



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director-General

Brussels
MARE/B2/FM

Subject: Reply to MEDAC advice for ICCAT 2025

Dear Mr Marzona Notlevsen,

I would like to thank you for your letter of 15 July providing the Mediterranean Advisory Council's (MEDAC) advice for the 29th regular meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT). The recommendations will help to inform us in establishing an EU position for this ICCAT meeting. We will also have the opportunity to discuss this in more detail at the stakeholders meeting that we hold prior to the ICCAT annual meeting.

I am pleased to report that on some of the issues you raise, action is already being taken. Under impetus of the EU, work in ICCAT has been done on gear codification for trap lines, for example. And EU Member States are taking the lead in launching pilot projects to enhance our understanding of the impact of this gear and strengthen the scientific basis.

The EU will also continue its work on driftnets by addressing loopholes in current ICCAT recommendations, promoting a level playing field for EU operators and by providing a solid legal basis for action against fishing gear that is harmful to the marine ecosystem. We will also ensure cooperation between ICCAT and GFCM in this regard.

The same holds for the development and further roll-out of electronic monitoring systems and the levels of observer coverage. It is important to ensure proper scientific and control observer coverage across fleet segments in order to ensure a level playing field for EU operators in ICCAT. However, I take note of the concerns you raise in terms of potential impacts on specific fleet segments in the Mediterranean.

With regards to the concerns you raise on an alleged (very) high number of bluefin tuna transfer operations by Turkish vessels as well as an extended fishing period by Turkish vessels, I would urge you to send any concrete information you or your members may have to the Commission. We take all such instances seriously and investigate them properly. Any instances of non-compliance will be raised in the ICCAT compliance committee.

Mr. Marzoa Notlevsen
Chair of the Mediterranean Advisory Council
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I also take good note of your advice on the importance of strengthening data collection to improve the robustness of scientific assessments.

Finally, let me reassure you about our commitment to combating illegal fishing and ensuring a level playing field with other contracting parties. The Commission is well aware of how important this is to our stakeholders, and we will continue to be the leading contracting party in ICCAT for improving ICCAT recommendations for better implementation and pointing out potential non-compliances by other contracting parties.

Thanks once more for providing your advice in such a timely manner and I am looking forward to our continued fruitful cooperation. Should you have any further questions on this reply, please contact Ms Julia RUBECK, our Advisory Councils coordinator, via the functional mailbox MARE-AC@ec.europa.eu.

Yours sincerely,

Charlina VITCHEVA