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**The Pew Charitable Trusts’
Statement to Panel 2 of the 25th Regular Meeting of ICCAT
14 November 2017**

Panel 2 convenes this year with a lengthy to-do list and an unprecedented opportunity – and responsibility – to lead ICCAT into a new phase by adopting its first harvest strategy and committing to a full recovery of ICCAT’s most iconic species – the Atlantic bluefin tuna. The SCRS advice has positive news for both, but also reason for caution. A harvest control rule (HCR) is ready for interim adoption for northern albacore, but the management strategy evaluation (MSE) process and results should be peer-reviewed. The 2017 bluefin assessment estimated that both stocks have grown, but neither stock could be confirmed as recovered and the SCRS-recommended quotas are predicted to lead to stock decline.

In light of the science and in recognition of ICCAT’s commitment to apply a precautionary approach, The Pew Charitable Trusts urges Panel 2 to:

- Adopt an interim HCR for northern albacore with a F_{TARGET} of $0.8F_{\text{MSY}}$, a $B_{\text{THRESHOLD}}$ of B_{MSY} , a B_{LIMIT} of $0.4B_{\text{MSY}}$, and a stability provision limiting TAC changes to 20% between 3-year quota cycles.
 - The measure should include specifications for the monitoring data and stock assessment method to be used to calculate the HCR’s reference points, making it a comprehensive harvest strategy.
 - The measure should also include terms of reference for an independent review of the MSE process and code, the results of which would be presented to the Commission at the 2018 annual meeting.
- Adopt quotas for Atlantic bluefin tuna for 2018 through 2020 that will allow both stocks to continue to grow, namely 28,000 t or below for the eastern stock and 1,000 t or below for the western stock. This would allow up to a nearly 20% increase in the eastern quota, but under no circumstances should the western quota be increased, especially since ICCAT’s 20-year, B_{MSY} -based rebuilding plan ends next year, and the stock is just 45% to 69% of the already depleted 1974 level. Even the current western quota is predicted to lead to decline.
 - Panel 2 should act to bring all eastern quota allocations into the main allocation key to eliminate subparagraph allocations. Any negotiations on the allocation key should be finalized before discussing the quota.
 - Given increasing concerns about IUU fishing in the Mediterranean Sea, existing monitoring and control measures, including capacity limits and seasonal closures, should be maintained.
 - Both eastern and western measures should also outline the process for a transition to harvest strategy-based management for Atlantic bluefin tuna in 2019 per Recommendation 15-07.