



Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism

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**REPORTS OF MEETINGS OF THE CRFM  
PELAGIC FISHERIES WORKING GROUP (CRFM-  
PWG) ON THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION  
FOR THE CONSERVATION OF ATLANTIC  
TUNAS (ICCAT) FOR THE  
BIENNIAL PERIOD 2020-2021**

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CRFM Secretariat  
2021

# CRFM Technical & Advisory Document - Number 2021/ 18

## **Reports of Meetings of the CRFM Pelagic Fisheries Working Group (CRFM-PWG) on the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) for the Biennial Period 2020-2021**

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CRFM Secretariat  
Belize, 2021

# **CRFM TECHNICAL & ADVISORY DOCUMENT – Number 2021 / 18**

Reports of Meetings of the CRFM Pelagic Fisheries Working Group (CRFM-PWG) on the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) for the Biennial Period 2020-2021

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## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CARICOM	Caribbean Community
COC	Compliance Committee
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease
CPC	Contracting Parties and Cooperating non-Contracting Parties, Entities or Fishing Entities
CPUE	Catch Per Unit Effort
CRFM	Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism
CRFM-PWG	CRFM Pelagic Working Group
DED	Deputy Executive Director
eBCD	Electronic Bluefin Tuna Catch Documentation system
EU	European Union
FAD	Fish Aggregating Device
FLBEIA	Bio-Economic Impact Assessment using FLR
GFCM	General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean
HCR	Harvest Control Rule
ICCAT	International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas
ICCAT-PWG	Permanent Working Group for Improvement of ICCAT Statistics and Conservation Measures
IOMS	Integrated Online Monitoring System
IUU	Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing
LOA	Length Overall
LSPLV	Large Scale Pelagic Longline Vessel
MCS	Monitoring, Control and Surveillance
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSE	Management Strategy Evaluation
NEAFC	North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
RFMO	Regional Fisheries Management Organization
ROP	Regional Observer Program
SCRS	Standing Committee on Research and Statistics
STACFAD	Standing Committee on Finance and Administration
SVG	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
TAC	Total Allowable Catch
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States
WECAFC	Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission
WG-TOR	Online Reporting Technology Working Group

# **CRFM PELAGIC FISHERIES WORKING GROUP (CRFM PWG) REPORT OF NINTH MEETING ON ICCAT**

**Virtual Meeting, 20 November 2020**

## **1. REGISTRATION OF ATTENDANCE**

The list of participants is given in Appendix 1.

## **2. OPENING AND PRAYER**

The CRFM Secretariat's Deputy Executive Director, Dr. Susan Singh-Renton, who served as Chairperson, called the Meeting to order at 1:07 p.m. and offered a short Prayer. The Chairperson advised the Meeting that although the SCRS and Commission meetings for 2020 had been cancelled due to COVID-19, ICCAT discussions were still ongoing and it was important to keep abreast of the discussions and the decisions. The Chairperson also advised that the Meeting was being recorded.

The Meeting's Agenda was reviewed and adopted without change. The Agenda is given in Appendix 2.

The Chairperson said that there were two substantive items on the Agenda, unless other items were raised under any other business. Participants, all of whom were ICCAT CPCs (Contracting Parties and Cooperating non-Contracting Parties, Entities or Fishing Entities) would already be aware, having received ICCAT correspondences directly, that the face-to-face SCRS and Commission meetings for 2020 had been cancelled. However, the ICCAT Commission had some updated SCRS advice and there was a number of issues which the Commission considered essential business, some of which it was trying to address via correspondence. Issues for which there was no consensus or which were considered too difficult to address through correspondence would be addressed during face-to-face meetings in 2021. There have been a number of deadlines in terms of the circulation of the correspondence. CRFM Secretariat was not in receipt of all the correspondences, but was able to download for review those documents that had been made publicly available on the ICCAT website. The different bodies of ICCAT; Permanent Working Group (ICCAT PWG), Compliance Committee (COC), the various Panels, as well as the Standing Committee on Finance and Administration (STACFAD), have been conducting discussions via correspondence and there had been a flurry of correspondences, statements and positions on the various proposals. For item 3 (Review of National Data and National Report Submissions, including Responses to ICCAT letters), the Chairperson proposed that the Meeting look at the issues raised by the Permanent Working Group for Improvement of ICCAT Statistics and Conservation Measures and issues for the Conservation and Management Measures Compliance Committee. For item 4 (Review of ICCAT 2020 Proposals for Amending ICCAT Measures, and Related Developments), the Meeting should review and discuss the recommendations proposed by the various panels and STACFAD.

The Chairperson presented this item. She said that the Compliance Committee (COC) had circulated a number of documents. These included reference documents, statements made by countries and the main document of the COC, the compliance summary by country. Some countries had been sent letters regarding their compliance based on the 2019 review. There was also a summary of which non-contracting parties had provided responses to ICCAT. Three CRFM Members States that were non-contracting parties had received letters and two had responded. There was also a summary table for review of cooperating party status, which included Suriname and Guyana. A transshipment paper, which contained an issue for SVG's attention as well as a US Statement with queries for Belize and SVG were circulated.

The EU submitted a statement that questioned some issues with certain countries, and some clarification was sought from Guyana regarding their cooperating status, renewal of which was not automatic. The US had submitted some IUU information.

### **3. REVIEW OF NATIONAL DATA AND REPORT SUBMISSIONS, INCLUDING RESPONSES TO ICCAT LETTERS**

#### **3.1 Compliance summary by country**

*Barbados* – Had been written to about potential non-compliance issues in 2020. Barbados acknowledged receipt of the letter and had indicated that they would provide a response by 30 October 2020, however, it was unclear if this had been done. There were some over harvesting issues, and differences between Task I and the compliance tables had been identified.

The Chairperson remarked that the COC was paying close attention to these differences in the reported information (Task I and compliance tables), as well as the ratio of main catch to what was reported as bycatch.

*Belize* – No issues were noted.

