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DRAFT RECOMMENDATION BY ICCAT AMENDING REC. 17-06 FOR AN INTERIM CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR WESTERN ATLANTIC BLUEFIN TUNA

(A proposal by the United States, Japan, and Canada)

AWARE that the Recommendation by ICCAT for an Interim Conservation and Management Plan for Western Atlantic Bluefin Tuna (Rec. 17-06) was amended and extended only through 2021 by the Recommendation by ICCAT Amending Rec. 17-06 for an Interim Conservation and Management Plan for Western Atlantic Bluefin Tuna (Rec. 20-06);

RECALLING the commitment of the Commission in Rec. 20-06 to take actions that would address overfishing in 2022 with at least a 50% probability;

NOTING the positive results of the 2021 western Atlantic bluefin tuna stock assessment, which estimates that the total biomass has increased by 9% over the time period 2017-2020, indicates that the current TAC is not likely to have led to overfishing relative to $F_{0.1}$ with a high probability, and shows clear signs of several strong subsequent recruitment years;

RECOGNIZING, however, that the results of the 2021 stock assessment and projections, including the Kobe matrix, do not capture the full degree of uncertainty with regard to the spawner-recruit relationship, the effects of stock mixing, and other aspects, and mindful as well of the conclusions of the external review of that assessment;

ACKNOWLEDGING the SCRS advice that, in light of the uncertainties and conclusions of the external review, the current scientific advice should be used with caution and, toward that end, only two years (2022 and 2023) were included in the Kobe 2 Strategy Matrix, and the SCRS advised the Commission could implement a moderate increase to the current TAC of 2,350 t;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the additional advice provided by the SCRS on alternative approaches to assist the Commission in determining the level of a moderate increase in TAC, specifically the empirical approach looking at both western area and western spawning stock abundance, and the management strategy evaluation (MSE) approach;

SUPPORTING the Commission's work toward the development of MSE for bluefin tuna to manage fisheries more effectively in the face of identified uncertainties, including efforts to develop operational management objectives, in particular, *Resolution by ICCAT on Development of Initial Management Objectives for Eastern and Western Bluefin Tuna* (Res. 18-03), and efforts to finalize these management objectives consistent with the Convention and *Recommendation by ICCAT on the Principles of Decision Making for ICCAT Conservation and Management Measures* (Rec. 11-13) and *Recommendation by ICCAT on the Development of Harvest Control Rules and Management Strategy Evaluation* (Rec. 15-07);

WELCOMING the 2022 SCRS Bluefin Tuna Workplan, including several manager-scientist dialogue meetings with Panel 2, to ensure the MSE process can be completed on schedule and anticipating that the SCRS will complete the MSE, including providing Candidate Management Procedures to the Commission for consideration, in 2022, with a view to the adoption of a management procedure to set TACs for 2023 onward;

COMMITTED in the interim, therefore, to the establishment of a precautionary TAC that prevents overfishing with a high probability; prioritizes continued stock growth, including into the long-term; and ensures relative stability by avoiding a large fluctuation in catches;

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE CONSERVATION OF
ATLANTIC TUNAS (ICCAT) RECOMMENDS THAT:

1. The provisions in the *Recommendation by ICCAT for an Interim Conservation and Management Plan for Western Atlantic Bluefin Tuna* (Rec. 17-06) shall be extended through 2022 with the following amendments:

(A) Paragraph 1 shall be replaced with:

“1. Contracting Parties and Cooperating non-Contracting Parties, Entities and Fishing Entities (CPCs) whose vessels have been actively fishing for bluefin tuna in the western Atlantic shall implement the following interim conservation and management plan for the 2022 period.”

(B) Paragraph 3 shall be replaced with:

“3. The annual total allowable catch (TAC), inclusive of dead discards, of [2,726] t is established for 2022.”

(C) Paragraph 4 shall be replaced with:

“4. Should the MSE process not be completed in order to allow adoption of a management procedure (MP) in 2022, the Commission shall establish a TAC for 2023 taking into account additional SCRS advice in 2022, which would include consideration of updates of the fishery indicators. In support of the development of this advice, CPCs shall make special efforts, *inter alia*, to update abundance indices and other fishery indicators in 2022 and provide them to the SCRS.”

