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### **Europêche to advocate increased TAC for bluefin tuna, management plans for sharks and recovery of Mediterranean swordfish at ICCAT's annual meeting**

Ahead of the 24<sup>th</sup> Session of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT<sup>1</sup>) which will take place in Malta from the 10<sup>th</sup> until 17<sup>th</sup> November 2015, Europêche has revealed its proposals for the different species of tuna, swordfish and sharks. In its capacity as observer, Europêche will defend the following considerations in order to ensure the sustainability of both the fish populations and the European fishing industry.

#### **Bluefin tuna**

Concerning bluefin tuna, Europeche advocates bringing forward in 2016 a quota increase of up to 23.155 tons, originally scheduled for 2017, taking into account, in the meanwhile, the inevitable reflect on market value. Europêche bases its position on the latest scientific evaluations, according to which abundance indices are at record highs, the biomass is above the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) and fishing mortality is below sustainable levels.

Europêche requests that measures should be taken to ensure compliance with the agreements adopted within ICCAT in 2014, since Turkey filed an objection to ICCAT's Recommendation on fishing quotas for 2015, 2016 and 2017, and unilaterally assigned an additional quota of 600 tonnes for this year and future years.

President of Europêche, Javier Garat stated: *'We urge ICCAT contracting parties, especially Japan, USA and EU Member States, not to buy bluefin tuna from Turkey, since if they do, it would jeopardize the successful control and sustainability of this fishery. In this sense, we consider that such unilateral measures, even if they are allowed by the ICCAT Convention, will certainly put at risk the successful recovery of this fishery, since these targets can only be achieved through the serious commitment of all parties and countries.'*

In addition, Europêche supports the possible implementation of specific measures for small-scale fishermen on accidental captures.

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<sup>1</sup> **The International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas** is an inter-governmental fishery organization responsible for the conservation of tunas and tuna-like species in the Atlantic Ocean and its adjacent seas.

### **Blue and mako sharks in the North and South Atlantic**

On the other hand, Europeche has raised the need to implement a management plan to properly regulate the populations of shark and shortfin mako both in the North and in the South Atlantic. Fortunately, the populations of both species are in healthy conditions from a biological point of view, because their biomass is well above the maximum sustainable yield (MSY), and below fishing mortality recommended levels.

Therefore, and in order to ensure that they can continue to fish sustainably in the future, Europeche considers a management plan to freeze the fishing effort, set Harvest Control Rules (HCR) and reference points essential. We also request the development of a specific research plan for sharks to increase and improve considerably data collection.

### **Mediterranean swordfish**

With regard to Mediterranean swordfish, Europeche calls for the enforcement of the correct implementation of the ICCAT recommendation 11-03, given the state of exploitation of the fishery. In addition, we propose to strengthen provisions on monitoring and control in order to prevent possible illegal fishing practices.

### **Bigeye tuna**

As far as bigeye tuna is concerned, Europeche requests the establishment of effective measures to control fishing effort. In this regard, we urge the EU to firmly defend the view that the current ban on transshipments at sea for purse seiners be extended to the longline fleet. This fleet, which targets bigeye tuna, are mainly Asian vessels, since Community boats target swordfish and sharks and always unload the catch at port. This would ensure the full implementation of measures to reduce the effort on bigeye and avoid possible non-declaration of a species that scientists say may be overfished. Also, all ships targeting this species must have a permanent observer on board, both seiners and longliners. Finally, Europeche calls for the implementation of a regional observer programme for tropical tuna fisheries which includes African countries.

**END**

**Europeche** represents the fisheries sector in Europe. Currently, the Association comprises 13 national organisations of fishing enterprises from the following 9 EU Member States: DE, DK, ES, FR, IT, MT, NL, PL, UK.

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