*Grenada* – Had a number of compliance issues. Grenada has been a member of ICCAT for just about two years and had submitted their annual reports. However, Grenada had not submitted statistical data and compliance tables for about three or four years. In keeping with Rec. 11-15, if a country did not report catch in one year, then that country was prevented from taking any catches (i.e., allocated a catch limit =0) in the following year.

*St. Vincent and the Grenadines* – There were delays in the scheduling of the national observer program and the national report and statistical data for 2019 were submitted late due to an administrative oversight. Compliance tables were also submitted late, and there was an issue with overharvest of white marlin and possible overharvest of South Atlantic swordfish. Differences between Task I and compliance tables were also noted.

The Chairperson queried of the SVG participants if a letter concerning these issues had been received from ICCAT. It was confirmed that a letter had been received and SVG had responded. The Chairperson highlighted the importance of maintaining dialogue with ICCAT, and cautioned against repeated late submissions, as ICCAT looked at the record of compliance.

*Trinidad & Tobago* – The annual report and statistical data (Task 2) were submitted late. Domestic observer program had not yet commenced. Legal, administrative and MCS frameworks had been submitted to the Cabinet for consideration.

The Chairperson remarked that the information reflected seemed quite recent and sought confirmation from Trinidad and Tobago as to whether they had received and responded to a letter from ICCAT. Trinidad and Tobago confirmed this and advised that the information reflected in the table was not exactly what was stated in their response. With regard to the observer program, a status (i.e., before the Parliament) on the Bill to demonstrate its forward movement was provided. The statement with regard Task 2 data was an error. Trinidad and Tobago had submitted the data, but was asked to do a revision in relation to the species codes, and this was perhaps the cause of the confusion. Trinidad and Tobago will write to ICCAT regarding this. The Chairperson reiterated the need to maintain dialogue with ICCAT and also for countries to check the tables to ensure their data were correctly reflected.

*UK OTs* – No potential compliance issues were noted for 2020. The UK was now a member of ICCAT.

*Guyana* – No compliance tables were submitted, and an incomplete annual report was submitted.

The Chairperson advised the Meeting that CRFM Secretariat had received a copy of a letter from ICCAT to Guyana on 20 November 2020, regarding the issues noted as these had implications for renewal of Guyana’s status. The correspondence was forwarded to Guyana and receipt was acknowledged.

*Suriname* – No issues were noted.

The Chairperson referred to a meeting on shrimp and groundfish in which she recently participated, and said that Suriname, in presenting its plan at that meeting, had indicated that Suriname had 40 longline vessels, and sought confirmation as to whether Suriname had catches to report this year, as well as for 2019. The Suriname representative said that they did not have any catches to report for this year or 2019 and explained that Suriname did not have its own tuna fleet; foreign vessels, registered to Panama and Belize, were landing their tuna in Suriname. The Chairperson further queried if Suriname was paying attention to the statistics that Belize and Panama were reporting to ICCAT. By way of response, the Suriname representative said that Belize and Panama shared the same data they submitted to ICCAT with Suriname and Suriname also submitted this data to ICCAT using the access agreement form. There was no written agreement neither between Belize and Suriname nor between Panama and Suriname, but ICCAT had advised that where there was no written agreement, the access agreement form should be completed and information on how permission was granted to the vessels to land their catches in Suriname’s waters provided. ICCAT was aware of the situation. The Chairperson remarked that there appeared to be no independent check on the catch by Suriname, but assumed that this was not an issue as the vessels were registered and authorized by their country and were also included on ICCAT’s list of authorized vessels. This was confirmed by Suriname. Given Suriname’s situation, its cooperating status should be renewed.

### 3.1.1 Information for review of Cooperating status

*Suriname* – No flagged vessels, hence had a zero catch.

*Guyana* - An incomplete annual report had been submitted and zero catch reported.

The EU had submitted a Statement on Renewal of Cooperating Status in which concern was expressed about the lack of cooperation in submitting annual reports or submitting incomplete annual reports. The EU also requested further clarification on the “zero catches” reported. The EU further stated that it “strongly believes that unless there was a clear commitment on respecting the duties impending on a cooperating non-contracting party, membership should not be automatically renewed”.

### 3.1.2 US questions and comments related to specific CPCs’ compliance matters

*Belize* – The US was paying very close attention to what countries were taking on longlines and the amount of information reported regarding catches of marlins and spearfish, which were incidental catches in the longline fishery. The US noted the lack of Task I data on blue marlin, white marlin and roundscale spearfish and was seeking clarification on this from Belize.

*St. Vincent and the Grenadines* – The issue of an at-sea encounter between two vessels flagged to SVG was raised. One vessel appeared to be a carrier vessel and the other a longline vessel; it was thought that transshipment at sea was taking place, but the encounter was not reported through the Regional Observer Program (ROP). The US noted that this was the second time such activity had been reported, and requested additional information from SVG on the rules it had in place and the steps it took to monitor potential transshipment activities of its flagged vessels. This encounter was also cited in the PEW paper, which had mentioned loitering activities.

The SVG participants in the Meeting were unaware of this issue but undertook to look into it.



### 3.1.3 Letters from non-contracting parties

*St. Kitts and Nevis* – ICCAT had requested information on the fisheries management regime. The Secretariat had contacted St. Kitts and Nevis about this, but they had not yet responded.

*Dominica* – Received a letter and had responded, however, Dominica’s response was not reflected in the table, despite ICCAT having acknowledged receipt. This oversight was brought to ICCAT’s attention and it was expected that an updated table would be posted.

*Saint Lucia* – Received a letter and had responded. St. Lucia’s reply was registered as received at ICCAT on 12 October 2020.

## **3.2 Permanent Working Group for Improvement of ICCAT Statistics and Conservation Measures**

The Permanent Working Group for Improvement of ICCAT Statistics and Conservation Measures (ICCAT PWG) focused on improvement of reporting of statistical data and improvement of conservation measures. Instruments, tools, and methods that improved statistics and the application of conservation methods was the subject of this group. The PWG also developed the IUU list for ICCAT. Some CRFM Member States appeared on the IUU list, either as a previous flag or an owner. In developing the IUU list, there were some correspondences about the vessels *Mario* and *Sage*, however these had to do with Senegal and Gambia; and perhaps not of particular interest to CRFM Member States.

