

--RESOLUTION --**ENHANCEMENT OF RESEARCH PROGRAMS FOR BILLFISHES
(BLUE MARLIN, WHITE MARLIN, SAILFISH AND SPEARFISH)**

Resolution adopted by the Commission at its Fourteenth Regular Meeting (Madrid, November, 1995). Report for Biennial Period, 1994-95, Part II. Official transmission to the Contracting Parties on December 21, 1995.

RECOGNIZING that fisheries for Atlantic billfishes are characterized by many different participants, including recreational and commercial fisheries;

NOTING that possible mis-reporting and/or under-reporting of landings from various Atlantic fisheries have been identified by the Commission's Standing Committee on Research and Statistics (SCRS) for these species;

MINDFUL that billfishes are consumed in many countries, particularly coastal nations in the Caribbean area and the West African area, and are species important both to the recreational fishing industry and commercial fishing industry throughout their range in the Convention area;

RECALLING that the SCRS reported in 1995 that the biomass for blue and white marlins has been below the level needed to yield MSY, for more than a decade, and that the Committee considered these stocks to be over-exploited, although they need verification with an updated assessment, and that for the north Atlantic blue marlin stock, a sign of recovery has been recognized;

ALSO RECALLING that the SCRS reported in 1995 that the biomass for sailfish in the western Atlantic was below the level needed to yield MSY, in 1994, and the Committee considered the stock to be at least fully exploited and perhaps over-exploited;

RECOGNIZING that improved data are necessary to better manage these important species;

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

FIRST, that the SCRS be requested to further improve research and study of these species, with particular attention to their growth and age;

SECOND, that the SCRS be requested to review and update historical catch and effort data for commercial and recreational fisheries for these species in the Convention area;

THIRD, that a five-year (or more) scientific program be hereby established, to be integrated within the ICCAT Enhanced Billfish Program, under which Contracting Parties will promote the voluntary release by their commercial and recreational fishermen of blue marlin, white marlin, sailfish, and spearfish taken alive in the Convention area and, where practicable, the tagging of these species under the program;

FOURTH, that all Contracting Parties fishing for billfishes should make an effort to participate in the ICCAT scientific program for these species, and that they report annually to the SCRS results of the program referred to in the Third paragraph; and

FIFTH, that ICCAT will, seeking particularly the cooperation of those Contracting Parties with interests in the billfish fisheries, develop for consideration during the 1996 meeting a plan to establish a reward program for the tag and release of billfishes, and for the return of tags recovered from recaptured billfishes.