

**LETTER FROM THE COMMISSION CHAIR ON CLOSURE OF THE CORRESPONDENCE PERIOD OF
ESSENTIAL COMMISSION BUSINESS IN 2020 IN LIEU OF THE 22ND SPECIAL MEETING OF THE
COMMISSION**

Dear Colleagues,

Although the COVID-19 pandemic has caused substantial problems to all of us, and particular to the usual ICCAT process, I am pleased to inform you that the 2020 Essential Commission Business decision making process is now closed.

I should like to extend my profound thanks to all our CPCs for their efforts and hard work carried out under the conditions we faced over the past 4 months. Although the conditions were far from ideal, I am grateful to the CPCs for their commitment to avoid ICCAT fisheries being in an unregulated situation throughout 2021. However, we must not forget that no consensus could be reached on the implementation of management and conservation measures to several stocks which show important signs for concern.

Since my last letter (ICCAT Circular #0658 dated 2 February 2021), I have not received any editorial comments to the Compliance Committee and the Plenary reports, nor to the ICCAT Calendar for 2021, which were the remaining few open issues for a final round of discussions.

Please see below a brief summary from the final correspondence round of the Plenary for the different agenda items, as well as some additional notes on the 2021 activities.

5. Review and endorsement, if appropriate, of the decisions taken by the Conservation and Management Measures Compliance Committee (COC)

No editorial edits were received and therefore the Compliance Committee report is adopted as COC-350A. However, a few minor mistakes were found in two of the Annexes to the report (COC-304 and Appendix 2 to COC-308-D) which have now been corrected, although these do not impact any of the decisions taken by the COC.

While I received a request to reconsider the proposal of not renewing Colombia's Cooperating Status, I also received one statement and several comments expressing support for the proposal. Accordingly, I see no reason to modify in the Plenary the recommendation from the Compliance Committee to not renew the cooperating status of Colombia this year. Notwithstanding, I strongly encourage Colombia to fully engage with ICCAT, while demonstrating its commitments to fully cooperate towards achieving the Convention objectives, in a constructive way.

7. Intersessional meetings in 2021

The ICCAT 2021 calendar was adopted in its present form (PLE-106E), although minor adjustments might be made as usual, but specifically under the current circumstances of the pandemic, since holding in-person intersessional meetings will be challenging. Therefore, if in-person meetings are not possible, these Commission meetings should be converted to a virtual format. On the other hand, currently scheduled online meetings (eg. September SCRS Species group and Plenary meetings) may be reverted to in-person meetings if the situation allows.

Accordingly, I urge the Chairs of the Commission subsidiary bodies with intersessional meetings scheduled for 2021 to develop and submit to the Secretariat, as soon as possible, tentative agendas and workplans for the intersessional period, as was successfully done by the Chair of Panel 2. Due to the need to reach agreements on these agendas and workplans, the Secretariat shall circulate these documents for comments **no later than 3 months in advance of the respective meeting**, to reach the widest possible consensus and a solid basis for the discussions within the intersessional period. Notwithstanding, I urge all CPCs to closely follow the correspondence circulated by the Secretariat, and to start bilateral or multilateral consultations to overcome some of the difficulties inherent in the most relevant business issues that will be addressed in the intersessional meetings.

Finally, I take this opportunity to thank the European Union for the invitation to host the Panel 4 intersessional meeting in Santiago de Compostela (Spain), scheduled between 6 and 8 July 2021.

9. Date and place of the next meeting of the Commission

I am pleased to inform that the Secretariat has received an expression of interest by the European Union to host our 2021 annual meeting, scheduled between 15 and 22 November 2021. The Secretariat is currently in direct contact with the EU to assess this possibility, as we urgently need to find potential venues for the meeting bearing in mind the current sanitary measures. As already noted in my previously letters, it is very possible that significant limitations on the total number of participants will need to be implemented for in-person meetings under the current pandemic scenario.

10. Adoption of the report containing the decisions of the Commission

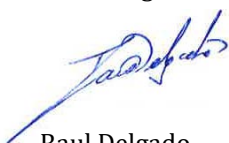
As mentioned above I have not received any editorial suggestions for the Plenary report. Accordingly, the Report is now considered adopted as presented in document PLE-150A.

With the aim of allowing the entry into force of the adopted measures as early as possible, the Secretariat has already circulated the nine adopted Recommendations and one Reference document (ICCAT circular #0894 dated 10 February 2021). However, these have been circulated only for editorial review. Therefore, they are not open for any further discussion until the 2021 Commission meeting. They will be officially transmitted as soon as possible after the deadline for editorial comments.

As mentioned in document GEN-007F, until the end of the decision-making process, both CPCs and Observers may provide the Secretariat with one consolidated Statement to each subsidiary body and the Plenary, which will be translated and included in the 2020 Commission proceedings, **but not posted** in the document's webpage. However, consolidated Statements that exceed the limit of 450 words will not be published, unless provided in the three official languages of the Commission. Accordingly, those that wish to submit those consolidated statements to the Secretariat shall do so by **19 February at the latest (18:00 Madrid time)**.

Finally, I would like to thank the Executive Secretary and his team for their tireless work to facilitate this lengthy process in the most efficient possible manner.

Warm regards,



Raul Delgado
Commission Chairman