Trinidad and Tobago informed the meeting that Trinidad and Tobago had been contacted by various agencies involved in investigating IUU fishing with regard to these two and other vessels because they had been identified as using the ports in Trinidad and Tobago. All available information on these vessels’ activities was provided to the respective agencies. These requests were being made of Trinidad as it was a port state which many IUU fishing vessels tended to visit.

### IUU list 2020

The Chairperson drew the Meeting’s attention to the IUU list and specifically to a vessel, *Southern Star 136*, and noted that it was formerly registered under SVG; the current flag, as was the case for many IUU vessels, was unknown; and the owner/operator’s address was Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. It was unclear if the situation of the owner/operator’s address being listed as Trinidad and Tobago would have implications for that country. Reference was made to ICCAT’s request of Chinese Taipei to examine what that country could do under its law with regard to its vessels operating elsewhere, since Chinese Taipei had legislation which did not support its vessels being flagged by other countries. Perhaps, Trinidad’s laws could be examined to determine if there was any legislation that might help to address the issue noted above. There was a number of vessels previously flagged by Belize for which there was no information on the current flags. The vessel *Asian Warrior*, previously flagged by SVG, ownership of which was uncertain and which SVG may have been written to about, was shown as currently flagged by Equatorial Guinea. The Chairperson urged SVG to always advise ICCAT about their list of authorized vessels and also to share any deletions with ICCAT. Additionally, a vessel currently flagged to Belize was also of interest to another regional fisheries management organization, NEAFC; and St. Kitts and Nevis also appeared on the IUU list as the previous flag of the vessel *Alboran II*.

### Electronic Bluefin Tuna Catch Documentation (eBCD) system

The other big issue for the ICCAT PWG was the continuation of the eBCD system, which dealt mostly with bluefin tuna, although there was a move towards electronic monitoring of other fisheries under ICCAT’s purview, for example, through an online process and possible digitizing of the statistical document programme for swordfish and bigeye. The Chairperson remarked that the implementation of these systems made it increasingly difficult for CRFM Member States to participate in these fisheries. ICCAT had intended to start implementation of the eBCD in this year but this had been deferred.

### Plenary

With regard to cooperation with other organizations and MOUs, ICCAT was working on a cooperation arrangement with GFCM, the regional fishery body in the Mediterranean, and WECAFC. WECAFC had attended the last ICCAT Meeting in 2019 and had sought formal cooperation with ICCAT. An MOU with WECAFC will be developed in 2021. All the recommendations from Compliance, ICCAT PWG and the various Panels came to Plenary, and the Plenary discussions were still evolving as the discussions on some of the Panels, such as Panel 2 on bluefin and Panel 4 on North Atlantic Shortfin Mako, were still ongoing. With regard to the shortfin mako, it was noted that there was no consensus, so the issues would be discussed at a meeting in July 2021; the existing shortfin mako measure will remain in place.

## **4. REVIEW OF ICCAT 2020 PROPOSALS FOR AMENDING ICCAT MEASURES, AND RELATED DEVELOPMENTS**

### **4.1 Panel 1**

*Bigeye tuna /Tropical tunas Panel* - Bigeye tuna catch limits were to be renegotiated in 2020. ICCAT Secretariat was asked to calculate catch limits for countries, but a few countries disagreed with the catch limits estimated by ICCAT Secretariat. Senegal and South Africa expressed concern that the EU catch limit was over 2000 t higher than it should be. Additionally, Guatemala and Panama were still waiting for higher limits, but according to the measure these limits cannot be increased as yet, and the countries involved have expressed concern about this. Document PA1-502 (catch limits) and PA1-503 (extension of the provisions) were referred; countries agreed to a rollover but were unhappy about the catch limits that had been calculated. South Africa and Senegal did not approve the catch limits because they did not reflect the intention of para. 4 of Rec 19-02, which dealt with the allocation key. Under para. 4, countries were categorized by recent catches (average catch over a certain number of years) and advised regarding levels of reduction, etc. However, there was no catch limit stated for countries with average catches below 1,000 t; these countries were just encouraged to maintain catch and effort at recent levels. South Africa and Senegal had proposed a new set of catch limits, which were presented in table 502A. The total allowable catch (TAC) for bigeye tuna for 2020 was 62,500 t and 61,500 t for 2021, however, if the allocation key was strictly followed, the TAC would be surpassed. In the negotiations, countries were aware of this issue, but agreed that it was unlikely that all countries would harvest their recent catch and thus unlikely that the TAC would be surpassed.

The Chairperson pointed out that the TAC for bigeye tuna was in excess of the TAC advised by the SCRS. Also, table 502A (South Africa/Senegal proposed limits) will be resubmitted to the Commission for review and adoption by correspondence. There have been no objections to this so far. 503A was the draft supplemental recommendation to amend the 19-02. The proposed amendments were related to paragraphs 4, 8, 18, 60 and 67 all of which were to be amended to read 2021 instead of 2020. In relation to paragraph 67, the term ‘*catch verification mechanisms*’ was noted and it was queried if this was in relation to electronic monitoring and it was opined that this was probably in relation to the observer programs, as well as monitoring of FADs.

### **4.2 Panel 2**

*Bluefin tuna (Western and Eastern Atlantic stocks)* – The bluefin tuna discussions were still ongoing. No CRFM Member State fished bluefin tuna.

*Northern albacore* – (606B & 607B) – Based on SCRS advice, an increase in TAC was allowed and a pro-rata increase of catch and other limits was proposed, which included even CPCs without a formal limit, whose annual catch was increased from 215t to 242t. Japan’s annual bycatch limit was also increased from 4% to 4.5%. Year adjustments for dealing with overages and underages were also

included in the recommendation. There were two recommendations on Northern albacore; a main recommendation that dealt with catch limits, reporting conditions, authorizations, etc., and a supplemental recommendation that dealt with the HCR, which was kept separate. The two recommendations would be consolidated into one at the 2021 Commission meeting. In both recommendations, it was indicated that the pro-rata increase was not to be a precedent. In the HCR recommendation (PA2-607B) it was stated that a stock assessment should be done every 3 years; the next assessment would be in 2023. The allocation scheme for the top four harvesting countries was indicated and this will be reviewed and amended, as appropriate, at the 2021 Commission meeting. The HCR will also be reviewed in 2021.

