



Commissioner Maria Damanaki
Maritime Affairs and Fisheries

Brussels, 25th March 2010

Dear Commissioner,

We are writing to you today on the matter of bluefin tuna.

First of all, we wish to congratulate you on the decision you made, on your first day as Commissioner, to end the deadlock within the European Commission and to throw your support behind the Monaco proposal for an Appendix 1 listing of bluefin on CITES. That was a courageous decision and we appreciated it very much.

In agreeing to finally support the Monaco proposal, all three institutions - the European Parliament, the Commission and the Council - had accepted the consequences, which included a moratorium on the export of bluefin tuna and a ban on fishing by industrial vessels (primarily purse seines).

We agree with you that the failure of the proposal was unfortunate - we would even use a stronger term, such as irresponsible for, as you and Commissioner Potočník have said, "If action is not taken, there is a very serious danger that the bluefin tuna will no longer exist."

We cannot help but feel that, had the EU supported the Monaco proposal from the beginning, there is a very good chance that it would have been adopted at CITES, given the political influence that the EU would have been able to bear.

What does the Commission plan to do now in order to stem the crash of the eastern bluefin tuna stock?

In the run-up to CITES, the Japanese position was that the responsibility for bluefin rests with ICCAT and that no body other than ICCAT has any role to play in conserving the species. Unfortunately, experience at ICCAT has clearly shown that that organisation is chronically incapable of adopting sufficiently restrictive fishery management measures to ensure the future of the stock and the fishery. The few tepid measures adopted at ICCAT in Recife were accepted only because the threat of an Appendix 1 listing was hanging over the deliberations. With the CITES listing rejected, there is no guarantee that ICCAT will not revert to its old ways.

More specifically, Recommendation 09-06, adopted last year, committed ICCAT to, among other things:

3. The Commission shall establish at its 2010 meeting a three-year recovery plan for 2011-2013 with the goal of achieving B_{MSY} through 2022 with at least 60% of probability, on a basis of the SCRS advice described in paragraph 2 above.

4. If the SCRS stock assessment detects a serious threat of fishery collapse, the Commission shall suspend all the fisheries for eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin tuna in 2011.

Certain Member States are already making noises that this recommendation, a legally binding international commitment, should be relaxed.

What is your proposal to for a European position now? Surely, after accepting the consequences of an Appendix 1 listing, the Commission cannot simply return to the old way of doing things, of negotiating the lowest common denominator in ICCAT in an attempt to achieve consensus.

We urge you, and your fellow Commissioner Potočnik in DG ENVI, to maintain the position you adopted last month and to implement, on a unilateral basis, the consequences of an Appendix 1 listing, i.e. a ban on industrial fishing (such as by purse seines and possibly others) of bluefin tuna and on the export of tuna outside the territory of the EU.

The EU must act and act now, given that the international community has so miserably failed.

Sincerely



Isabella Lövin
Member of the European Parliament



Raül Romeva Rueda
Member of the European Parliament