

Report from the CCSBT Observer to
the 19th Special Meeting of
International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT)
(10 November – 17 November, Genoa, Italy)

CCSBT Observer (Japan)

42 Contracting Parties and 3(three) Cooperating non-Contracting Parties, Entities or Fishing Entities were present, and the increasing importance of ICCAT was evident from the attendance of 2(two) non-Contracting Parties, 6(six) intergovernmental organizations and 21 non-governmental organizations, totaling well over 500 delegates in all.

As usual, the flagship species *Bluefin tuna* captured much of the attention of participants, remaining a high priority issue on the 2014 agenda, although other important species, such as *tropical tuna species*, *sharks and by-catch species* were not overlooked.

The success of heeding scientific advice was reflected in the encouraging signs shown for *Bluefin tuna*, in particular the Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean stock during the last assessment update, and the Commission showed prudence in allocating the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) within the limits indicated by its scientific Committee.

For Eastern and Mediterranean Bluefin tuna, TAC was increased by just under 20% over the next three years, for 2015; 16,142t, for 2016; 19,296t, and for 2017; 23,155t (2014; 13,400t), in line with scientific advice and subject to an annual review. For Western Bluefin tuna, TAC also increased by around 14%, to 2,000t (2014; 1,750t) for the next two years.

The Commission also considered the management of tropical tunas, including skipjack, which had been assessed in 2014 by ICCAT Scientific Committee. The Commission created a working group to better evaluate the effects of a fishing technique that utilizes fish aggregating devices (FADs) on tropical tuna species with a view to improving management advice.

With catch levels for 2015 for many ICCAT species having already been determined in 2013, the Commission had some time to reflect on other important matters, particularly those relating to *Monitoring, surveillance and control (MCS)* issues in the continued fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing activities. The implementation in 2015 of the electronic Bluefin catch document scheme (eBCD) placed this issue at the top of the list.

Recognizing that a few technical difficulties with the system remained, the Commission determined that paper documents would be allowed until such difficulties could be resolved. At the same time, the Commission reiterated its commitment to the full implementation of the electronic system as soon as all

core functionalities were fully operational. Inter-sessional work will continue to resolve technical issues. The Commission also took a step to strengthen its vessel monitoring system requirements by increasing the transmission rate from six hours to four hours.

Discussion also centered on improving and strengthening the organization, with more in-depth proposals for Convention Amendment, and a stock taking of actions taken in response to the ICCAT 2008 Performance Review.

The deliberations of the Compliance Committee once again ensured that Contracting Parties and cooperating non-members remained vigilant in the implementation of adopted ICCAT ***conservation and management measures***, and none of the Contracting Parties were identified as having any compliance deficiencies of serious concern.

Next annual meeting of ICCAT will be held in November 2015 in Malta.