

Report of the First Intersessional Meeting of Panel 1 on Tropical Tunas MSE
(Online, 30 March 2026)

1. Opening of the meeting and meeting arrangements

Mr Emmanuel Kwame Dovlo, Chair of Panel 1, opened the meeting and welcomed the participants. The ICCAT Secretariat explained the virtual meeting arrangements.

2. Appointment of the Rapporteur

Ms Thamires Bride Ventura (Brazil) was appointed as Rapporteur.

3. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted with changes and is attached as **Appendix 1**.

The List of participants is included as **Appendix 2**.

The Assistant Executive Secretary introduced the 25 CPCs participating in the meeting.

One Intergovernmental Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) attended the meeting as an Observer, and the Brazilian Association of Fish Industries (ABIPESCA), the International Seafood Sustainability Foundation (ISSF), the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), the Pew Charitable Trusts (PEW), Sciaena, and the Ocean Foundation, participated as Non-governmental Organizations.

4. Review of the progress on the Tropical Tunas Multi-Stock MSE

Dr Merino presented the development of management procedures (MPs) for tropical tuna stocks. Three alternative Candidate Management Procedures (CMPs) were described: a model-based MP, an indicator-based MP, and a quasi-constant catch approach. The presentation focused on the evaluation of these CMPs against existing ICCAT management objectives and considered potential revisions to current conservation thresholds and stability provisions.

The main characteristics of each CMP and their expected performance under different stock productivity scenarios were summarized. Attention was given to the balance between stock conservation, catch stability, and management responsiveness. It was noted that some scenarios explored the possibility of increased productivity in certain tropical tuna stocks while maintaining current stock conditions within precautionary limits.

The Chair thanked Dr Merino for the presentation and the Tropical Tunas Technical Sub-group on MSE for their efforts and scientific products.

CPCs congratulated the scientific team and the Standing Committee on Research and Statistics (SCRS) for their efforts.

The delegation of Guatemala expressed concerns regarding the technical complexity of the document, noting that some sections relied heavily on mathematical formulations and equations that were difficult for managers to interpret. In addition, Guatemala emphasized the importance of presenting the information in a more accessible manner, particularly with respect to the practical implications of the MSE process for management decisions. Specific concerns were raised regarding how the proposed approaches could translate into total allowable catch (TAC) adjustments, reductions in catch limits, and the redistribution of fishing opportunities among CPCs and fishing gears.

CPCs highlighted the need for clearer communication between scientists and managers during the MSE development process, emphasizing that management implications should be presented alongside the technical analyses to facilitate informed decision-making within Panel 1.

To facilitate the discussion, it was agreed that the Panel would focus on addressing the specific questions contained in document “Atlantic Tropical Tunas MSE: Progress and Workplan in 2026 Document in support of discussions of the First Intersessional Meeting of Panel 1”, rather than entering into detailed technical discussions on the modeling framework itself. It was further indicated that preliminary results would continue to be reviewed during upcoming intersessional discussions, with additional focused discussions planned prior to the annual Commission meeting.

5. Multi-Stock MSE workplan, and discussion on where the SCRS is seeking feedback and additional guidance from Panel 1 on:

5.1 Suitability of the general approach towards providing advice from the MSE

Dr Merino presented updates on the development of the multi-stock MSE framework for tropical tuna stocks, including bigeye tuna (BET), yellowfin tuna (YFT), and eastern skipjack tuna (SKJ-E). The presentation described recent progress on the operating models (OMs) and CMPs, as well as the evaluation of management scenarios considering the interaction among the three stocks.

CPCs thanked Dr Merino and the MSE Technical Team for the presentation and progress on the multi-stock MSE.

Canada raised questions regarding the use of catch per unit effort (CPUE) indices, the application of three-year TAC periods, and the treatment of choke stocks effects in the simulations. In response, it was clarified that alternative CPUE indices could be applied depending on the scenario under evaluation and that the MSE framework assumes the implementation of catch limits for all three tropical tuna stocks.

The United Kingdom inquired about the potential impacts of recent spatio-temporal fish aggregating devices (FAD) closure measures on fleet catchability and stock dynamics. It was indicated that additional robustness tests could be developed to evaluate these effects within the MSE framework. The United States expressed concerns regarding selectivity issues affecting juvenile BET and YFT catches and noted that the MSE process could contribute to evaluating management measures aimed at reducing these impacts. Guatemala also requested clarification on the integration of TACs for the western skipjack stock and on how MSE outputs would translate into practical management measures.

Discussion focused on the operational aspects of the multi-stock MSE process. It was clarified that although the simulations account for interactions among species and fisheries, the management framework would continue to operate with separate TACs for each stock rather than a single combined TAC. The SCRS Chair explained that the MSE framework incorporates choke stocks considerations during the evaluation process while still producing stock-specific management advice.

