

**Subject: ICCAT Joint Expert Group on Climate Change – Urging EU leadership to take effective climate action**

Dear head of the EU delegation to ICCAT,  
Stijn Billiet,

We write to you in advance of the Meeting of the Joint Expert Group on Climate Change, to encourage the EU to support the adoption of a climate action plan for ICCAT. While fishing continues to be the primary driver of marine environment degradation, the accelerating effects of climate change, including ocean warming and acidification, are increasingly impacting marine species, ecosystems, and fisheries. Climate change is already influencing fisheries under the remit of the ICCAT convention. Effective fisheries management that contributes to the resilience of these ecosystems is critical to mitigate the impacts of climate change. Thus, the adoption of a climate action plan at this expert meeting, for endorsement at the 2024 ICCAT Commission meeting, is urgently needed to ensure the future sustainability and predictability of fisheries targeting Atlantic migratory species. The EU should provide leadership with a clear sign to CPCs that a concerted effort is needed to ensure fisheries can be managed effectively.

Scientists have already shown that the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM) is essential to mitigate the combined impacts of fisheries and climate change on wild fish populations. Thus, we urge the EU to support the adoption of EAFM and Management Strategy Evaluations (MSEs) that include climate and ecological components as part of the climate action plan. This will enable ICCAT scientists to provide advice that accounts for more uncertainties, allowing ICCAT managers to adopt measures, including management procedures, that are likely to be more effective in a changing environment.

As in many other circumstances and international *fora*, the EU has the opportunity to continue to lead on climate action, by steering ICCAT towards an ecosystem approach to fisheries management. Incorporating climate change scenarios and ecological objectives and elements in MSEs is crucial. This will also reaffirm the EU's commitment to healthy ecosystems and sustainable fisheries management.

We are at your disposal to discuss this issue and how to support you in achieving this goal.

Kind regards,

Alessandro Buzzi, Interim Global Tuna Lead, WWF Mediterranean Marine Initiative  
Esther Wozniak, Manager, RFMO Policy, International Fisheries, The Pew Charitable Trusts  
Gonçalo Carvalho, Executive Coordinator, Sciaena  
Dr Iris Ziegler, Head of Fisheries Policies and Ocean Advocacy, Deutsche Stiftung Meeresschutz  
Shana Miller, Project Director, International Fisheries Conservation, The Ocean Foundation  
Vera Coelho, Deputy Vice President in Europe, Oceana