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**The Pew Charitable Trusts’  
Statement to Panel 2 of the 21<sup>st</sup> Special Meeting of ICCAT  
November 2018**

Panel 2 has two main priorities this year: to update the eastern bluefin measure (Rec. 17-07) and adopt conceptual management objectives for both western and eastern Atlantic bluefin tuna stocks. This is a relatively light agenda by Panel 2 standards, but the implications of these tasks are significant and warrant careful attention to detail.

In 2017, ICCAT agreed to increase the TAC for bluefin tuna in the eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean Sea in stepwise increments through 2020. The agreed 2019 TAC is the highest in history, despite the fact that the stock has not yet been confirmed as recovered. Of additional concern, there are allegations of a resurgence of illegal fishing in the Mediterranean, including recent activities under investigation by Europol for IUU bluefin in the European Union annually totaling more than the entire West Atlantic quota. As a result, Panel 2 should exercise caution in its deliberations on eastern bluefin by both questioning whether the 2019 quota increase is prudent and strengthening – rather than weakening – the monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) provisions of Rec. 17-07.

Unfortunately, the EU draft (PA2-605) proposes to roll back a number of Rec. 17-07’s controls on the eastern bluefin fishery, rather than following the SCRS advice to “not weaken the current monitoring and control measures.” The riskiest new provisions are:

- Efforts to increase fishing capacity (particularly in paragraphs 18-19), even while recent capacity estimates suggest that current capacity is already more than sufficient to catch the 2020 quota;
- The removal of closed fishing seasons for industrial gears including large-scale pelagic longlines, pelagic trawlers and baitboats in Part III;
- An increase in the allowable bluefin bycatch by unauthorized vessels from 5% to 20% by weight or number (paragraph 32). It is unclear how these potentially significant bluefin catches by unauthorized vessels could be entered into the eBCD system and tracked.
- New derogations to the minimum size (paragraph 29).

Together, these proposed revisions weaken MCS in the eastern bluefin fishery at a time where increased scrutiny is required to prevent a return to the illegal activities that plagued the fishery just one decade ago, putting the stock, fishery and ICCAT in crisis. The Pew Charitable Trusts urges Panel 2 to reject these changes and focus instead on strengthening Rec. 17-07. It is Panel 2’s responsibility to ensure that the new eastern bluefin measure leads to a sustainable, well-managed fishery.

The SCRS has asked the Commission to set conceptual management objectives for both stocks of bluefin tuna this year so they can continue progress on development of the management strategy evaluation (MSE) framework. Canada’s proposal (PA2-607) is a comprehensive and appropriate starting point for that discussion, and the proposed objectives were well-received when first presented at the SWGSM meeting in Madeira. The Pew Charitable Trusts looks forward to engaging in the MSE process as a key stakeholder as Panel 2 initiates the iterative discussion central to development of management procedures.