6. Review of potential capacity limits in light of the allocation key

On the second day of the meeting, the Chair opened discussions on agenda items 6 and 7 and invited the Secretariat to present the table which had been revised in light of the discussions and comments from the previous day.

Most CPCs commented on the revised document, noting that the table is very useful as a basis for discussions but that it must reflect the status of each CPC and be completed with the catch limits of Rec. 16-01 and the catch reference period, and that it must be corrected based on the information that will be provided to the Secretariat by CPCs on the latest version of the table.

A CPC put forward ideas for capacity management measures including the global freeze on large purse seiners and longliners at the 2015 level, prohibition of transfers of new vessels from other oceans (e.g. the Pacific) and prohibition on registration of foreign vessels by CPCs and the freeze on support vessels.

Several CPCs considered that this proposal contains some very interesting discussion points but lamented that the allocation criteria related to capacity issues are not taken into account. Several CPCs considered that the freeze on global capacity would undermine the rights of developing countries with little fishing capacity, and their aspirations to participate in the fishery. They considered that CPCs and large scale fisher entities must reduce their fishing capacities based on the bigeye tuna reallocation.

Some CPCs considered that it would be more appropriate to first limit capacities before reallocating bigeye tuna. A CPC indicated that the freeze on capacities would reduce catches of other tropical tunas. A CPC suggested that the reallocation of bigeye tuna limits be carried out before an optimal effort is defined and adjusted to these limits.

Several large scale fisher CPCs expressed that they are open only to a bigeye tuna reallocation that is progressive because they had to agree to sacrifices when the TAC decreased from 85,000 t to 65,000 t with a decrease in fishing capacities in particular for longliners. One of these CPCs added that the allocation **is** more conceivable when the TAC increases.

Several CPCs proposed a temporary measure that would treat globally the TAC, allocation and capacity with catch limits for CPCs. A CPC proposed that all the measures be prolonged until 2022 except the TAC for which an increase is conceivable.

Several CPCs recalled that they could not accept that an increase in TAC be the condition for bigeye tuna reallocation. A CPC highlighted that since 2015 the bigeye tuna TAC has decreased constantly. Another CPC recalled the statement of the African coastal countries in relation to maintenance of the TAC at 61,500 t, until otherwise advised by the SCRS. A CPC indicated that a solution must be found for CPCs that did not submit a capacity plan by 31 January 2020.

The Panel Chair stated that the way forward will include proposal of a process as soon as the SCRS report becomes available.

7. Other matters

Japan recalled its proposal to amend paragraph 31 of Rec. 19-02 and requested that CPCs provide it with feedback before submission of the revised version.

8. Adoption of report/ adjournment

It was agreed that the report would be adopted by correspondence.

Agenda

1. Opening of the meeting
2. Appointment of rapporteur and meeting arrangements
3. Review of any issue raised by the Report of the First Intersessional Meeting of Panel 1
4. Review of bigeye TAC for 2022 and beyond, and yellowfin if appropriate
5. Allocation key for distribution of bigeye TAC and yellowfin if appropriate
6. Review of potential capacity limits in light of the allocation key
7. Other matters
8. Adoption of report/ adjournment

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Japan's proposal on amendments for Rec. 19-02

At the First Intersessional Meeting of Panel 1 held in July, Japan proposed that Panel 1 consider a limitation on the number of FAD sets rather than the current restriction on the number of FADs retained by each purse seine vessel as a more direct and effective FADs management measure. However, it became clear that, regardless of the reporting requirement stipulated in Rec. 19-02, most CPCs have not submitted historical data which allow the SCRS to conduct the necessary analysis to provide advice on conservation effects of such maximum number of FAD sets per vessel or per CPC.

Given this situation, although it can be argued that such additional measures should be introduced in accordance with the precautionary approach, it would be realistic to revisit this matter next year while ensuring necessary scientific advice will be available by then.

In 2021, the Commission should agree that:

- Following reminder letters from the Secretariat, CPCs shall submit FAD sets data up to 2020 by the end of 2021, or sometime deemed appropriate by the SCRS.
- In 2022, the SCRS shall analyze data up to 2020 and give advice on the possible conservation effects of setting the maximum number of FAD sets to the Commission.

For this purpose, Japan proposes the following amendments to Rec.19-02:

Proposed amendments on Recommendation 19-02

31. *With a view to establishing FAD set limits to keep the catches of juvenile tropical tunas at sustainable levels, in ~~2021~~ 2022 SCRS should inform the Commission about the maximum number of FAD sets which should be established per vessel or per CPC. To support this analysis, CPCs with purse seine vessels shall urgently undertake to report to the SCRS by ~~31 July 2020~~ [31 December 2021] the required historical FAD set data up to 2020. CPCs that do not report these data in accordance with this paragraph shall be prohibited from setting on FADs until such data have been received by the SCRS. CPCs with purse seine vessels are encouraged to report FAD set data for 2021 by [31 July 2022].*

Note: Due date for data reporting should be decided taking into account the SCRS work schedule for 2022.