In terms of the status of Panel 2 discussions, there was agreement on northern albacore, and both recommendations (606B & 607B) will go forward to the Plenary. Discussions on bluefin tuna were still evolving. There was likely to be a rollover and, for Western Atlantic bluefin there was likely to be agreement to redo the assessment in 2021. Canada may support an external expert to help with the assessment. There was also discussion on management strategy evaluation for both bluefin tuna stocks in 2021. For Eastern bluefin tuna there were two countries looking for increased catches and bi-lateral negotiations may be ongoing to try to incorporate additional requests for increased catches and agree on a rollover.

#### **4.3 Panel 3**

*South Atlantic albacore* – The terms of the 2016 recommendation have been extended to 2021. Belize and SVG had catch limits which were approved and can go over to 2021. Any carryover of underages should be indicated to the Chair of Panel 3 in writing. Japan was the only country that had advised of the underage that it intended to carry over. Particular attention should be paid to the adjustment year and the percentage of catch that could be carried over.

#### **4.4 Panel 4**

*North Atlantic Swordfish* – The adjustments were in relation to changing the year from 2020 to 2021.

*North Atlantic Shortfin mako* – The EU, US and Canada had put forward proposals, all of which were different. There was no consensus, hence the issues will be discussed at a meeting in 2021. The 2019 recommendation (Rec 19-06) remained in force.

There were no new recommendations for Panel 4. There were also no new assessments or recommendations for marlins.

#### **4.5 Standing Committee on Finance and Administration (STACFAD)**

There was a reallocation of money from the participation fund mainly to research. There were some requests from different countries to revise the conditions for the meeting participation fund. It was proposed to increase the number of delegates for the meetings. An increase to 6 delegates for the Commission was recommended as it was recognized that a multi-disciplinary delegation was needed. There were also requests for longer timeframes for completion of applications and securing travel visas.

The Strategic Research Program got an additional €250,000.00, which was transferred from the special meeting participation fund. With the membership of the UK as a category A country, there were changes to the contributions of the other parties. All CRFM Member States were classified as C countries.

The Chairperson queried if any of the CRFM Member States were in arrears to ICCAT. Both SVG and Trinidad and Tobago were unsure of the status of their payments to ICCAT and agreed to check.

With regards to the Plenary, the only additional issue was the cooperation with WECAFC, which will be dealt with more in 2021, but a decision had been made and the MOU would go forward.

## **5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business.

## **6. CLOSING AND ADJOURNMENT**

In closing the Chairperson urged Member States to pay attention to the ICCAT correspondences as they were received, particularly in this year as several issues were being dealt with via correspondence and deadlines were being provided for feedback. Also, the compliance tables, when they were finalized, should be examined to ensure that they correctly reflected countries' situations, and inaccuracies should be pointed out to ICCAT. The Chairperson thanked participants for their patience with the internet interruptions and for their time and attention and their contributions during the meeting and wished everyone a Happy Christmas. The Chairperson also acknowledged the participant from Anguilla, and invited her to address the meeting.

The Anguilla participant said that Anguilla was exploring development of its off-shore fishing sector and was interested to find out what was expected at the ICCAT level, so that when the fishery became active, Anguilla could be as compliant as possible. The Chairperson enquired about Anguilla being part of the UK membership and the Anguilla participant confirmed this. The Chairperson added that it would be good for Anguilla to have development plans/management plans as having these will help a country to be stronger in negotiations. She also pointed out that Panel 1 will have two virtual meetings in 2021, one meeting on bigeye tuna TAC and allocation key in February and the other on FAD limitation issue in April 2021. The Chairperson also used the opportunity to remind Member States, if they had not yet done so, to prepare and submit their swordfish plans to ICCAT.

The Chairperson again thanked all for their time and attention, and the meeting adjourned at 3:17 p.m.

**Appendix 1: PWG – Ninth Meeting on ICCAT**

**List of Participants**

<b>Name &amp; Designation</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Email Contact</b>
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**Appendix 2: CRFM PWG – Ninth Meeting on ICCAT  
Agenda**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Date &amp; Time (Eastern Caribbean Time)</b>
1	Meeting registration	12:30 – 1:00 p.m.
2	Opening and prayer	1:00 – 1:05 p.m.
3	Review of national data and report submissions, including responses to ICCAT letters	1:05 – 1:30 p.m.
4	Review of ICCAT 2020 proposals for amending ICCAT measures, and related developments	1:30 – 3:45 p.m.
5	Any Other Business	3:45 -3:55 p.m.
6	Closing and adjournment	3:55 – 4:00 p.m.

# **CRFM PELAGIC FISHERIES WORKING GROUP (CRFM PWG) REPORT OF TENTH MEETING ON ICCAT**

**Virtual Meeting, 11 June 2021**

## **1. REGISTRATION OF ATTENDANCE**

The list of participants is given in Appendix 1.

## **2. OPENING AND PRAYER**

The CRFM Secretariat's Deputy Executive Director (DED), Dr. Susan Singh-Renton, who served as Chairperson, called the Meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and offered a Prayer. The Chairperson welcomed all to the Meeting and said that it was a special meeting for her as it was her last PWG on ICCAT Meeting before demitting office at the end of the month. The Chairperson advised that she was being replaced by Dr. Sandra Grant, who would be stationed in Belize. Dr. Maren Headley would be responsible for ICCAT matters for the time being and will assume chairmanship of the PWG.

The Meeting's Agenda was reviewed and adopted without change. The Agenda is given in Appendix 2.

