



28.11.2024

## MISSION REPORT

following the delegation of the Committee on Fisheries to the 24th Special Meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), Limassol, Cyprus, 14-17 November 2024

Committee on Fisheries

Members of the mission:

Thomas Bajada

(S&D)

## Introduction

The International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) held its 24th Special Meeting from 11 to 18 November 2024 in Limassol, Cyprus, attended by delegates from Contracting Parties (CPC), Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties, Intergovernmental Organisations and Non-Governmental Organisations.

Thomas Bajada (S&D, MT) of the PECH Committee participated in the ICCAT meetings as part of the official EU Delegation led by Mr. Stijn BILLIET, Head of Unit for Regional Fisheries Management Organizations in DG MARE, marking the 13th participation of Members of the European Parliament attending an ICCAT Annual Meeting since the Treaty of Lisbon came into force.

As part of the official mission, MEP Bajada was given a debrief by the Head of the EU Delegation on the ongoing negotiations. In view that 4 days of negotiations had already passed, the Head of the EU delegation gave an overview of what was achieved and the expected results. MEP Bajada remarked the importance of involvement of the European Parliament in the preparations for these negotiations, in view that most recommendations relate to fisheries management provisions that eventually require a co-decision process within the EU framework.

This was reiterated during a stakeholders meeting organised by the EU delegation for all the stakeholders that joined the delegation for the ICCAT Annual Meeting. MEP Bajada spoke to several stakeholders present, in particular those coming from the outermost regions who were vociferous on the need for quotas for their artisanal fleet. MEP Bajada joined their calls and took the opportunity to call on the Council to dedicate quotas for artisanal fleets in outermost regions during the upcoming AGRIFISH Council, in view of the failed negotiations at ICCAT.

Furthermore, MEP Bajada held a meeting with the Chair of ICCAT, Mr Ernesto PENAS LADO, who welcomed the European Parliament's present at ICCAT and called on the Parliament to remain steadfast in its efforts to ensure sustainable management of fisheries across the globe.

## 24th Special Meeting of ICCAT - main results

ICCAT convened in Limassol to take decisions on the regulation of fisheries including adopting a **new management measure for tropical tunas**, implementing two new **Candidate Management Procedures (CMPs) for northern Atlantic swordfish and western skipjack**, as well as planning a new **Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) process for southern Atlantic albacore and Atlantic blue shark**.

ICCAT evaluated the results of the 2024 workplan, together with the current status of application of the regulatory measures in force and to establish the conservation and management measures for the future. In 2024, full scientific stock assessments were carried out for three species: **yellowfin tuna** (*Thunnus alacares*), **blue marlin** (*Makaira nigricans*), a common billfish in artisanal and commercial fisheries, and **Mediterranean albacore**.

In total, **15 new Recommendations** and **2 Resolutions** were adopted covering relevant issues on Atlantic tuna and tuna-like species conservation and fisheries management.

**Bigeye and yellowfin tuna:** An agreement was reached for a new increased TAC of 73,011 t for bigeye tuna (EU share: 13,576 t), including 6,100 t for small harvesters. The TAC for yellowfin tuna remains at 110,000 t. In addition, a 45-day fishing closure (from 17 March to 30 April) was agreed, as well as the limitation on the use of FADs (288 per fishing vessel starting in 2026).

**Western skipjack, northern Atlantic swordfish and southern Atlantic albacore:** The adopted CMPs aim to set the TAC for 2026 and beyond for western skipjack, and set a TAC of 14,769 t for northern Atlantic swordfish for the period 2025-2027. The Commission further agreed on Operational Management Objectives for southern Atlantic albacore.

**Southern Atlantic albacore, northern and southern Atlantic blue shark:** New MSE processes to start in 2025 for all species.

**Whale sharks and mobulid rays:** ICCAT confirmed the full entry into force of Recommendations for the conservation of both species (Rec. 23-12 and 23-14 respectively) no later than 1 July 2025, which prohibit these species being retained on board, transhipped, or landed, in whole or in part.

**Bluefin tuna and Mediterranean albacore:** The Commission agreed to amend the BFT Multi-annual Management Plan in the eastern Atlantic and the Mediterranean, namely on aspects regarding BFT farming as well as the management and control measures for BFT produced through aquaculture using artificially hatched fries. It also agreed to an amendment to the rebuilding plan for Mediterranean albacore accommodating Algerian and Tunisian fisheries needs.

**Conservation and management:** ICCAT adopted Recommendations on protecting the health and safety of observers in CPC observer programmes, on transshipment operations and for aquaculture of bluefin tuna.

**Compliance:** The Compliance Committee (COC) reviewed the implementation of ICCAT requirements by the Contracting Parties and Cooperators (CPCs) and gathered input from CPCs to identify longer-term priorities for inclusion in the COC strategic plan. The Commission also agreed to seek to reduce the current data reporting burden and streamline Compliance Committee documents where feasible.

**Election and representation of ICCAT representatives:** The Commission consolidated the process for electing its representatives, clarifying it further to take greater account of the concerns of its members and to ensure fair and balanced representation of all interests - developed and developing States, geographical balance and gender balance.

