Correspondence from the Panel 2 Chair regarding disclosure of BFT Species Group meeting information
(*ICCAT Circular #5676-20, dated 17 August 2020*)

FISHERIES AGENCY
MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND FISHERIES, GOVERNMENT OF JAPAN
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August 17, 2020

Mr. Camille Manel
Executive Secretary
ICCAT

Dear Camille:

I am writing as the Panel 2 Chair to remind one issue which recently happened as regards how to handle outcomes of species group meetings. Immediately after the Intersessional meeting of the BFT Species Group which took place from 20 to 28 of July, PEW that participated in the meeting as an observer revealed the conclusion of the stock assessment to Undercurrentnews (https://www.undercurrentnews.com/2020/07/30/western-atlantic-bluefin-stock-in-decline-after-premature-easing-of-protections/).

I checked Rules of Procedure and Rec. 05-12 and found no provision to prohibit observers to reveal the conclusions of the meeting. It should be noted, however, that the report of the intersessional meeting has yet to become public. Since the species group meeting further reviews the report and the SCRS plenary session produces management recommendation based on the advice of the species group, I am wondering if disclosure of the information earlier than those meetings may negatively affect the process.

If things were normal, this type of issue should be discussed at an annual meeting. Since no annual meeting will be held this year, I would like to register it as one of the agenda items for the plenary session in 2021. Until the Commission draws a conclusion on this issue, I would like to request PEW and other observers to refrain from revealing such information at least until the report is uploaded.

I would appreciate it if you circular this letter among CPCs and observers.

Best regards,

Shingo Ota
Panel 2 Chair