## **3. REVIEW AND DISCUSSION OF ICCAT INTERSESSIONAL REPORTS**

The Chairperson presented this item. She remarked that several CRFM Member States were now very familiar with ICCAT's reporting and compliance processes; report and data preparation; dealing with ICCAT on various issues, including allegations of IUU fishing; and conducting negotiations at the annual meetings. The number of CRFM States that had become members of ICCAT had grown, and CRFM States were now in a strong position as Member States were able to help each other. The Chairperson also reminded the Meeting that Member States could request CRFM Secretariat to convene meetings of the PWG to discuss ICCAT-related matters. She encouraged Member States to download and read the ICCAT reports, which were educational and instructive and could help, not only in enhancing understanding of ICCAT processes, but with other matters as well. The Chairperson advised that the reports of four intersessional meetings, which took place in the first quarter of 2021, were available on the ICCAT website and the Meeting will review these reports. There were also three proposals available, two of which were of interest to Member States and would be discussed at item 4.

### **3.1 Meeting of the Working Group for the development of an Integrated Online Monitoring System (IOMS), 16-18 February 2021**

Using the agenda for the meeting of the Online Reporting Technology Working Group (WG-TOR) for the development of an Integrated Online Monitoring System (IOMS) as a guide, the chairperson shared key information and recommendations from the meeting's report. ICCAT had adopted a recommendation for development of an integrated online reporting system, which the Chairperson explained was intended to capture data and information on implementation of various ICCAT measures, in addition to the usual data on fisheries (catch and effort), management plans, list of authorized vessels, capacity limitation reports, etc. The IOMS would also facilitate the work of the Compliance Committee as it would allow for easy evaluation of the levels of compliance with the various measures and to identify weaknesses. Work began in 2019; and the 2021 meeting gave a status update on the online system. A demonstration of the system



was given and practical exercises in data integration were undertaken at the Working Group meeting. There will also be an opportunity for ICCAT member states to receive training in the use of the system and to be involved in phase 2 - testing and validation. The Working Group meeting also looked at current ICCAT data requirements; reasons for accessing the online system – scientific purposes and as administrators; and harmonization of data entry, including the development of codes for use in the system. Additionally, the meeting considered revision of the work plan for phase 2, which had been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The EU was financing a *help* system (in the three ICCAT languages<sup>1</sup>) for the integrated online monitoring system and the meeting discussed the advantages of a standard help system; and also gave some attention to visibility of the system. The final version of the *help* system will have to be approved by the EU and there were plans to keep it updated. There was a prototyping period (before June 2019), which covered pilot studies, feasibility studies, and the development of working prototypes with different architectures, and functionality. This was followed by a development phase (after June 2019) in which the actual system was developed and it was being tested (certain modules) at present. ICCAT Members could contact ICCAT Secretariat directly to be involved in this process. More practical exercises were being planned for the coming months and a list of ‘*bugs*’ had already been started. There had also been discussions about filtering, querying and reporting. In terms of the work plan, it was expected that by August, countries would be able to use one of three approaches to submit the 2021 Annual Report (Part II / Section 3 and Part I /Annex) due by 15 September 2021: (i) entering data directly into the IOMS; (ii) using the export/import functions in the IOMS; and (iii) submit the report in the traditional manner. The WG-TOR noted the essential need for training in use of the IOMS and has identified low-cost virtual training options, including posting a video tutorial on the ICCAT website and hosting shorter live tutorials virtually to assist CPCs with submission of the 2021 Annual Report. The WG agreed on the virtual training workshop sessions and to complete phase 1 modules for the annual report and to release into production mode. Essentially, the IOMS was already being rolled out and will continue to be tested. The need for reporting rules and validation criteria to ensure quality and consistency of information entered into the system was also discussed. Priorities for the remaining phase included: addressing bugs and enhancements previously identified by the WG, developing additional modules (vessel manager, statistical documents (Task 1), compliance tables); and continued capacity building. The WG-TOR was concerned about the low levels of participation of CPCs in the WG and in providing input into development of the IOMS. The WG-TOR agreed to the issuing of another circular with additional information on the IOMS and inviting more CPCs to participate in testing of the system and to participate in the training workshop sessions.

### Discussion

Clarification was sought on the objective of the WG-TOR. The Chairperson shared that ICCAT, recognizing the increasing number of recommendations and regulations being adopted and the volume of information being submitted electronically via data forms, mandated the working group to develop an online system to which all data and information, including annual reports, could be submitted. Hence, all data and information reported to ICCAT will be done in an electronic codified form in the future.

A query was also raised as to who were the members of the WG-TOR. The Chairperson advised that the members of the working group were members of ICCAT and cooperating parties to ICCAT. CRFM Member States, which were not members or cooperating parties to ICCAT, but which wanted to benefit from the training in use of the online system, could request to participate through the CARICOM Observer Status seat. Also, WECAFC was in the process of finalizing a cooperation agreement with ICCAT and, when finalized, this would provide another avenue through which Member States could have access to ICCAT capacity building activities.

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<sup>1</sup> *English, Spanish and French*



The Chairperson was thanked for bringing the development of this system to the Meeting's attention and it was noted that it was an important development which all countries should pay attention to. The Trinidad and Tobago representative indicated that Trinidad and Tobago will try to participate in the upcoming exercises. The Chairperson suggested that Dominica and Saint Lucia, given that they regularly reported to ICCAT, should consider options for being exposed to these sessions. As the sessions would be virtual, the member countries of ICCAT could request directly of the ICCAT Secretariat to participate in the sessions and also enquire about the possibility of more than one participant from a member country participating. If CRFM countries which were not members of ICCAT were interested in participating in the training sessions, then the head of the Division/Department could write to the CRFM Secretariat requesting to participate as part of the CARICOM observer seat.

