

I trust that my response is in time so that it may be included in the Secretary-General's report to the 5th Meeting of the Consultative Process (7-11 June 2004). ICCAT is pleased to contribute to the report focusing on "New sustainable uses of the oceans, including the conservation and management of the biological diversity of the seabed in areas beyond national jurisdiction."

Please be advised that my tenure as Executive Secretary ends on 31 March 2004, and the new Executive Secretary, Mr. Driss Meski, will take office on 1 April 2004. I will pass your letter to him, and can assure you the Executive Secretary of ICCAT will attend the 5th Meeting of the Consultative Process.

At this time, I would like to express my appreciation to the United Nations for their high regard of ICCAT during my eight years as ICCAT's Executive Secretary. ICCAT is pleased to be able to contribute to the activities of the United Nations.

ICCAT has recently completed its 18th Regular Meeting of the Commission where many issues were discussed related to the focus of the Consultative Process. In particular I wish to mention the instruments dealing with (1) capacity-building to improve the provisioning of the basic statistics, and (2) ICCAT's continuing efforts to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing in the Atlantic and to improve the management and conservation schemes of the ICCAT Contracting Parties.

ICCAT's strong scientific base provides the foundation for the conservation of Atlantic tuna and tuna-like species. The Commission has again recognized the fundamental requirement for high quality data, and some of the constraints that some Contracting Parties have in providing reliable data. I draw attention to the 2003 *Resolution by ICCAT on Improvements in Data Collection and Quality Assurance* [Ref. 03-21], which calls for capacity-building to make improvements in data collection and quality assurance. In fact, in 2004 the Commission has established a fund to be used for training in data collection and for supporting of scientific participation in ICCAT scientific data preparatory and stock assessment sessions by scientists from Parties with insufficient capacity to meet data collection, quality assurance, and reporting obligations. Initially this fund has been established by voluntary contributions from Contracting Parties with sufficient capacity for meeting these obligations. In the future, it is my hope that international agencies will also contribute to this important fund. It is my belief that such a fund and program will efficiently and effectively direct resources to critical areas, and assist Contracting Parties in becoming self-sufficient in meeting their data collection and reporting obligations.

Attachments:

Resolution by ICCAT on Improvements in Data Collection and Quality Assurance

Recommendation by ICCAT to Establish a List of Vessels Presumed to Have Carried Out Illegal, Unreported And Unregulated Fishing Activities in the ICCAT Convention Area

Recommendation by ICCAT to Adopt Additional Measures Against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing

Recommendation by ICCAT Concerning the Establishment of an ICCAT Record of Vessels Over 24 Meters Authorized to Operate in the Convention Area