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**Statement from Russell F. Smith III, deputy assistant secretary for international fisheries**  
*U.S. priorities for fishermen, science and stewardship achieved at international meeting*

I am pleased to report that the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) made significant progress on key U.S. priorities to improve science, management of fish stocks and their ecosystems, monitoring of fishing activities, and compliance with commission decisions at the recently completed annual meeting in Turkey.

U.S. stakeholders, including fishermen, will benefit from the actions that ICCAT has taken:

- The U.S. delegation was able to preserve the current North Atlantic swordfish annual quota of 3,907 metric tons for U.S. fishermen. We're pleased that our fishermen's sacrifices to help rebuild swordfish were recognized. Retaining U.S. quota will help the industry continue on its economic rebuilding path.
- ICCAT agreed to expand a time/area closure in the Gulf of Guinea off Africa to protect young bigeye and yellowfin tunas and to strengthen monitoring and control measures in the fishery. As these fish grow, they travel across the Atlantic Ocean where they are important to U.S. recreational and commercial fishermen. Although the U.S. believes that ICCAT needs to do more with respect to these stocks, they are moving in the right direction.
- ICCAT continued its efforts to protect vulnerable species of sharks in adopting a measure co-sponsored by the U.S. to require release of silky sharks, a vulnerable species, in ICCAT fisheries, with a limited exception for developing nations that depend on these sharks for food. The U.S. hopes that next year ICCAT can make more progress on measures to address the protection of porbeagle sharks and to require that all sharks be landed with their fins naturally attached, measures that the commission was unable to reach agreement on this year.
- The commission advanced the U.S.-promoted plan to adopt electronic, real-time tracking of Atlantic bluefin tuna catch from the landing through international trade, a measure that will help prevent fraud and reduce the burden of the existing paper-based system.
- ICCAT adopted conservation and management measures for blue and white marlins, bycatch reporting, and the protection of seabirds.
- ICCAT adopted several measures to help combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, allowing for smaller vessels to be listed on IUU vessel lists and requiring greater transparency on bi-national fishing agreements to help improve catch reporting.
- Several measures were adopted to strengthen the link between scientific advice and management, which build on efforts to ensure that ICCAT applies a precautionary form of management that takes uncertainty into account.

In separate letters to the commission chairman before this year's meeting, NOAA Administrator Dr. Jane Lubchenco and Maria Damanaki, European Union Commissioner for Maritime and Fisheries Affairs, both highlighted the importance of basing management on high quality science.