Views of Korea (Rep.) on elements of the tropical tunas measure

Korea (Rep.) would like to provide its position on certain elements of the tropical tunas measure, for consideration at the upcoming meeting of Panel 1 and the Commission.

A. Bigeye tuna catch limits

- We believe that the starting point or basis of future negotiations on catch limits should be Rec. 2016-01 and not Rec. 2019-02, since Rec. 2019-02 is an interim measure.
- Korea (Rep.) notes the estimated total bigeye tuna catch of 59,919 t for 2020 and supports continued use of the bigeye tuna TAC of 61,500 t for 2022, in the absence of new scientific recommendation.
- CPCs with catch limits in para 3 of Rec. 16-01 have a long history of bigeye tuna fisheries and therefore, specific catch limits have been set for them for more than a decade. No legally binding catch limits were applied to the other CPCs until 2020. We believe that the two groups need to be dealt with separately. When it comes to the reductions in catch limits, we had an impression from para 4 of Rec. 19-02 that the general view of the Commission or Panel 1 was that the bigger players should reduce more, compared to smaller players. Please refer to the following table:

<i>CPC</i>	<i>BET Catch Limits</i>		<i>Reduction</i>
	<i>Rec. 2016-01</i>	<i>Rec. 2019-02 and 2020-01</i>	
China	5,376	4,462	17%
European Union	16,989	13,421	21%
Ghana	4,250	3,528	17%
Japan	17,696	13,980	21%
Philippines	286		
Korea	1,486	1,000 (Korea voluntarily set this limit)	32.7%
Chinese Taipei	11,679	9,226	21%

- Based on the above explanation, we believe that a specific catch limit should be set for Korea (Rep.) and the level of reduction should be less than what would be applied to China or Ghana, for example. The Philippines, as a developing coastal State with a very small catch limit, may wish to seek a different arrangement.

B. Monitoring of catch

- All CPCs should submit their catch and effort data in a timely manner so that the Commission can decide the stock status and take necessary action without delay. We note that some CPCs have not provided their bigeye tuna catch data for recent year(s) yet.

C. FAD management

- Management of FAD fishing should be further strengthened based on scientific advice, as appropriate.

**Statement by African coastal countries
(Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Ghana, Morocco, Senegal and South Africa)**

The African States signatories of this statement would like to express to Panel 1 their following common positions:

1. We are concerned by the lack of robust data and information that have been made available to Panel 1 to support our discussions and decision taking. In order to assess the efficacy of the measures introduced through Rec. 19-02, we request aggregated and accessible data on tropical tuna catches and effort for 2020, the provisional results of the bigeye tuna stock assessment and data capable of indicating changes in FAD use since implementation of Rec. 19-02.
2. Until the bigeye tuna stock assessment update is available, we support maintaining the current bigeye TAC of 61,500 t for 2022.
3. We support the provisional result of the First Intersessional Meeting of Panel 1 regarding FAD management, to maintain the FAD fishery closure at three (03) months and a limit on number of FADs at three hundred (300) per vessel.
4. We continue to express our concern regarding the lack of consideration given to the set of allocation criteria provided for in *Resolution by ICCAT on criteria for the allocation of fishing possibilities* (Res. 15-13). While a considerable number of criteria are detailed in Res. 15-13, allocation of bigeye tuna catch limits has been virtually entirely based on just one of these criteria, the historical catch of qualified participants (criterion A.4), almost completely ignoring the numerous criteria on status of qualified participants. We maintain that non-compliance with these important allocation criteria violates our rights as developing coastal States, with a small-scale subsistence artisanal fishery, compromising the needs of the communities of coastal fishers and their means of subsistence as well as the economies dependent on Atlantic tropical tuna resources that are exclusively present along our coasts.

Therefore it is our opinion that the catch limits contained in paragraph 4 of Rec. 19-02 should be amended for more objective implementation of the set of allocation criteria to which the ICCAT CPCs committed through Res. 15-13. As per the commitment contained in the text of the preamble of Rec. 19-02, these catch limits must be revised to achieve a fairer distribution of fishing possibilities for developing coastal States, in particular those of Africa that are still considerably disadvantaged by this allocation system.
5. We propose that a capacity limit be imposed on support vessels, one (01) for every four (04) purse seiners, except for CPC fleets with only one (01) to three (03) purse seiners which would be authorised to have one (01) support vessel to support their fleet.
6. We also request greater acknowledgement of the limited capacity of the administrations of developing coastal States and the need to reduce the administrative burden imposed by numerous obligations and ICCAT reporting requirements. In this spirit, we request that the obligations and reporting requirements of Rec. 19-02 be reviewed to identify which are necessary for sustainable management of the stocks and that associated reporting requirements and their submission be streamlined.
7. We continue to support implementation of a regional observer programme with involvement of qualified observers from developing coastal States. We request enhanced efforts to support capacity building and technology transfer to enable developing coastal States to contribute to this programme and to implement electronic monitoring and other advances in data collection and management.

