

STATEMENT FROM NORWAY TO PANEL 2 – ROUND 2

Western Atlantic Bluefin Tuna (WBFT):

The SCRS has conducted an updated stock assessment and scientific advice on WBFT in 2020. At present, there exists both limited data sources and obvious conflicting signals on relative abundance of WBFT from the available fishery-independent and fishery-dependent time series. New, and possibly crucial data being available in 2021 that was not available in time for the 2020 assessment, will generally be a valid argument for a new stock assessment for any fish stock in ICCAT. It is important to give the SCRS time to consider whether the new data material for the western component indicates that we need a new stock assessment in 2021, before the Commission make a decision on this matter.

The proposal from the Chair of Panel 2 includes the hiring of an external expert to review, prepare and present the findings in the proposed new stock assessment and scientific advice to the BFT Group. Norway requests further explanation as to why there is a need to hire an external expert. Norway would also like more information on how the external expert shall be chosen. As far as we understand, an external expert would usually be paid by the Commission and not by individual CPC's, and the external expert is selected after an open calling process organized by the SCRS and Secretariat.

Norway has expressed its support to the Panel 2 Chairs proposal in PA2-608 on a WBFT TAC level of 1,785 t in 2021. Norway maintains this position, and will not support a roll-over of the TAC for WBFT from 2020 to 2021. The reason for this is that the SCRS has already provided a whole range of different advice options on WBFT. A roll-over of a TAC of 2,350 t for WBFT from 2020 to 2021 is not precautionary, and will provide us with only a 6% probability of not overfishing (94% probability of overfishing) in 2021 (Option 3 in Table 4 in the SCRS report on WBFT). Option 2 in Table 4 suggested by Panel 2 Chair, on the other hand, gives us approximately 60% probability of not overfishing WBFT with a TAC of 1,785 t in 2021.

Furthermore, Norway is not certain of the role of the SCRS in relation to the suggested sub-group which will involve only a few selected CPC's within the SCRS, when conducting the new full stock assessment on WBFT I 2021. Norway would thus like more information on this issue.

Norway is concerned that a new full stock assessment of the WBFT may create a precedence amongst other CPC's if they do not agree with the outcome of an updated stock assessment.