



OCEANA AND MARVIVA WORK TOGETHER TO RESTORE MARINE ECOSYSTEMS AND ELIMINATE ILLEGAL AND OVER-FISHING

PRESS RELEASE

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“ICCAT COUNTRIES SELL OUT BLUEFIN TUNA TO INDUSTRY,” SAYS OCEANA

Recife (Brazil).- Today, the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas agreed to weak management measures for bluefin tuna, ignoring the only acceptable measure that would have recovered this depleted stock: the total closure of the fishery.

Xavier Pastor, Executive Director of Oceana in Europe remarked: *“ICCAT’s credibility was in the hands of the Contracting Parties during this meeting. Now, they have shown their inability to properly manage large pelagic species by adopting measures that respond to both political pressure and the industry’s demands. They’ve ignored the real status of fish stocks and the immediate risk of losing this tuna species”.*

New bluefin tuna measures adopted by ICCAT for 2010 include a TAC of 13,500 tonnes for all Mediterranean and Eastern Atlantic fleets, one additional month of fishery closure for purse seiners, and a vague commitment to close the fishery if the next scientific stock assessment shows a serious risk of collapse for this species.

“The risk of collapse has already been addressed in previous assessments, and there is scientific consensus about what’s happening right now. But instead they’ve decided to implement a TAC of 13,500 tonnes. This is not sufficient to recover the stocks and it will lead to individual vessel quotas that are too low to economically sustain fishing activities. This will definitely encourage underreporting of catches and illegal fishing” said Xavier Pastor. He added: *“ICCAT has now definitely lost its credibility and its CITES’ turn to avoid the collapse of this species.”*

Bluefin tuna is facing a high risk of stock collapse due to mismanagement, illegal fishing and international market demand. Thus, Monaco presented a proposal to list this species in Appendix 1 of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), which would lead to a complete international trade ban for this species. The CITES Meeting of the Contracting Parties will take place in Doha, Qatar in March 2010.

Recently, ICCAT scientist assessed that Atlantic bluefin tuna stocks have probably experienced a historical decline to less than 15% of unfished stock levels. This data meets the criteria defined by CITES for being considered a species at risk of extinction, and thus making this species eligible for listing in Appendix 1. Additionally, the same ICCAT assessment concluded that there is a high possibility that a lower TAC, such as the 15,000 tonnes or less recommended by the 2008 ICCAT Bluefin Tuna Stock Assessment, still would not lead to the recovery of the stock in a ten year period.

ICCAT also took up the issue of regulating shark fisheries in the Atlantic, but this meeting once again represented a lost opportunity for these vulnerable species. Proposals were initially considered to regulate endangered porbeagle sharks, protect all thresher sharks, limit catches of shortfin makos, and put a concrete end to shark finning. However, despite these wide ranging initiatives, the meeting in Recife ended with only a prohibition on the retention, landing, and sale of endangered bigeye threshers, and a meager encouragement for countries to not target other thresher shark species. However, even this measure was weakened with an exception for Mexico who can still catch 110 bigeye threshers, a species that ICCAT scientists identified as having high vulnerability and low

biological productivity.

“Sharks are being caught without any limit at all in the Atlantic, and there is little hope now for getting these fisheries regulated in the near future,” said Rebecca Greenberg, shark campaigner with Oceana. “ICCAT scientists recommended that mortality for shortfin mako be reduced years ago, and the Commission still has not done anything to implement this. ICCAT is ignoring the advice of its own scientists, and dooming species to overfishing and imminent stock collapse.”

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Oceana campaigns to protect and restore the world's oceans. Our teams of marine scientists, economists, lawyers and advocates win specific and concrete policy changes to reduce pollution and to prevent the irreversible collapse of fish populations, marine mammals and other sea life. Global in scope and dedicated to conservation, Oceana has campaigners based in North America, Europe and South and Central America. More than 300,000 members and e-activists in over 150 countries have already joined Oceana. For more information, please visit www.oceana.org.

MarViva is a non-profit, non-governmental organisation that collaborates with local communities, private companies and various social sectors to protect coastal and marine resources. The organisation has offices in Costa Rica, Colombia, Panama and Spain. For more information, visit www.marviva.net