



3 September 2009

Dear President Barroso

We are writing to you today to express our conviction that the Commission, which you currently preside, should support the proposal made by the Principality of Monaco to list bluefin tuna on Appendix 1 of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). Several Member States have already expressed their support.

Given the status of the bluefin tuna population and the direct responsibility of the EU on this issue, the Commission's credibility as a responsible member of the international community is at stake.

There is no doubt that the Atlantic bluefin tuna is a severely depleted species throughout its range. The most recent scientific assessment of bluefin tuna concluded that the eastern stock, fished primarily by the EU, is one third the level that would produce the maximum sustainable yield and fishing mortality is three times too high.

Nobody disputes the fact that the stock is in dire need of strict conservation measures. The only question is how that can be best achieved.

The International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna (ICCAT) is the fishery management body which has responsibility for managing tuna fisheries, including bluefin tuna. It has been the position of the Greens for several years that ICCAT was not fulfilling its obligations with respect to bluefin tuna, a point we have made clear in several letters to the Commission. In 2008, an independent panel of fisheries experts conducted a review of the performance of ICCAT and they agreed with us. The panel concluded that:

*ICCAT CPCs' performance in managing fisheries on bluefin tuna particularly in the eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean Sea is widely regarded as an international disgrace<sup>1</sup>*

The Panel went on to note that the only way to stop "a travesty in fisheries management" was for:

*all fishing for East Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin tuna be immediately suspended until the CPCs involved in those fisheries, their nationals and companies operating in their waters, agree to fully abide by the rules and recommendations of ICCAT and international fisheries law.*

Two months later, ICCAT adopted a quota for bluefin tuna that was far higher than the scientific advice.

Clearly, ICCAT has failed to assume its responsibilities.

The Greens contend that the European Union bears a large share of the responsibility for the disgraceful situation in which ICCAT and the bluefin tuna fishery find themselves. For many years, the EU has proposed, and worked hard to achieve, catch limits that were significantly above the scientific advice.

In Morocco last year, the scientific advice was for catches in 2009 of 8,000 to 15,000 tonnes. The EU refused to support a proposal to set the quota at 15,000 tonnes, which was

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<sup>1</sup> Report of the Independent Review of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas, September 2008; page 11

sponsored or supported by 11 countries from North America, South America, Asia, Europe and Africa. Instead, the European Commission lobbied intensively to defeat this proposal and in favour of its own proposal - for 25,500 tonnes.

It is true that certain additional control measures were adopted for the fishery, but a few well-intentioned bits of paper will have very little effect in curtailing the massive amount of illegal fishing and fraud that inevitably accompanies a fishery that is worth hundreds of millions of euros. We include EU and non-EU fishers here: the draft report from the European Fisheries Control Agency in 2008 noted that, with respect to EU players, "*It has not been a priority of most operators in the fishery to comply with the ICCAT legal requirements.*"

In addition to its irresponsible behaviour within ICCAT, the EU has contributed to the problem by allowing the development of a large surplus capacity of the fleet, much of it subsidized by EU structural funds.

Both ICCAT and the EU have had a great many chances to come to grips with an extremely lucrative fishery that has come to resemble a feeding frenzy rather than a well-managed and sustainable fishery. They have not done so.

President Barroso, in your Political Guidelines for the Next Commission, published today, you state that you want the Commission to put European fisheries policy on a "sustainable footing". We, the Greens, would argue that as far as bluefin tuna is concerned, the current situation is so bad that this can only be achieved by temporarily closing the fishery, as we have stated in the past. Anything less than a moratorium is no longer sufficient. Since ICCAT is blatantly incapable of making such a decision, the only alternative is to impose a ban on international trade in bluefin tuna, by placing the species on Appendix 1 of CITES until the species has recovered and ICCAT has adopted the management measures that are necessary to allow the species to be fished sustainably thereafter. This would be a good example of how the two Conventions could operate in a complementary manner.

The Green Paper published in April by Commissioner Borg freely admits the abject failure of the Common Fisheries Policy to achieve sustainable fisheries. Indeed, the CFP is widely viewed, both inside and outside the EU, as how not to manage commercial fisheries and the EU's credibility suffers as a consequence.

With bluefin, as with other fisheries, the EU is at a crossroads. The question is whether the Community will summon the political will to make the difficult decisions that are so clearly needed to put the bluefin tuna fishery on a sustainable basis, and thereby achieve some credibility as a body that actively supports responsible fishing. Or will the EU continue to lead the pack of countries that insist, against all evidence, that ICCAT is a credible organization; that the fishery is too valuable, at least to a few wealthy ship-owners and traders, and that international trade must not be interfered with?

As Commission President, you have a direct role to play in making that choice and we look forward to discussing this with you next week in our meeting.

Signed:

Isabella Lövin, Greens/EFA Coordinator of the Fisheries Committee

Raül Romeva y Rueda, Member of EU Delegation to ICCAT, 2008

cc: Commissioner Borg  
Commissioner Dimas