### **Full list of ICCAT Recommendations and Resolutions adopted**

- Recommendation by ICCAT on continuing to enhance the dialogue between fisheries scientists and managers
- Recommendation by ICCAT on the application of the Integrated Online Management

## System (IOMS)

- Recommendation by ICCAT amending Recommendation 22-16 amending Recommendation 21-18 on the application of the eBCD system
- Recommendation by ICCAT on aquaculture bluefin tuna
- Recommendation by ICCAT on protecting the health and safety of observers in CPC observer programs
- Recommendation by ICCAT amending Recommendation 21-15 on transshipment
- Recommendation by ICCAT replacing Recommendation 22-01 on a multi-annual conservation and management programme for tropical tunas
- Resolution by ICCAT on interim operational management objectives for Atlantic bigeye tuna, yellowfin tuna, and the eastern stock of skipjack tuna
- Recommendation by ICCAT to replace Recommendation 23-02 on Brazil's bigeye tuna payback plan
- Recommendation by ICCAT on a candidate management procedure for western Atlantic skipjack tuna
- Recommendation by ICCAT amending the Recommendation 22-08 establishing a multi-annual management plan for bluefin tuna in the eastern Atlantic and the Mediterranean
- Recommendation by ICCAT amending Recommendation 23-08 for a pilot project for farming bluefin tuna (*Thunnus thynnus*) in the Cantabrian Sea
- Recommendation by ICCAT to amend the Recommendation 22-05 to establish a rebuilding plan for Mediterranean albacore
- Resolution by ICCAT on development of initial operational management objectives for southern Atlantic albacore
- Recommendation by ICCAT on conservation and management measures, including a management procedure, for North Atlantic swordfish
- Recommendation by ICCAT for catch limits for Mediterranean swordfish
- Recommendation by ICCAT replacing Recommendation 23-14 on mobulid rays (family Mobulidae) caught in association with ICCAT fisheries

**Link to all ICCAT 2024 documents:** <https://www.iccat.int/com2024/index.htm#en>

## **ICCAT background**

The International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (“the Commission”) is responsible for the conservation of tunas and tuna-like species in the Atlantic Ocean and adjacent seas. It was established in 1969, at a Conference of Plenipotentiaries, which prepared and adopted the International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas.

The Commission may be joined by any government that is a member of the United Nations (UN), any specialised UN agency, or any inter-governmental economic integration organization constituted by States that have transferred to it competence over the matters governed by the ICCAT Convention.

Instruments of ratification, approval, or adherence may be deposited with the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and membership is effective on the date of such deposit.

Through the Convention it is established that ICCAT is the only fisheries organisation that can undertake the range of work required for the study and management of tunas and tuna like fishes in the Atlantic. Such studies include research on biometry, ecology, and oceanography, with a principal focus on the effects of fishing on stock abundance. The Commission's work requires the collection and analysis of statistical information relative to current conditions and trends of the fishery resources in the Convention area.

The Commission also undertakes work in the compilation of data for other fish species that are caught during tuna fishing (by-catch, principally sharks) in the Convention area, and which are not investigated by another international fishery organisation.

About 30 species are of direct concern to ICCAT. It develops scientific-based management advice; provides a mechanism for contracting parties to agree on management measures; coordinates research, including stock assessment, on behalf of its members; compiles fishery statistics from its members and from all entities fishing for these species in the Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean; and produces relevant publications.

Currently, there are 53 contracting parties, including the EU and France (on behalf of St Pierre and Miquelon). Composed of Contracting Party Delegations, the Commission carries out the objectives set forth in the 1966 International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas.



*MEP Thomas Bajada with Ernesto Penas Lado, Chair of the ICCAT Commission*

# PROGRAMME

**European Parliament**

2024 - 2029



## **24th Special Meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) Limassol, Cyprus - 14-17 November 2024**

### **Accommodation:**

#### **Hotel St Raphael Resort**

Address: Amathus Avenue 502, 4534, Pyrgos, Limassol, Cyprus  
Telephone: +357 25 834200

### **ICCAT meeting venue:**

#### **Parklane Resort & Spa**

Address: Giannou Kranidioti 11, 4534 Limassol, Cyprus  
Telephone: +357-25-862000

## **THURSDAY 14 NOVEMBER 2024**

### **TRAVEL DAY**

Individual travel to Larnaca International Airport and transfer to the hotel

## **FRIDAY 15 NOVEMBER 2024**

08.45 - 09.00 Accreditation at ICCAT Welcome Desk

09:00 - 09:30 Debriefing by the Head of EU Delegation on ongoing negotiations to the PECH Committee delegation

09.00 - 10.30 Attendance of the Compliance Committee meeting

11.00 - 13.00 Attendance of Panel 4 meeting  
*Other species (swordfish, billfishes, small tunas)*

13.00 - 14.30 Lunch break

14:30-15:00 EU delegation meeting with stakeholders

15:00-15:30 Meeting with ICCAT Commission Chair Ernesto Penas Lado

16.30 - 18.00 Attendance of Panel 2 meeting  
*Northern temperate tunas (albacore and Atlantic bluefin)*

19.00 - 20.30 Attendance of Panel 1 meeting  
*Tropical tunas (yellowfin, bigeye and skipjack)*

Individual dinner arrangements

## **SATURDAY 16 NOVEMBER 2024**

09.00 - 10.30 Attendance of the Compliance Committee meeting

11.00 - 13.00 Attendance of the Permanent Working Group for the improvement of ICCAT  
Statistics and Conservation Measures / Panel 3 meeting  
*Southern temperate tunas (albacore and southern bluefin)*

13.00 - 14.30 Lunch break

14.30 - 16.00 Attendance of Panel 2 meeting  
*Northern temperate tunas (albacore and Atlantic bluefin)*

16.30 - 18.00 Attendance of Panel 1 meeting  
*Tropical tunas (yellowfin, bigeye and skipjack)*

Individual dinner arrangements

## **SUNDAY 17 NOVEMBER 2024**

### **TRAVEL DAY**

Individual transfers to Larnaca International Airport and return flights