CPCs discussed the practical implications of the simulations and their consistency with current management practices. Guatemala questioned the practical utility of some simulation assumptions, while Canada noted the challenges of fully reflecting fishery interactions within management implementation. The European Union (EU) suggested postponing detailed discussions on management implications until more complete evaluation results become available, expected during the upcoming intersessional work, while encouraging the technical team to continue testing the proposed scenarios.

5.2 Any modifications or additions to the management objectives covered in Res. 24-02

The EU proposed expanding the range of probability of maintaining the stock in the green quadrant of the Kobe plot (PGK) objectives beyond the current 50% threshold to include 55%, 60%, and 65%. The EU also suggested evaluating the use of $0.4 B_{MSY}$ as a limit reference point (LRP) and incorporating an additional 10% risk level within the safety objectives. The United States supported using the [Resolution by ICCAT on interim operational management objectives for Atlantic bigeye tuna, yellowfin tuna, and the eastern stock of skipjack tuna \(Res. 24-02\)](#) as the basis for the evaluation process.

Guatemala clarified that the proposals raised by its delegation should not be interpreted as formal Panel guidance, but rather as possible areas for technical exploration within the MSE process. Japan emphasized the importance of maintaining consistency with [Res. 24-02](#) as the primary framework for the work and requested the evaluation of different stability provisions, including 10%, 15%, and 20% TAC variation limits.

The EU proposed exploring scenarios allowing TAC levels at 110%, 115%, and 120% of MSY under specific stock conditions, as well as evaluating modified harvest control rules (HCRs) that could permit limited TAC increases when biomass exceeds B_{MSY} levels.

CPCs expressed concerns regarding the technical complexity of these proposals and emphasized the need for additional scientific evaluation before management decisions are considered.

CPCs noted that management objectives may differ among stocks due to differences in stock dynamics, fisheries characteristics, and life-history traits and expressed concerns regarding the technical complexity of these proposals and emphasized the need for additional scientific evaluation before management decisions are considered.

Canada noted that evaluating all proposed combinations of management parameters before the Second Intersessional Meeting of Panel 1 (May 2026) could present significant computational challenges. In response, Dr Merino indicated that while the technical team would attempt to evaluate the requested options, not all combinations and management periods could be fully tested within the available timeframe.

The United States and Japan also supported exploring allocation scenarios among fishing gears within the MSE framework in order to better address selectivity issues affecting tropical tuna fisheries. Dr Merino summarized the main points raised during the discussions, including the expansion of PGK ranges, alternative risk and stability provisions, modified HCRs, and gear-specific considerations. It was indicated that these elements would continue to be refined during the intersessional work in preparation for further discussions at the Second Intersessional Meeting of Panel 1.

6. Review of the progress on the western skipjack tuna MSE

Dr Sant'Ana presented a proposal for the development of an Exceptional Circumstances Protocol (ECP) within the western Atlantic skipjack tuna MSE framework. The presentation outlined the main principles proposed for the protocol, including the identification of indicators and conditions that could trigger exceptional circumstances (ECs) requiring management review or alternative actions outside the standard MP.

Brazil suggested that climate-related impacts should be explicitly incorporated as part of the ECP principles and evaluation process. Guatemala requested clarification on the potential expansion of the protocol beyond the three principles initially presented and inquired about the management process that would be followed once an EC is triggered.

The EU highlighted the importance of clearly defining the monitoring strategy, data requirements, and operational procedures necessary to support the implementation of the protocol. CPCs emphasized the need to ensure that the ECP framework remains practical and sufficiently flexible to address unforeseen changes in stock dynamics or fishery conditions.

The SCRS Chair acknowledged the comments and noted the technical complexity associated with the development of ECPs within MSE processes. It was indicated that additional discussions would continue during future intersessional meetings, including a possible ambassador-level discussion prior to the annual Commission meeting.

7. Other matters

No other matters were discussed.

8. Adoption of the report and closure

The Panel agreed to a process for adopting the report by correspondence.

The Chair thanked the ICCAT Secretariat, the SCRS, the interpreters, the Rapporteur, and the participants for their hard work and contributions to the meeting and adjourned the meeting.

Agenda

1. Opening of the meeting and meeting arrangement
2. Appointment of Rapporteur
3. Adoption of agenda
4. Review of the progress on the Tropical Tunas Multi-Stock MSE
5. Multi-Stock MSE workplan, and discussion on where the SCRS is seeking feedback and additional guidance from Panel 1 on:
 - 5.1 Suitability of the general approach towards providing advice from the MSE
 - 5.2 Any modifications or additions to the management objectives covered in [Res. 24-02](#)
6. Review of the SKJ-W workplan and progress on the development of the scientific components of an exceptional circumstances protocol
7. Other matters
8. Adoption of the report and closure

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