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**The Pew Charitable Trusts'
Statement to Panel 1 of the 21st Special Meeting of ICCAT
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The SCRS has concluded that the Atlantic bigeye stock is significantly overfished, with overfishing still occurring, and that adopting a recovery plan that urgently reduces catch of both adults and juveniles to levels that immediately end overfishing and allow the stock to recover is vital. This is not only the top priority for Panel 1, but also the top priority for this year's Special Meeting of ICCAT. The Panel 1 Intersessional Meeting in Bilbao was successful in building positive momentum toward adopting a rebuilding program and in identifying several issues that must be addressed in Croatia. Since that time, the SCRS has finalized its advice on how various catch levels will affect recovery time for this heavily overfished stock. This advice is summarized in the bigeye Kobe matrices in the SCRS Plenary report (PLE-104, BET-Table 4). With the SCRS advice in hand, the Panel now convenes with a responsibility to endorse a recovery plan that gives bigeye a chance to recover quickly and supports more productive and profitable fisheries.

The stock is in worse shape than in 2015, so not only has the recovery not started but the starting line has been moved backwards, meaning there is more ground to cover and less time to do so. The total allowable catch (TAC) must be lowered, and Pew strongly encourages the Panel to endorse a TAC of 50,000 t, the level with a 50% probability of ending overfishing in 2020 and a 70% probability of recovering the stock by 2028. Of the three proposals submitted before the Panel's first meeting, none has proposed a TAC sufficiently low to end overfishing by 2020, though the South Africa draft (PA1-506) comes closest to achieving this goal.

Pew also urges the Panel to adopt new measures that specifically lower juvenile catch, as recommended by the SCRS, to improve the productivity of the stock and hasten recovery efforts. These measures should include a reduction in purse seine fishing on FADs, via a FAD set limit or equivalent means. Again, the South Africa draft is strongest in this regard, as it includes a cap on the number of FAD sets at 2015 levels, a limit on the number of FADs that can be deployed by each purse seine vessel at 250 per year, and a three-month, Atlantic-wide closure on FAD fishing activities. It is important to remember, however, that these efforts to mitigate juvenile mortality should be adopted in conjunction with a more restrictive TAC, not as an alternative to one. The Guatemala draft (PA1-505) may restrict overall purse seine effort, but the proposal represents such a significant change to the way ICCAT manages fisheries that it is difficult to support without sufficient scientific advice on how effective it is expected to be at recovering the bigeye stock and how limits to fishing days can or cannot be overcome by operational changes (e.g., increasing the number of purse seine sets per day) of the fleets.

A fundamental flaw in the current management plan is the inability to control total catch, a result of the very high quota exemption held by states which formerly did not catch much bigeye. This exemption incentivized the reflagging of industrial purse seine and longline vessels, promoted the growth of large new fisheries despite the poor status of the stock, and led to the bigeye TAC being exceeded for several years in a row, by more than 20% in recent years. Bigeye is now 60 times more likely to collapse than to recover by 2033, under current catch levels. In order to address this lack of control, the exemption must

be lowered to 500 t, triggering the movement of additional CPCs into the allocation key. Of the three proposals already submitted, the EU draft (PA1-504) includes a trigger at this level, a position that should be supported.

Finally, monitoring, control, and surveillance of bigeye fisheries must be improved, so ICCAT can better promote the recovery. Therefore, Panel 1 should endorse a plan that includes a substantial increase to observer coverage for both longline and purse seine vessels (to 20% and 100%, respectively), promotes transparency of transshipment activities or a halt to this activity until operations can be improved, and a ban on rollover of underage. Of the three proposals being discussed, only the Guatemala draft would require an increase in longline observer coverage to 20%, a position that should be supported. The drafts submitted by Guatemala and by the EU both include bans on transshipment at sea. While these two proposals also reduce the rollover of underage of this overfished stock to 5% of each CPC's quota, the South African proposal is the only of the three that bans this practice until the stock is recovered. That position should be supported.

As detailed above, there are pieces of each proposal that should be supported and pieces that must be improved. Pew is hopeful that the sponsors of each proposal and the other members of Panel 1 will collaborate to develop a recovery plan that ends overfishing immediately and recovers the stock with 70% probability by 2028, while reducing juvenile mortality and improving monitoring, control, and surveillance.

ICCAT currently has inadequate control over tropical tuna fisheries: the bigeye stock being is in worse shape than ever before; the yellowfin TAC has been exceeded by more than 40,000 t recently; and eastern skipjack catch reached the highest levels ever in 2017. This must be the meeting where ICCAT starts to better manage these most valuable stocks in the Atlantic, and that starts with Panel 1.