Statement by International Pole and Line Foundation (IPNLF)

The International Pole and Line Foundation (IPNLF) is concerned that the upcoming discussions at ICCAT on the allocation of bigeye tuna fishing opportunities and resultant catch limits, could place a disproportionate conservation burden on low impact tuna fisheries using the most selective and sustainable methods. It is critical that the rights of small-scale fisheries and coastal states are specifically recognized and protected while ICCAT Rec. 19-02 is further improved. One-by-one tuna fisheries (handline, pole-and-line, troll) support livelihoods in some of the Atlantic's most isolated regions, and represent traditions of cultural importance while supplying a healthy and sustainably-caught source of protein. The fact that bigeye tuna has been overfished remains concerning and threatens food security, ecosystem resilience and the livelihoods of all stakeholders who critically rely upon one-by-one fisheries.

IPNLF would welcome the application of an approach similar to the polluter pays principle. After all, current small-scale tuna fisheries using responsible one-by-one fishing gears in the Atlantic have not been significant drivers of overfishing of highly migratory and productive tuna populations. These fisheries tend to be seasonal while the selective one-by-one fishing methods always leave part of the schools they fish on behind to reproduce. Despite this, island regions like the Azores, Canary Islands, and St Helena have self-imposed size limits and other restrictions greater than those of ICCAT, reflecting the critical importance of sustainable tuna fisheries to their citizens and national economies. Overfishing by industrial fleets could cause communities who rely on these fisheries to run out of options.

It is important for the one-by-one sector, that the disproportionate burden of enforced catch limits is fully recognised. In this respect, we urge that ICCAT's own Allocation Criteria (Res. 15-13) are suitably applied when developing a new allocation approach, and harvest cuts reflect the damage caused by different sectors of the Atlantic tuna fleet. This would align with many international agreements and instruments that exist to promote an equitable and just world (e.g. ICCAT Res. 15-13, UN SDGs, FAO SSF Guidelines).

With regard to negotiating a new TAC based on the latest scientific advice from the SCRS, we would like to see a rebuilding plan implemented that has a probability of success higher than the current 50%, and with the shortest possible rebuilding timeframe. Regarding the wider set of measures to support compliance with the TAC and bigeye tuna rebuilding, IPNLF is highly concerned that decision-making will be further delayed by a lack of useful catch and effort data in 2020, and a lack of evidence that the FAD closure has been implemented since 2020. Current information gaps to inform decision-making need to be addressed as a matter of priority to ensure much needed progress can be made in advance of the annual meeting.

Statement by the Organization for the Promotion of Responsible Tuna (OPRT) Fishing

1. OPRT is an international NGO, whose members are involved in production, distribution and consumption of sashimi tuna in the world. We would like to make the following statement at this Panel 1 Intersessional Meeting.
2. Bigeye tuna is an important species as sashimi tuna and its sustainable use is of vital importance to OPRT members. We are seriously concerned about the worsening stock condition of bigeye tuna in the Atlantic Ocean. OPRT adopted at its General meeting last June “Resolution to urge to recover Bigeye tuna stocks” that has been circulated among ICCAT Members through Circular 5010/2021.
3. There is no question that the main reason for this bad stock condition is increased catches of bigeye juveniles by FADs associated fishing by purse seiners. Reduction of juveniles in FADs operations will lead to a higher maximum sustainable yield of bigeye stock and its higher total allowable catch, providing benefits to ICCAT.
4. We recognize that discussion took place on possible strengthening of FADs management measures during the last Panel 1 Intersessional Meeting. It is regrettable that the SCRS could not complete its analysis due to lack of data to be submitted by purse sein fishing countries. Consequently the SCRS could not provide any scientific advice on FAD set limitations as one of new possible management measures for FADs operation. Discussion on FADs management measures will continue at this Panel 1 Intersessional Meeting. ICCAT should introduce more effective FADs management measures for recovering the bigeye stock without delay.
5. Some ICCAT members say that long line fishing is partly responsible for such a bad stock condition of bigeye tuna. However, long line fishermen have already made great efforts such as a large-scale program for reducing the number of long line vessels and efforts to restrain the increase in the number of long line fishing vessels. In addition, long line fishing vessels catch much larger size of bigeye tuna compared to FADs associated purse seine fishing. This means that a relative impact of catching one metric ton of bigeye tuna is much higher in purse seiners than long liners.
6. We expect that this year ICCAT will adopt effective and fair measures for the recovery of the bigeye tuna stock, taking into account these points.