

COLLABORATION WITH OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

(ICCAT Secretariat)

Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP)

In 2016, ICCAT signed guidelines for cooperation with ACAP. This cooperation is a non-binding agreement that covers such issues as participation as observers in each other's meetings, as well as consultation, cooperation and collaboration on issues of common concern. In 2021 one scientist from ACAP attended the SCRS meeting of the Sub-committee on Ecosystems.

Aquatic Sciences and Fisheries Abstracts (ASFA)

The Secretariat has prepared a few new entries for the Aquatic Sciences and Fisheries Abstracts (ASFA-ProQuest) database of the papers published in the most recent issues of the ICCAT Collective Volume of Scientific Papers.

Ministerial Conference on fisheries cooperation among African States bordering the Atlantic Ocean (ATLAFCO)

The Executive Secretary attended the ATLAFCO symposium "For an active participation in the international management of marine living species" held online 3-4 March 2021 (details available in document STF-201/21, Annex 1). An overview presentation was provided on ICCAT. It was stressed the importance effective participation on the ICCAT process and recalled that the Commission made available some mechanisms to encourage active participation of its members, such as special funds for participation in meetings and strengthening capacities.

Coordinating Working Group on Fishery Statistics (CWP)

The Secretariat has maintained a close collaboration with FAO by participating in meetings and at the technical level on the solution of various data issues (data corrections, coding systems, application of fisheries harmonization standards and concepts, data exchange, etc.). In 2021, the ICCAT Secretariat attended the Coordinating working Party on Fishery Statistics (CWP) Intersessional joint Meetings of Aquaculture (7th session) and Fisheries (28th session) Subject Groups, held online between 2 and 5 November. ICCAT reported the 2020-2021 progress of the activities relevant to CWP on fisheries statistics of tuna and tuna like species and reiterated its commitment as partner of FAO-CWP.

Fisheries and Resources Monitoring System (FIRMS)

ICCAT is a partner of the FAO/FIRMS that provides access to information on the global monitoring and management of fishery marine resources. As such the Secretariat provides regular updates for the stock status of ICCAT species (<http://firms.fao.org/firms/en>) assessed by the SCRS. The Secretariat attended the 12th Steering Committee meeting of the Fisheries and Resources Monitoring System (FIRMS), held online 18-21 October 2021. The progress on the new FIRMS information system developed under the BlueBRIDGE project was reviewed, including the Tuna Atlas and the Global Record of Stocks and Fisheries. FIRMS informed that is developing a strategic plan for the 2020-30 decade for which is requesting input from each partner through a survey highlighting the benefits and needs. Preliminary responses from partners including ICCAT Secretariat, noted limitations on time and staff to address FIRMS requirements, recommending streamlining and standardize the overall transfer of data. It was further noticed that ICCAT is in the process of updating its Data Confidentiality Policy, and that future data submission will follow those policy requirements. Responses from FIRMS partners will be considered in the strategic plan draft that will be reviewed at the next meeting.

The ICCAT Secretariat also has activities under way for the accomplishment of the data provision for the FAO-FIRMS Global Tuna Atlas (GTA) as described in the FAO-FIRMS Steering Committee eleven session meeting report (FSC11, May 2019 Rome-Italy: www.fao.org/3/ca5247en/ca5247en.pdf). Two short online technical meetings were held online to work on the t-RFMOs data provision for the GTA portal aiming its public dissemination (slightly delayed due to the pandemic). These activities will continue during 2022.

International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES)

In light of the fruitful experience in recent years between ICCAT and ICES regarding scientific collaboration, in 2018 the two organisations expressed their willingness to strengthen this cooperation and to explore new initiatives and discussions. It has been agreed therefore that it is appropriate and desirable to improve collaboration between the ICCAT SCRS-ICES, particularly in the areas of bycatch, sharks and stock assessment issues, through our Sub-committee on Ecosystems and Bycatch, the Shark Species Group, as well as the WGSAM. Specifically, it would be desirable for ICES scientific experts to continue to participate in ICCAT shark stock assessments, as well as in the Working Group on Stock Assessment Methods.

