

4.028 Action for recovery of the East Atlantic and Mediterranean population of Atlantic Bluefin Tuna *Thunnus thynnus*

NOTING that, in its latest estimate of East Atlantic and Mediterranean stocks of Atlantic (or Northern) Bluefin Tuna, the Standing Committee on Research and Statistics (SCRS) of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna (ICCAT) recommends that catches of these stocks should not exceed 15,000 metric tonnes (mt), and that a catch quota of more than 29,000 mt has been approved for 2008 by the ICCAT in the *Multi-Annual Recovery Plan for Bluefin Tuna in the Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean (ICCAT Recovery Plan)* adopted in November 2006;

FURTHER NOTING that all scenarios which, according to the latest SCRS assessment of East Atlantic and Mediterranean Bluefin Tuna stocks, would allow this population to recover, provide for closure of the fishery during the month of June to allow the species to reproduce, and that the ICCAT *Recovery Plan* only establishes closure of the fishery to the purse-seine fleet from 1 July;

CONCERNED by the fact that fishing capacity is at least double that needed to catch the current legal quota and that recent catches have been four times greater than the maximum catch recommended by scientists to prevent the collapse of the population, with a purse-seine fleet operating in the Mediterranean capable of catching at least 54,000 mt, not counting the fishing capacity of other types of net;

RECOGNIZING that illegal catches of this species are estimated to be up to 30,000 mt, which clearly indicates the absence of adequate means of control over this fishing activity and the systematic failure to implement the ICCAT *Recovery Plan*;

CONCERNED by the recommendations of the SCRS, which indicate that a 78.4% cut would be needed in the fishing effort by the fleet targeting East Atlantic and Mediterranean Atlantic Bluefin Tuna;

RECOGNIZING that catches made by the tuna traps known as *almadrabas*, which are considered as a good indicator of the stock status, fell by 80% in the southern Iberian Peninsula between 2000 and 2006, and that the average size of fish has fallen sharply (from 220 kg to 145 kg);

CONCERNED by the difficulty of controlling and supervising the fishery caused and made worse by the development of the tuna farming industry towards the end of the 1990s, which has also made it more difficult to obtain data on catches and their geographical origin, as well as estimates of the fishing effort and information on the size distribution of fish caught; and

CONSIDERING that the loss of groups of older fish in the shoals present in the Eastern Atlantic fishery and the drastic fall in the reproductive biomass, which is currently only 36% of the level that existed at the beginning of the 1970s, are clear symptoms that this population is in imminent danger of collapse;

The World Conservation Congress at its 4th Session in Barcelona, Spain, 5-14 October 2008:

1. URGES IUCN's members to immediately adopt and implement effective measures to protect and restore the Bluefin Tuna population in the East Atlantic and Mediterranean;

In addition, the World Conservation Congress, at its 4th Session in Barcelona, Spain, 5-14 October 2008, provides the following guidance concerning implementation of the IUCN Programme 2009-2012:

2. REQUESTS the Director General to:
 - (a) ask ICCAT, at its next annual meeting (Marrakech, November 2008), to:
 - (i) establish a science-based recovery plan which contains and enables the implementation of measures in accordance with the recommendations of the SCRS in 2008, and specifically to drastically reduce the length of the open season, especially in the crucial months of May and June, and to adhere to the scientific advice on Total

Allowable Catch (TAC), and to consider a mandatory fleet-reduction scheme;

- (ii) establish immediately an interim suspension of the East Atlantic and Mediterranean Bluefin Tuna fishery; and
 - (iii) permit resumption of fishing activities only according to the following conditions:
 - each Flag State must adopt and implement a proper fishery plan in accordance with a revised, science-based ICCAT population recovery plan;
 - such state fishing plans must include an effort-reduction scheme to adapt its fleet to its fishing possibilities, as well as means of monitoring, control and surveillance of activities, relating to, among others, fishing, farming, ports and markets to ensure effective control; and
 - resumption of each Flag State's fishing activities would be subject to a timely review process to be developed and implemented under ICCAT; and
- (b) request ICCAT, as a first step towards the species' recovery and in accordance with all scientific information available to SCRS, to set up protection zones for spawning grounds in the Mediterranean, including the waters within the Balearic Sea, Central Mediterranean, and Levant Sea, during the spawning season.