

November 9, 2016

Dear Delegates,

This letter is submitted on behalf of the undersigned non-governmental organizations that participate in the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (Commission) process, or may seek to do so in the future.

Collectively our organizations work in over a 100 countries and work with industry, engage suppliers and/or provide advice to retailers, buyers and food service sectors regarding improvements in tuna sustainability. In addition, the undersigned organizations work with a considerable number of purse seine, longline and pole & line vessels active in tuna fisheries and recognize that the sustainability of tuna stocks is integral to businesses as well as the health of the marine environment.

We are writing to bring to your attention our views on harvest control rules and reference points – an issue we see as a fundamental to sustainable fisheries management – and one on which the Commission must take action.

We support the Commission's efforts to adopt fundamental science-based management measures to ensure the sustainability of tuna populations in the Atlantic Ocean, and we request your support for additional management reforms. We also support the application of the Precautionary Approach using clear target and limit reference points and harvest control rules, as called for by the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement. Harvest control rules are a set of well-defined management actions to be taken in response to changes in stock status, and include appropriate, biologically-based reference points. However, we are concerned that the Commission has not yet adopted biological reference points or harvest strategies, including harvest control rules, for most priority tuna stocks.

As you prepare for the upcoming Meeting of the Commission, we urge governments to ensure the needed additional work by the SCRS and Panel 2 progresses in 2017 to permit the Commission to adopt reference points and a harvest control rule for Northern Albacore tuna that will assure that the stock will remain in the green zone of the Kobe plot with at least a 60% probability (per Recommendation 15-04). Further, we urge the Commission to take the decisions needed to progress the development of harvest strategies for other

ICCAT managed stocks, as outlined in Recommendation 15-07, by identifying management objectives, acceptable quantitative levels of probability of achieving and/or maintaining stocks at sustainable levels and setting precautionary limit reference points and timeframes for ending overfishing and/or rebuilding overfished stocks.

We urge ICCAT to take these actions at its upcoming Commission Meeting as a matter of priority.

Sincerely,