The ICES/ICCAT north-eastern porbeagle stock assessment was scheduled for 2020, however due to the impact of the pandemic on ICES activities, this joint assessment was postponed. The Secretariat was recently informed on the ICES plans for North-eastern porbeagle stock assessment, which includes a data evaluation workshop between 29 November to 3 December 2021 and the assessment workshop to be held 7-11 March 2022. Since ICCAT was only notified of these meetings after the 2021 SCRS Plenary, these meetings were not included in the SCRS schedule for 2022. Accordingly, there are currently ongoing discussions with ICES to seek the possible engagement of ICCAT scientists in the north-eastern porbeagle stock assessment, which includes a Data Preparatory meeting in late 2021, a benchmark meeting in March 2022 and an assessment meeting by mid-June 2022.

FAO Common Oceans/ABNJ Tuna Project

At the 2019 ICCAT Commission meeting, it was decided to continue to cooperate with this programme provided that there are benefits to ICCAT. To this end, in 2021, the ICCAT Secretariat worked together with the coordination team of the FAO Common Oceans/ABNJ Tuna Project and ABNJ Project aiming drafting four proposals to be considered at the Phase II of the project.

Accordingly, the four proposals were finalised and submitted to FAO Common Oceans/ABNJ Tuna Project and ABNJ Project (Phase II), . These will support several activities and have direct benefits to ICCAT and ICCAT's members, including: i) improving compliance with ICCAT conservation and management measures; ii) enhancing the ICCAT Integrated Online Management System (IOMS); iii) testing ecosystem based indicators and management policies; and, iv) supporting harmonization of commonalities shared by t-RFMOs (e.g., observer or Electronic Monitoring Systems data, Harvest Strategies /Management Strategic Evaluation, FAD, bycatch, etc.).

The Secretariat is committing a total of \$US 5,165,025 over a 5-year period for in-kind co-finance for ABNJ Tuna II, which is in line with the commitment made for ABNJ Tuna I. The total amount to be funded by GEF is of \$US 1,503,030. More details are provided in document PLE-108/21.

General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM)

Following the contacts established in 2019 aiming to further strengthen the cooperation between the GFCM and ICCAT, the two Secretariats worked on a draft text of a Memorandum of Understanding, mainly relating to issues of common interest. That draft text was submitted to the 2019 Commission, which adopted it with amendments. This adopted text was provided to the GFCM, which later notified the Secretariat of some legal *language* issues. This feedback from the GFCM was circulated to ICCAT CPCs in 2020 and some CPCs expressed concerns with the changes in the language. Given that these concerns remain to date in the absence of the expected discussions as foreseen by the Commission last year, and considering the virtual format of this meeting, after consultation with the CPCs who had made comments, it is proposed to resume these discussions at the 2022 annual meeting.

In 2021 ICCAT Secretariat attended the CoC - Working group on VMS and related controls system (WGVMS), held online 20 May. GFCM proposed a technical cooperation with ICCAT on Regional VMS Systems, via a pilot VMS, aiming to learn from ICCAT VMS' experience. In the absence of a formal operational mechanism of cooperation between the two organisations, during the 2021 IMM meeting it was agreed to share the ICCAT experience with the GFCM, as far as non-confidential information is concerned. As a result, a set of information of the VMS was shared with the GFCM.

Inter-American Sea Turtle Convention (IAC)

In 2019 the Inter-American Sea Turtle Convention (IAC) informed the Secretariat that IAC Parties had adopted that year a Resolution (CIT-COP9-2019-R2) on the Conservation of Northwest Atlantic Leatherbacks, which includes a recommendation to the IAC Secretariat to resume dialogue with the ICCAT Secretariat and Parties, to establish a memorandum of understanding to improve our cooperation, and provide technical support to the Parties through implementation of the relevant resolutions of both organizations. IAC informed the Commission in 2019 in Palma of this intention to have an MoU.

Following the contacts established in 2019, the two Secretariats have been working on a draft text for a Memorandum of Understanding, which is now being presented to ICCAT CPCs for discussion at the 2021 Commission meeting in 2021, as Appendix 1 to this document.

