



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director-General

Brussels,
MARE/B2

Subject: RE: Recommendation n° 39 - Consistent management of fish aggregating devices in International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna and Indian Ocean Tuna Commission Recommendation n° 40 - Equitable management of tuna quotas in the Atlantic

Dear Mr David Pavón,

I would like to thank you for your recommendation n° 39 on the consistent management of fish aggregating devices (FADs) in the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna (ICCAT) and the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC), and your recommendation n° 40 on equitable management of tuna quotas in the Atlantic.

As regards recommendation n° 39, I would like to inform you that Resolution 23/02 on management of Drifting Fish Aggregating Devices (DFADs) adopted by the IOTC at its 6th Special Session is no longer compulsory in accordance with Article IX of the IOTC Agreement, following the objections of 11 members of the IOTC.

The EU is one of the IOTC members which objected to this resolution. This decision has been taken because this particular measure, imposed by a majority vote, lacked scientific basis and would have proven impossible to implement on a number of aspects. I would also like to recall that the EU had presented to the IOTC a number of concrete alternative proposals which unfortunately were rejected.

In ICCAT, the EU continues to work with other contracting parties in order to explore the best solutions for FAD management in the Atlantic.

Please be reassured that the EU is in favour of a stringent but implementable framework to manage FADs in all oceans and will keep proposing solutions to address the issues linked with FAD fishery. The EU recognises that, as all fishing methods, both drifting and anchored FADs may also cause some negative impacts, such as increased catches of juveniles for some species or possible marine pollution in case of loss, more particularly for drifting FADs. For this reason, the EU has strongly and consistently advocated and pushed for the adoption of robust, science based and implementable management measures aiming at improving sustainability. For a number of years, the EU has been supporting research programs to develop biodegradable and non-entangling FADs.

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I would like to highlight that in its most recent proposal tabled in Panel 1 (tropical tunas) in ICCAT, the EU is seeking to align to the sustainable measure recently adopted in the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) on biodegradable non-entangling drifting FADs (adopted on the basis of a EU proposal) in order to avoid adverse impacts on the marine environment, preserve biodiversity and maintain the integrity of marine ecosystems. This would mean that, in accordance with the EU proposal, in the ICCAT convention area FADs to be deployed or redeployed, as of 1 January 2025, must be non-entangling, with the incremental requirement for the use of biodegradable construction materials as of January 2026.

Moreover, I agree that one of the remaining challenges concerns the lack of accountability and transparency, there are potential benefits of introducing a FADs registry which would provide crucial information on FADs ownership, characteristics and deployment. We believe that such a registry could be very effective in making operators accountable to recover their FADs before they potentially create damages on vulnerable habitats. For this reason, the EU is still supporting the setting up of a temporary working group on a FAD registry in ICCAT, to discuss the best modality for such a tool.

With regard to recommendation n° 40 on the equitable management of tuna quotas in the Atlantic, let me assure you that the management of tropical tuna stocks in ICCAT continues to be at the top of the EU agenda. The EU continues to advocate for an increase in the total allowable catch (TAC) of bigeye tuna in line with the best available scientific advice. The EU supports a TAC that would maintain the bigeye tuna stock in the green quadrant of the Kobe plot with an acceptable long-term probability. On this point, there seems to be a growing consensus in Panel 1 of setting a TAC of 73,000 tonnes, which the EU could support.

In relation to the bigeye tuna allocation negotiations, the EU is very conscious of taking into account the specific needs of the artisanal fisheries and our EU proposal on the conservation and management programme for tropical tunas aims to have a specific allocation for artisanal fisheries.

On compliance, including in terms of illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing activities, the EU continues to work on strengthening compliance in ICCAT. The EU is one of the most proactive parties in the ICCAT compliance process and continues to call for action in cases of potential non-compliance in relation to all ICCAT contracting parties.

I am looking forward to our continued fruitful cooperation. Should you have any further questions on this reply, please contact Ms Julia Rubeck, our Advisory Councils coordinator, via the functional mailbox MARE-AC@ec.europa.eu.

Yours sincerely,

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