### **3.2 Intersessional Meeting of Panel 2, 02-05 March 2021**

The Intersessional meeting of Panel 2, which dealt with northern temperate tunas – Northern Albacore and Bluefin tuna in the North Atlantic, reviewed and approved fisheries management plans, which included arrangements for capacity management and inspection, and farming plans for 2021, submitted by CPCs to Panel 2. Generally, the plans were submitted and reviewed prior to the Panel 2 meeting and updated plans were reviewed at the Meeting. If further amendments were required, CPCs were requested to submit a second draft following the intersessional meeting. All CPCs had approval of their plans for 2021. There was a regional observer program for monitoring of the Bluefin tuna farms. The ROP Consortium had a number of queries, particularly in relation to how to evaluate the growth weight of the fish - at capture or on arrival at farm; in-cage technology for measuring weight; the use of artificial intelligence for determining weight of the fish; growth rates and length/weight relationships. The Panel also discussed the draft protocol for Northern Albacore Exceptional Circumstances (what were defined as 'exceptional circumstances'), and development of the Bluefin Tuna Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) work. Management strategies were being developed for different ICCAT species, including tropical tunas and CRFM Member States should take note of this development, as this was how fisheries management was evolving. MSE was more than an assessment; it looked at the dynamics of the fishery - how quotas were implemented, changes in quotas; changes in stock conditions; and the robustness of the management strategy. In addition, Panel 2 introduced draft recommendations on Eastern Bluefin tuna.

#### Discussion

What lessons could be learnt from the caging process – design, feeding, etc. - for Bluefin tuna, particularly in relation to mariculture, was queried. In response, it was indicated that there may be ICCAT documents that provide a description of the caging arrangements that would be useful. Also, some NGOs may have information on these arrangements, which may be accessible online. It was noted that while there may not be a fishery for Bluefin tuna, the information and caging technology, and techniques, particularly the mariculture aspects, may be applicable to other species.

A query was also raised as to whether countries that were not members of Panel 2 could attend the Panel 2 meetings. The Meeting learnt that ICCAT members that were not members of Panel 2 could request to participate in Panel 2 meetings as observers.

#### Northern Albacore

The protocol for Northern Albacore Exceptional Circumstances had to do with implementation of the Management Strategy and what were considered exceptional circumstances. If unusual conditions were noted and the management strategy was no longer robust, what would be the procedures, i.e., additional data or new indicators may be required. Hence, a protocol for identifying and agreeing on what would be exceptional circumstances for revision and update of the management strategy was being discussed and developed. The Chairperson referred to the brief update provided by the Chair of the SCRS Albacore Species Group, and explained that for each management principle/strategy, indicators were developed and

an agreed range of values, generated from operating models in support of the management strategy, was determined. If a situation developed in which values were outside the agreed range, then this would be considered an exceptional circumstance. The protocol could possibly be ready by November 2021.

### **3.3 Intersessional Meeting of the Billfish Species Group, 08-12 March 2021**

The Chairperson, using the meeting's agenda as a guide, gave an overview of the report of the Intersessional Meeting of the Billfish Species Group. There was an ongoing debate regarding the quality of data on billfishes, as billfishes were caught as by-catch in other big tuna fisheries; with the only directed billfish fisheries being recreational and artisanal. With regard to quality of data, there was some discussion about Task I and Task II data and a decrease in reporting of billfish catches was noted. The CPUE series used for billfish assessments was not standardized and made development of billfish management advice difficult. The meeting discussed how to improve CPUE standardization, including different sources of data and information to better understand trends in CPUE. For example, a collection of commercial advertisements was reviewed to get information on vessel characteristics, vessel type, navigation aids, etc., to determine trends in vessel sizes and navigational equipment, as well as attitudes towards retention versus release of catch. Joint CPUE analyses were looked at, as this had been done for other ICCAT stocks and blue and white marlin taken on longline were considered good candidates for a joint CPUE analysis. In terms of quality control, comparison of observer versus logbook CPUE indices was discussed. The meeting reviewed the Enhanced Billfish Research Program - new data, age and growth, reproduction, genetics, and age reading (genetics and age reading in early stages). The meeting recalled the objectives of the original plan: to provide more detailed catch and effort data, particularly size frequency data; to initiate the ICCAT tagging programme for billfishes; and to assist in collecting data for age and growth studies. The plan has been revised to overcome the data gap issues, particularly for artisanal fisheries in developing CPCs. The meeting looked at the work plan for billfish research, which included a workshop on small-scale fisheries to provide training in species identification and data collection in an effort to improve collection and reporting of billfish data, with particular attention to the artisanal fisheries. The Workshop on small-scale fisheries was likely to be held in Miami in 2023. Tools - mobile applications, SMARTforms, etc. - to aid in data collection were also considered by the Billfish Species Group. ICCAT and WECAFC were working on an agreement and ICCAT was expecting through WECAFC to get non-members on-board and trained. The meeting also discussed the methodologies for estimating dead and live discards.

#### Discussion

Whether the estimates of live and dead discards were available was queried. Also, reference was made to the quota for marlin that some ICCAT members, i.e., Barbados was allowed to harvest for food and it was remarked that it would be interesting to compare the volume of live marlin caught for food against the volume that other countries were allowed as discards, and to use this comparison as a baseline argument for taking live marlin as food. The remark was acknowledged and the need for the countries to know and understand the socio-economic importance of their fisheries was highlighted, as was the need to develop the evidence for defending the social and economic arguments. The characteristics of fisheries using those methodologies were important to understand, as some countries developed and advanced methodologies and ICCAT accepted and adopted these methodologies, which may suit the countries putting them forward, but which may not suit the particular needs of CRFM countries. The need to pay attention to the proposals and how they may affect the billfish quotas to CRFM countries was also noted.

### **3.4 Intersessional Meeting of Tropical Tunas MSE Technical Group, 29-31 March 2021**

The focus of the Intersessional Meeting of Tropical Tunas MSE Technical Group was development of MSE operating models for Western Skipjack and also Eastern Skipjack (stock specific and multi-stock – Yellowfin tuna, Big-eye tuna and Eastern Skipjack). The meeting also discussed uncertainty of the operating models; performance metrics; and the roadmap for completing the Group's work. The mandate

of the Group was to develop the MSE. A MSE had been developed for Western Skipjack, specifically for the south-western portion of the Atlantic as a single stock using catches from the Brazilian fleet as Brazil was the largest harvester of western skipjack and had a good dataset. Six operating models were explored, considering uncertainty in natural mortality, growth, maturity, selectivity and steepness. A suite of management procedures, one of which will ultimately be agreed upon by the ICCAT Commission, was tested in closed-loop simulation. The Group expressed concern regarding assumption of a separate southwestern Atlantic stock as this was not consistent with the current ICCAT stock hypothesis of two stocks (western and eastern). The Group agreed to continue its work and to revise the operating models to include all the western fisheries (Venezuela and US). The Group also considered the possibility of inclusion of economic variables, but expressed concern about the feasibility of including these variables due to the lack of economic data. The MSE testing was most advanced for western skipjack, and the southwestern stock in particular.