ISSF

The International Seafood Sustainability Foundation (ISSF) continues providing the ICCAT Secretariat with detailed catches (by vessel trip, species, and commercial size category) for all purchases made ISSF participating companies. These correspond to unloading of Atlantic catches from tropical tunas (bigeye, yellowfin, and skipjack) and albacore to canneries around the world. In 2021, the ISSF financed a short-term Project aiming to treat, validate and store in a relational database the information received by ICCAT between 2010 and 2020 (about 1,400 quarterly reports). This project used the IOTC Secretariat software specially developed to handle the cannery reports reported to ICCAT and IOTC. An expert was hired at full-time (Nathalie Bodin) to work on the project. The preliminary results of this work were presented on document SCRS/2021/064 to the SCRS Tropical Tunas Species Group. The SCRS considered very promising the preliminary results and recommended its continuity into the future. The ICCAT Secretariat thanked ISSF for this project and its commitment with ICCAT in support of the best scientific advice.

OSPAR

Following previous contacts in 2019, the Secretariat was recently informed that the OSPAR Commission designated the 'North Atlantic Current and Evlanov Sea basin MPA' (NACES MPA) at its Ministerial Meeting which took place 1 October 2021. The NACES MPA, which covers nearly 600,000 km², is designed to protect a vitally important foraging area for seabirds, many species of which are in serious decline across the North-East Atlantic. Designation of the MPA in the Area Beyond National Jurisdiction of the OSPAR maritime area was done through OSPAR Decision 2021/01 on the establishment of the North Atlantic Current and Evlanov Sea basin Marine Protected Area, which is legally binding for the Contracting Parties to OSPAR. The Decision comes into effect 200 days after its adoption, i.e., on 19 April 2022.

Western Central Atlantic Fisheries Commission (WECAFC)

In 2019, the two Secretariats worked on a draft text of a Memorandum of Understanding, mainly on issues of common interest. That draft text was submitted to the 2019 Commission, which adopted it with amendments. This adopted text was provided to the WECAFC which later notified the Secretariat of some legal language issues. This feedback regarding language changes from the WECAFC was circulated to ICCAT CPCs in 2020 and some CPCs had concerns with these new changes. Those CPCs wished the text to be re-tabled at the Commission and suggested that alternative avenues be explored in the event that a text cannot be agreed for a formal MoU. Similar to the GFCM, the discussions on the language issue will resume at the 2022 annual meeting.

In 2021, upon a request from WECAFC, the Secretariat and four SCRS invited shark experts reviewed and commented the first draft of the Regional Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks and Rays (RPOA) in the WECAFC Area. Later, the ICCAT Secretariat and two of the SCRS shark experts attended the *2nd (Virtual) meeting of the WECAFC/CITES/OSPESCA/CRFM/CFMC Working Group on Shark Conservation and Management* (20-22 October). The Secretariat provided two presentations:

- 1) Overview of the ICCAT fisheries catching pelagic sharks and major research lines of the ICCAT Shark Research and Data Collection Program;
- 2) Status of the shark stocks and current conservation and management of sharks in ICCAT.

A Task Force was established which would work to deliver the final WECAFC Regional Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks and Rays in the WECAFC Area. It was agreed that ICCAT Secretariat and SCRS shark experts would continue supporting WECAFC in this regard.

Tuna Compliance Network (TCN)

No in-person meeting of the Tuna Compliance Network could be held in 2021. However, two online meetings between the officers responsible for compliance and the network coordinator and consultant were held to advance the Compliance Assessment Study Report, financed by FAO and carried out by an external consultant. The draft report is in the process of being finalised, and it has been agreed that a second study be carried out to carry out a comparative assessment of compliance reviews in t-RFMOs.

The network had established a sub-group with other non-tuna RFMOs for exchanging information on IUU lists which continues to be operative, but to date no easy way to incorporate the information into each RFMOs list has been developed, although ideas continue to be exchanged. The cross listing of IUU lists has become a major task and creates similar challenges for all RFMOs involved in cross listing.