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EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director-General

Brussels
MARE.B.2/YB

Dear Mr Farias,

Thank you for the advice of the Conseil Consultatif pour les Régions Ultrapériphériques (CC RUP) in preparation of the International Commission on Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) 2026 plenary session. Let me congratulate and thank the CC RUP for the well-coordinated work in preparation of the above-mentioned advice.

With regard to the Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) process for tropical tunas, we would like to emphasise that this process is still ongoing. Developing a multi species MSE is a new process for an RFMO, and this is the first time it is attempted. The EU is eager to continue the work on this important process. On your proposals relating to yellowfin tuna we fully agree with your recommendation that a quota and an allocation table should be set at this year's annual meeting, and our efforts are targeted towards that objective. We also agree with your position that increased observer coverage for the long line fleet would be appropriate.

We have noted your recommendation that the negotiation position of the EU should not contain any proposals concerning the development of aquaculture or tuna purse seine fishing in the waters of the Outermost Regions without prior consultation and the consent of the fisheries sector represented within CC RUP. The European Commission engages in extensive outreach before establishing its proposal for an EU position for ICCAT. The EU position is then finalised and determined after discussions among the Member States and the European Commission.

In this context, we would like to point out once more that last year's proposal for a pilot project for bluefin tuna and yellowfin tuna farming was made on the explicit request of a Member State. If there are stakeholders or regional concerns, these need to be taken up with the relevant Member State. With regard to the preparation of this year's annual meeting, I can confirm that the Commission has not proposed any such project.

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The Commission agrees on the importance of the work on the conservation and management of sharks. We note the important role of the SCRS in guiding ICCAT to adopt further mitigation measures for the conservation and management of sharks. Additionally, with a proposal to adopt management objectives for the development of an MSE, the EU will again lead the push for a sustainable and science-based management of the two blue shark Atlantic stocks. For blue marlins, the EU will defend the interests of its Outermost Regions and oppose any calls to decrease catch limits applicable to coastal fisheries.

Regarding your proposal on the restriction of access to the waters up to 100 nautical miles from the Canary Islands, Article 5(3) of the CFP-Regulation authorises Member to restrict fishing to vessels registered in the ports of the outermost regions with the exception of Union vessels that traditionally fish in those waters, in line with the conditions set out in that article. It is the discretion of the Member States to whether have such restrictions in place or not.

Finally, on budget and governance issues the EU is supportive of a third performance review focussed on improving ICCAT governance.

Thank you once again for providing your advice in such a timely manner and I am looking forward to our continued fruitful cooperation. Should you have 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,

Charlina VITCHEVA

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