### Multi-stock Tropical Tunas

The Group reviewed the Multi-stock MSE for tropical tunas (yellowfin, bigeye and eastern skipjack), particularly the tool (FLBEIA) that would be used, which contains an algorithm that facilitates the development of a bio-economic model to evaluate the management strategies. FLBEIA can be configured to evaluate the impact of effort limits. There was some concern about how selectivity was modelled using the FLBEIA (which was a work in progress), as well as some discussion about the fisheries to be included and the scientists confirmed that stock-specific information could be provided; there was the flexibility to give a TAC for each stock caught by the fleet. There was some discussion about having a consistent approach in the development of the MSEs so that they are comparable when presented to the Commission. The Group also looked at the main sources of uncertainty in the dynamics of tropical tuna fish and fisheries, including the uncertainty in the biological parameters of the stocks, fishery exploitation patterns and information content of the data used in the stock assessments. Also discussed was the difference between stock assessment structural uncertainty grid and the axes of uncertainty used to condition operating models. In order to reduce the number of models and consider mainly the uncertainty that matters, different methodologies can be applied. The Group agreed to examine diagnostics for the stock assessment models in order to define/improve the uncertainty factors to inform what should be included in the MSE. Options that should be included in tropical tuna MSE, which included an agreed to set of axes for biological parameters, were also discussed. Performance metrics, which are quantitative expressions of management objectives that compare the value of an indicator to the stated objective, was also debated. In relation to the roadmap, the stock assessment schedule was considered – bigeye tuna in 2021; skipjack in 2022 and yellowfin tuna in 2023. Delivery of the multi-stock MSE would be in 2024 and CPCs should pay attention to these developments. With regard to communication, other RFMOs were also working on MSE development and could benefit from each other's experiences. In relation to communication, development of harmonized graphics and best practices for a consistent presentation of MSE outputs for decision-making was examined. The meeting also looked at capacity building and concern was expressed at the low level of participation by CPCs at the meeting and CPCs' interest and commitment to the MSE process was queried. Capacity building activities in relation to development of MSE with a focus on scientists, but which will also include managers, were being planned. The Chairperson noted that MSE was now a very firm feature of modern fisheries management and, though not discussed much in the region at this time, should be given greater attention and efforts to incorporate MSE into fisheries management made.

#### **4. REVIEW OF DRAFT ICCAT RECOMMENDATIONS BEING PREPARED FOR ADOPTION IN 2021 AND AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW**

##### **4.1 Proposal to amend Rec 19-02 by ICCAT to replace Rec16-01 by ICCAT on a multi-annual conservation and management programme for Tropical Tunas**

The Chairperson drew the Meeting's attention to the draft recommendation, which was submitted by the EU, and highlighted key pieces of information that would be of interest to Member States and to which Member States should pay attention. In particular, for bigeye tuna, the TAC needed to be reduced hence CPCs were being asked to apply lower catch limits as follows: CPCs with recent average catches above 3,500 t to reduce catches by 17%; for catches between 1,000 and 3,500 t to reduce by 10%; and for recent average catches of less than 1,000 t to maintain catch and effort at recent levels. The recommendation should not prejudice the right of developing coastal CPCs with a real interest in developing a fishery for bigeye tuna. CPCs were expected to implement robust MCS measures as applicable in relation to their capacity and resources. CPCs seeking to develop a bigeye tuna fishery would have to submit management plans and indicate likely changes in their capacity. Special consideration will be given to the specificities and needs of small-scale artisanal fishers. With regard to reporting, CPCs were expected to report catches of tropical tunas by species on a quarterly basis. For purse seiners and large longline vessels (LOA  $\geq$ 20m), catches should be reported monthly, increasing to weekly when 80% of the catch limit would have been caught. ICCAT Secretariat would advise CPCs when 80% of their catch limit had been caught, and the CPCs were expected to notify ICCAT when their entire catch limit of bigeye tuna had been caught. CPCs were also required to submit fishing and capacity management plans to show how catch reductions will be achieved. Also, developing CPCs intending to increase their participation in ICCAT fisheries for tropical tunas should endeavour to submit statements on their development intentions, which should include details of proposed fleet additions (vessel type, gear type, etc.). In relation to FADs, a closure was being proposed for purse seiners and bait-boat vessels fishing for or vessels supporting activities to fish for bigeye, yellowfin or skipjack tunas in association with FADs, which could have implications for western fisheries if the closure is applied to the entire Convention area. Changes to the number of FADs with operational buoys per vessel were proposed as follows: 2020 – 350 per vessel; and 2021 – 300 per vessel. With regard to transshipments, it was proposed that Large Scale Pelagic Longline Vessels (LSPLVs) transshipping tuna and tuna-like species in the Convention Area shall ensure that a minimum of [20]% of these transshipments take place in port. A meeting to discuss the draft recommendation was scheduled for 01-02 July 2021 and CPCs still had an opportunity to provide their inputs on the proposed recommendation.

##### Discussion

The Meeting was informed that the major areas of contention in the 2019 negotiations had to do with the supply vessels and the FADs.

A query was raised as to whether only CPCs could attend the 01-02 July 2021 meeting. The Meeting learnt that non-CPCs could register as Observers. In terms of the process to do this, it was explained that countries would need to write a letter to ICCAT requesting to participate and submit their list of delegates by the stipulated deadlines. For the intersessional meetings of Panel 1 and Panel 4, the deadline for submission of the list of delegates was 24 June 2021 and 29 June 2021, respectively.