(D) Paragraph 6 shall be replaced with:

“6. The allocation of the annual TAC, inclusive of dead discards, will be indicated as follows:

(a) The annual TAC shall include the following allocations:

CPC	Allocation
USA (by-catch related to longline fisheries in vicinity of management area boundary)	25 t
Canada (by-catch related to longline fisheries in vicinity of management area boundary)	15 t

b) After subtracting the amounts under paragraph 6(a), the remainder of the annual TAC will be allocated as follows:

CPC	If the remainder of the annual TAC is:			
	<2,413 t (A)	2,413 t (B)	>2,413-2,660 t (C)	>2,660 t (D)
United States	54.02%	1,303 t	1,303 t	49.00%
Canada	22.32%	539 t	539 t	20.24%
Japan	17.64%	426 t	426 t + all increase between 2,413 t and 2,660 t	24.74%
United Kingdom (in respect of Bermuda)	0.23%	5.5 t	5.5 t	0.23%
France (in respect of St. Pierre & Miquelon)	0.23%	5.5 t	5.5 t	0.23%
Mexico	5.56%	134 t	134 t	5.56%

- (c) Consistent with paragraphs 1, 3, and 6(b), the TAC for 2022 results in the following CPC-specific quota allocations (not including by-catch allowances listed in 6(a)):

<i>TAC for 2022: [2,726] t</i>	
United States	[1,316.14] t
Canada	[543.65] t
Japan	[664.52] t
United Kingdom (in respect of Bermuda)	[6.18] t
France (in respect of St. Pierre & Miquelon)	[6.18] t
Mexico	[149.34] t

In no case shall the allocation to France (in respect of St. Pierre & Miquelon) and to the United Kingdom (in respect of Bermuda) be less than 4 t each in any single year unless the fishery is closed.

- (d) Depending on availability, Mexico can transfer up to [149.34] t of its adjusted 2022 quota to Canada to support cooperative research as specified in paragraph 20.
- (e) Depending on availability, the United Kingdom (in respect of Bermuda) can transfer up to the amount of its adjusted 2022 quota to the United States to support cooperative research as specified in paragraph 20.
- (f) Depending on availability, France (in respect of St. Pierre & Miquelon) can transfer up to the amount of its adjusted 2022 quota to Canada to support cooperative research as specified in paragraph 20.
- (g) CPCs planning to engage in the cooperative research activities specified in paragraphs 6(d), 6(e), and 6(f) above shall: notify the Commission and the SCRS of the details of their research programs to be undertaken before they commence, and present the results of the research to the SCRS.

(E) Paragraph 16 shall be replaced with:

“16. The SCRS shall continue to refine the MSE and test candidate MPs in 2022. In support of this effort, the SCRS and Panel 2 shall hold three MSE dialogue meetings in 2022. At the 2022 ICCAT Annual Meeting, the Commission shall review the final candidate MPs and, select one for adoption and application to establish the TAC for 2023 and future years, including pre-agreed management actions to be taken under various stock conditions.”

(F) Paragraph 18 shall be replaced with:

“18. By 2022, the SCRS shall provide the Commission with advice on any potential impacts due to uncertainties (including regarding the spawner-recruit relationship) of implementing an $F_{0.1}$ strategy, and, for any identified risks, advise how they could be addressed in future management decisions.”

(G) Paragraph 20 shall be replaced with:

“20. CPCs that harvest Atlantic bluefin tuna should make every effort to contribute to priority research and other scientific activities, including that being undertaken through or in collaboration with the ICCAT GBYP. CPCs should make or continue special efforts to enhance the collection and analysis of biological samples from Atlantic bluefin tuna fisheries, such as through sample contributions to the coordinated sampling plan recommended by the SCRS. An area of particular focus should be to support and provide samples for genetic close-kin mark recapture and stock of origin analyses. The SCRS will report annually to the Commission on these efforts. In addition, it is important to continue to explore sampling and/or other approaches for enhancing, and where needed developing, accurate abundance indices for juvenile bluefin tuna. CPCs should also make special efforts to ensure complete and timely submission of any collected data to the SCRS.”

2. In 2022, the Commission shall review and amend, as appropriate, Recommendation 17-06 as amended by this Recommendation.
3. This Recommendation amends Recommendation 17-06 and repeals and replaces Recommendation 20-06.