

Bluefin tuna

EU complicit as ICCAT signs bluefin tuna death warrant behind closed doors

Raül Romeva, Greens/EFA Vice-president and member of the European Parliament Fisheries Committee, has attended the annual meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) in Recife, Brazil from 6 to 15 November, where the fate of endangered bluefin tuna has hung in the balance until the meeting's close yesterday.

"The EU delegation deserves to be condemned in the strongest possible terms for contributing to take ICCAT to the moral low ground. At the very end of nine days of frenetic but secret negotiations, the EU tabled a 'fait-accompli' proposal for a total bluefin tuna fishing quota of 13,500 tonnes. The EU will claim that this is a courageous step, but in reality even a reduction to 8,000 tonnes has only a 50% chance of allowing bluefin to recover by 2023. Even a closure of the fishery is not certain to lead to a full recovery of the stock by then. And this assumes full respect of the rules.

"By making a few token gestures in a desperate attempt to avoid the listing of its most iconic species on Appendix 1 of CITES (1), ICCAT has failed miserably in its conservation responsibilities. Most delegations behaved like children, pointing the finger at their neighbours and refusing to admit that they had made mistakes themselves. As an independent review panel said in 2008, management of bluefin tuna has been an international disgrace."

"So much time was wasted in these manoeuvres that several other important proposals, regarding sharks, sea turtles, seabirds and other species, were barely discussed. The preferred phrase of the meeting was 'next year we will act'."

Notes to editors:

(1) Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species

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