

RESOLUTION BY ICCAT ON BEST AVAILABLE SCIENCE

RECOGNIZING the importance of sound scientific advice as the centerpiece for the conservation and management of tuna and tuna-like species in the Atlantic and the Mediterranean in line with international law and recommendations and Article VIII of the ICCAT Convention,

AWARE that the availability of adequate scientific information is fundamental to carrying out the objectives of the Convention laid down in Article IV of the Convention,

EMPHASIZING the importance of the effective participation of CPCs in the work of the Standing Committee on Research and Statistics (SCRS) and its working groups,

ACKNOWLEDGING the need to strengthen the data availability and quality for scientific advice, including on by-catch and discards,

NOTING that external expert participation may advance the quality assurance of the scientific work of the SCRS,

RECOGNIZING the need for broadening and streamlining the scope of financial support for capacity building for the purpose of this resolution,

BUILDING on the recommendations of the SCRS and of the Kobe process,

NOTING the importance of regular assessments of the performance of regional fisheries management organizations, including the functioning of their scientific committees,

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE CONSERVATION
OF ATLANTIC TUNAS (ICCAT) RESOLVES THAT:

CPCs undertake to:

1. Take all measures which would be appropriate
 - i) To improve the communication between CPCs, the Commission and the SCRS by enabling a constant and regular dialogue;
 - ii) To improve the implementation of data collection and provision to the SCRS, including on by-catches,
 - iii) To support research programs and projects supporting the work of the SCRS;
 - iv) To facilitate participation in working groups and SCRS meetings of scientists from all CPCs, as well as other relevant scientific bodies;
 - v) To contribute to the training of scientific researchers, including young scientists;
2. Preserve and promote the independence and excellence of the SCRS and its working groups by:
 - i) Enhancing the participation of scientists to meetings of the SCRS and its Working Groups, including scientists involved in other tunas' RFMOs and other relevant scientific bodies;
 - ii) Adopting, publishing and implementing SCRS rules, including a code of conduct for scientists and for observers. For this purpose, SCRS will develop such rules to avoid conflict of interests and ensure the independence of the scientific process and, where applicable, maintain the confidentiality of the data used;
 - iii) Ensuring that independent and objective scientific input, based on the best available and peer-reviewed scientific deliverables, is presented by the SCRS to the Commission;

- iv) Ensuring that sources and history of revisions of all documents submitted to and assessed by the SCRS and its working groups are fully documented;
 - v) Providing clear, transparent, and standardized scientific findings and advice to the Commission;
 - vi) Providing for well-defined rules for efficient decision-making to arrive at scientific advice to be endorsed, released and published by the SCRS;
 - vii) Reflecting different opinions in the scientific reports and during the endorsement process of SCRS' scientific advice to foster transparency of the scientific advisory process.
3. Strengthen peer review mechanisms within the SCRS by participation of outside experts (e.g., from other RFMOs or from academia) in the SCRS activities, particularly for stock assessments.
 4. Continue to support the SCRS' initiatives to publish its scientific findings in the scientific peer-reviewed literature.
 5. With the aim of meeting the above-mentioned objectives, consider broadening financial support and mechanisms, including *inter alia*, contributing to the “Meeting Participation Fund for Developing ICCAT Contracting Parties”, for the purpose of the implementation of this Resolution, in particular to:
 - i) Contribute to the scientific capacity building of the developing CPCs and to enhance their effective participation in the work of the SCRS and its working groups;
 - ii) Provide necessary resources for the SCRS and its working groups.
 6. The next independent performance review of ICCAT should include an assessment of the functioning of the SCRS and its working groups through a total quality management process, including an evaluation of the potential role of external reviews.