

**STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION TO PLENARY**

The European Union (EU) would like to refer to the recent letter from the Commission Chair (PLE\_144).

The European Union is pleased to note that the only issues still open are of editorial nature and therefore welcomes the conclusion of the decision-making process in ICCAT. Despite obvious challenges, it is reassuring that the Commission was in the end able to ensure business continuity by meeting most of the priority objectives established in the run-up to this unique process in 2020. The majority of the 27 Member States of the European Union are also coastal States in ICCAT and the efficient functioning of the Commission is of the utmost importance for the EU fishing communities.

The EU would like to take this opportunity to thank the Chairs of the Commission and of the various Panels and Committees, as well as the Parties who contributed to this process. Special thanks are also due to the Executive Secretary and his team for their tireless work to facilitate this process.

Regarding Panel 1, the European Union is pleased to see that the management measures adopted in 2019 have been extended through the adoption of proposal PA1\_503A. Substantial work is still required to consolidate these measures and ensure a sustainable exploitation of the tropical tuna resources in the future, and we are therefore looking forward to engage constructively with other CPCs in 2021.

The European Union also welcomes the adoption of the report of the Compliance Committee (COC\_350A), subject to the confirmation of the proposed editorial comments. The EU agrees with the conclusions of the Chair regarding both the request from Colombia for the renewal of its status of Cooperating non-Contracting Party, as well as the two late interventions to challenge the recommendations of the Compliance Committee on this matter. The mandate of the Compliance Committee is clearly established under Recommendation 11-24 and includes the review of the requests for the status of Cooperating Non-Contracting Party. We regret these attempts to supplant the conclusions of the COC in the plenary in the absence of justification, and the fact that this undermines the crucial work of this Committee. The EU considers that it is essential for the credibility of the compliance process that the organisation strictly adheres to the established procedures, and does no question the findings of the Committee for reasons not invoked or discussed in the COC first.

We also regret the efforts to move the discussions away from considerations purely related to the compliance record of the applicant and the requirement to cooperate, to others related to the aspirations of Colombia to participate to ICCAT work; the latter were never taken into consideration nor were they questioned by the Committee when expressing its recommendation to not renew the status of Columbia. The EU remains a strong advocate of the crucial role of RFMOs, and as such continues to encourage maximum participation, in particular by developing countries. This is reflected by the unmatched level of financial support provided by the European Union to RFMOs, in particular to facilitate the participation of developing Countries to ICCAT meetings.

While participation should be encouraged, the EU nevertheless believes that it is also fundamental that the aspiring members demonstrate their commitments to fully cooperate towards achieving the Convention objectives, in a transparent and constructive way.

For these reasons, the EU supports the conclusions already expressed by the Compliance Committee and later confirmed in the summary report from the Commission Chair.