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## **The Pew Charitable Trusts’ Opening Statement to Panel 2 November 2021**

Panel 2 has several pieces of important business that must be addressed this year. The Panel and the SCRS have both completed substantial intersessional work since the last ICCAT Commission meeting, and there are now several items ready for final decision making and adoption. To continue progress on these issues and achieve final adoption of measures that will help to ensure sustainability of bluefin and albacore fisheries, The Pew Charitable Trusts urges PA2 to prioritize the following:

- **Adopt a western bluefin total allowable catch that is no higher than 2,444 t.** The results of this year’s western Atlantic bluefin stock assessment were substantially different than the 2020 results. Fortunately, the reduction adopted in Recommendation 20-06 no longer appears necessary. Unfortunately, changes to the assessment model led to substantial uncertainty in the results, and an independent review that was expressly requested by PA2 and the Commission concluded that it should not be used to guide management. The SCRS therefore encouraged precaution when setting a TAC for 2022. The most precautionary of three additional analyses they conducted concluded that a 4% increase from the 2021 TAC to 2,444 t would be acceptable. This should be the maximum TAC increase that PA2 considers this year.
- **Adopt proposal [PA2-613](#) to implement a fully specified management procedure (MP) for north Atlantic albacore.** PA2 adopted ICCAT’s first ever harvest control rule (HCR) when it adopted Recommendation 17-04 in 2017. PA2-613 expands the existing HCR to an MP and adds an exceptional circumstances protocol. This Recommendation would implement ICCAT’s first fully specified MP and ensure ICCAT is keeping up with other tuna RFMOs on adoption of robust MPs to guide future management.
- **Endorse the SCRS workplan and meeting schedule to complete the management strategy evaluation (MSE) for Atlantic bluefin and adopt a management procedure in 2022.** The SCRS has informed PA2 and ICCAT that an Atlantic bluefin MSE will be completed in 2022, after a series of final consultations with managers and stakeholders. The scientists will also produce a final set of candidate MPs for the Panel’s consideration. To ensure this process will be finalized without further delay, PA2 should endorse the SCRS work plan and meeting schedule for next year, including delaying the eastern assessment until 2023. MP adoption will help to overcome the ongoing problems associated with the eastern and western stock assessments, and an MP will introduce a new era of sustainability and prolific fisheries for this valuable species.
- **Adopt proposal [PA2-610](#) to implement a rebuilding program for Mediterranean albacore.** The stock status requires a recovery plan, and Pew acknowledges the efforts of the EU to ensure the population will return to a sustainable level.