##### **4.2 Draft recommendation by ICCAT to establish a rebuilding program for North Atlantic Shortfin Mako sharks caught in association with ICCAT fisheries**

The Chairperson informed the Meeting that for Panel 4 there were three proposals on North Atlantic Shortfin Mako shark submitted by the US, Canada and the EU. The three proposals were similar in terms of their purpose in putting in place a rebuilding plan, and to increase the probability of ending overfishing, as available scientific information indicated that North Shortfin Mako was overfished and overfishing was

occurring. The key difference between the proposals was the stance on retention of the species. Canada and US proposals were seeking release of all catches, dead and alive; while the EU proposal spoke to reducing the amount of Mako shark that was retained, and rationalized why a complete retention ban would not work. The Chairperson advised the Meeting that ICCAT Members could provide input on these proposals. She also reminded the Meeting that the ICCAT recommendations in relation to sharks were specifically for incidental catches, not for directed shark fisheries. There was no consensus on the proposals in 2019, hence the issues will be discussed at a meeting in 2021. The 2019 recommendation (Rec 19-06) remained in force.

There were no new recommendations for Panel 4. There were also no new assessments or recommendations for marlins.

#### Discussion

The Chairperson queried whether CPCs, such as Trinidad and Tobago and Suriname, had any concerns about the proposals. She noted that the Canada proposal had already received support from several countries and queried about preference among proposals. The Trinidad and Tobago representative said that Trinidad and Tobago had concerns about the shortfin mako proposals. She added that countries had been unable to agree on the measures in 2019, but Trinidad and Tobago had favoured the Canada proposal at that time. In response to a query regarding the preference for the Canada proposal, the Trinidad and Tobago representative said that at the time it was felt that the Canada proposal was reasonable and implementable, while there were certain provisions in the other proposals that could not be implemented. The Panel 4 meeting to discuss the proposals was scheduled for 06-08 July 2021.

It was noted that the recommendation did not prohibit the capture of mako shark in targeted shark fisheries, and a query was raised as to whether accidental catches of mako shark could also be retained. The Chairperson explained that the recommendations were always worded as ‘sharks caught in association with ICCAT fisheries’, which recognizes that ICCAT fisheries can take sharks. ICCAT management measurements were relevant to ICCAT fisheries, and were tailored to take into account the fact that ICCAT fisheries targeted other species, but sharks were caught in association with the fishing operations and hence were by-catch. It was expected that countries would make efforts to limit by-catch.

Confirmation was sought as to whether a total ban on shortfin mako sharks was being proposed or that a limited amount could be taken. The chairperson confirmed that a total ban was not in place at present, however, efforts were being made to introduce more stringent monitoring of mako sharks. She added that the countries needed to study the recommendations in depth to determine which was feasible and reasonable to implement given their national situations. Countries should review and provide their comments on the proposals before the meeting or at the meeting.

The Chairperson advised the Meeting that the Integrated Monitoring Measures Group meeting documentation was now available on the ICCAT website and suggested that countries should try to participate in the meeting as far as possible.

### **5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business.

## 6. CLOSING AND ADJOURNMENT

In response to a query as to whether the Deputy Executive Director would continue to chair the PWG or serve as a resource person to the Working Group, the Chairperson indicated that the Programme Manager, Fisheries Management and Development will have responsibility for ICCAT matters and will assume chairmanship of the PWG. With regard to her continuing as a resource person to the PWG on ICCAT, the Chairperson said that that would have to be decided by CRFM, however, she did not think it was necessary as there was a number of officers in several Member States who were now very experienced in ICCAT matters and could serve as resource persons to the Working Group. The Chairperson urged countries to pay attention to the results of the assessments and any new recommendations agreed upon at the Commission Meeting in November, and suggested that the PWG could prepare for a meeting to discuss the assessment results and recommendations. The Chairperson added that she had done a lot to help build the region's participation in ICCAT and she felt that the transition was coming at a good time, as there were several officers in CRFM Member States that were ICCAT CPCs who could serve as resource persons to the Group. The Chairperson, in answer to a question about her future plans, indicated that she intended to do some consultancy and would be remaining in the region for the time being.

Several group members expressed thanks to the Chairperson for her advice, assistance and support over the years and wished her all the very best in her future endeavours. The Chairperson thanked all for their well wishes and encouraged countries to continue to 'mind ICCAT's business.'

The Chairperson again thanked all for their time and attention, and adjourned the meeting at 1:14 p.m.



**Appendix 1: PWG – Tenth Meeting on ICCAT**

**List of Participants**

<b>Name &amp; Designation</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Email Contact</b>
Ms. Joyce LESLIE Chief Fisheries Officer (ag.)	Fisheries Division Ministry of Maritime Affairs and the Blue Economy Princess Alice Highway P. O. Box 505, Bridgetown <b>Barbados</b> Tel: (246) 535-5803 / 535-5800 / 243-1669	<a href="mailto:joyce.leslie@barbados.gov.bb">joyce.leslie@barbados.gov.bb</a> <a href="mailto:fisheries.division@barbados.gov.bb">fisheries.division@barbados.gov.bb</a>
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## Appendix 2: CRFM PWG – Tenth Meeting on ICCAT

### Agenda

Item	Title	Time (Barbados Time)
1	Registration of attendance	09:45 - 10:00 a.m.
2	Opening and prayer	10:00 - 10:05 a.m.
3	Review and discussion of ICCAT intersessional reports: i. Meeting of the Working Group for the development of an Online Monitoring System (IOMS): 16-18 February 2021; ii. Intersessional Meeting of Panel 2: 2-5 March 2021; iii. Intersessional Meeting of the Billfish Species Group: 8-12 March 2021; iv. Intersessional Meeting of Tropical Tunas MSE Technical Group: 29-31 March 2021.	10:05 - 11:30 a.m.
4	Review of draft ICCAT recommendations being proposed for adoption in 2021 and available for review	11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
5	Any other business	1:00 - 1:15 p.m.
6	Closing and adjournment	1:15 - 1:20 p.m.



The CRFM is an inter-governmental organization whose mission is to “Promote and facilitate the responsible utilization of the region’s fisheries and other aquatic resources for the economic and social benefits of the current and future population of the region”. The CRFM consists of three bodies – the Ministerial Council, the Caribbean Fisheries Forum and the CRFM Secretariat.

CRFM members are Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago and the Turks and Caicos Islands.

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