

INTER-AC COOPERATION AGREEMENT IN ICCAT

Article 1. Rationale

The DG MARE has been requesting, in the recent years, the need for ACs dealing with topics of shared interest to make efforts to collaborate and work together to be more efficient in terms of provision of feedback and advice to them. This can be achieved through multiple avenues, such as organization of joint AC technical meetings (both between the ACs and with DG MARE) or issuing joint pieces of advice, if agreed.

Article 2. Background: history and steps made

A first informal meeting between Chairs and Secretaries of the LDAC, MEDAC, SWWAC and CCRUP was held via Zoom on 3 March 2023. The aim of this meeting was to exchange views on how each AC deals with ICCAT advice in terms both of process (decision-making and approval procedure including deadlines for consultation) and content (structure and recommendations of each advice).

Subsequent discussions and presentations (including terms of reference for collaboration) took place from March to September 2023 at ACs relevant Working Groups, dealing with highly migratory and tuna pelagic stocks on ICCAT, and Executive Committee meetings.

There was a common agreement by all ACs involved that they should collaborate and talk to each other, so they could make progress in this direction.

Article 3. Aim of this initiative

The aim of this initiative is to maintain regular channels of communications and exchange views on how each AC deals with ICCAT advice to gain a better understanding in terms both of process (decision-making and approval procedure including deadlines for consultation) and content (advice produced).

Article 4. Geographical and material scope

The geographical scope of this work are the regulatory areas and fisheries covered by each AC in ICCAT Regulatory Area, while respecting the mandate and competencies established for each AC. The material scope would be the topics covered by ICCAT,

within the framework of the agendas defined by the organization. In particular, special reference will be dedicated to address specific topics of interest requested by the European Commission.

Article 5. Short, mid, and long term objectives

5.1. Short-term objectives (Year 2024)

ST1 – To set up a permanent forum for dialogue (formal/informal) in the form of ICCAT Steering Group (SG) composed of Chairs or Vice-Chairs of the AC ExCom and Chairs or Vice Chairs of the Pelagic Working Groups, providing a balanced representativity of all relevant interests, including the Other Interests groups. It will be possible to appoint selected members by express delegation of the AC Chairs. The SG will also count with the assistance of the Secretariats.

The aim of the SG would be to coordinate and be aware of each AC work on ICCAT issues. For reasons of efficiency, the maximum number of members per AC should be 5 (Secretariat staff will not be counted as part of this).

This Group will be chaired on a rotation basis annually per calendar year as follows: LDAC (2024), SWWAC (2025), CCRUP (2026) and MEDAC (2027).

ST2 –The AC Secretariats and designated members of the Steering Group will be allowed to participate in observer/expert capacity at each relevant AC Working Groups dealing with ICCAT for stocks of common interest.

This objective has been already partially achieved in 2023. The level of participation entails to any member of the Steering Group and Secretariat, prior notification to and permission by the organizing AC, to provide active input in forms of presentations, questions both prior to and during the meeting; and follow up of actions and reception of minutes afterwards.

ST3 – To organize joint AC Focus Group technical meetings with European Commission in preparation for ICCAT.

The organization of such meetings will be organized the designated AC in charge for each year (see ST1). These meetings will be held n due advance to the ICCAT annual meeting / special session.

It will be up to the AC Secretariats to decide on the format of each meeting (i.e., online, in person or hybrid), depending on budget and availability of key participants including DG MARE.

In terms of content, the agenda, minutes and list of actions and outcomes agreed for each of these meetings will be agreed in advance and shared amongst all participants and Secretariat for the sake of transparency.

ST4 – (For each AC) To Keep each other informed on relevant consultation procedures and content of advice that can be endorsed/signed-off/incorporated as advice.

We have already started sharing this information in 2023 providing website links to all adopted advice on ICCAT issues, but there is still work to be done.

5.2. Medium-term objectives (Year 2025)

MT1 – To establish a continuous flow of information with the DG MARE, including periodic reporting and preparation of forthcoming technical coordination meetings on this topic.

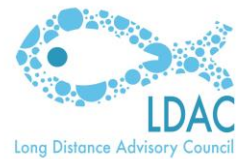
5.3. Long-term objectives (2026 and onwards)

LT1 – To issue joint AC advice (totally or partially) through integration of elements discussed within each AC into a single document signed and adopted by all ACs.

As a disclaimer, for those areas or issues, where no agreement is possible, there would be still the possibility to issue individual advice, according to CFP Regulation and principles.

Article 6. Timeline

- March - April : observer attendance to each other's AC pelagic groups
 - Mid-March: LDAC Working Group 1 (tuna RFMOs) + ExCom
 - Late (2nd or 3rd week) March: CCRUP Pelagics Working Group + ExCom
 - April: SWWAC Pelagics Working Group
- May : steering group to assess the previous year ICCAT results, and to share each other's plans for the year ahead (planned advice, topics of most interest)
 - select topics for common Focus Groups - select topics for common advice (long term)



- June to end of September: Focus groups, advice drafting groups (long term)
- September: publish of SCRS advice and initiation of work on a common advice (long term)
- September-October – AC Working Groups:
 - Early September – CCRUP Pelagic Working Group
 - First half of October – MEDAC Working Group 2 (ICCAT)
 - First half of October – LDAC Working Group 1 (Tuna RFMOs)
 - Late October - SWWAC Working Group on Pelagics
- October: Inter AC focus group at « EC request » share/ advertise common positions
- Mid-November : ICCAT annual meeting

Article 7. Periodic evaluation and assessment

The Steering Group will have a meeting at the beginning of each year to reassess the progress made in terms of outcomes of ICCAT meeting, feedback from EC to our joint document, and fulfilment of objectives of common work included in this proposal.