



FECOP

(Costa Rican Sport Fishing Federation)

Statement to the 104th Meeting of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission

August 31 – September 4, 2026. Lisbon, Portugal

FECOP is grateful for the opportunity to participate and contribute as an observer in the 104th Annual meeting of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC). We wish all member delegations a very productive and positive outcome from this important meeting. We respectfully ask the Commission to consider the following recommendations during this year's deliberations:

Adopt a Working Group on Billfish

We welcome the proposal by the Delegation of Panama to create a Billfish Working Group, and we kindly ask all commission delegations to support this proposal.

Billfish are key fishery resources for many countries with commercial and recreational fishing fleets operating in the Eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO). Billfish support two major uses: as a seafood resource for commercial fisheries and as a high-value target for recreational fisheries. Both industries rely on healthy fish populations and therefore require accurate information on stock status to guide effective management and conservation. Sustainable management is critical not only to maintain seafood supplies but also to preserve the economic and social benefits generated by recreational fishing tourism, including employment and income for coastal communities. Recreational fisheries in the EPO and in particular billfish sportfishing are the basis of dynamic economies that sustain thousands of jobs in several IATTC member countries, including Canada, the United States, Mexico, Guatemala, Costa Rica, and Panama, among others. To keep sportfishing industries thriving and generating healthy economies, billfish stocks need be healthy as well. However, as of today, the IATTC still lacks an assessment of the status of marlins and sailfish stocks that could guide the adoption of conservation measures in the EPO. The uncertainty on billfish stock conditions is a risk for companies investing in the sportfishing tourism industry.

We invite all IATTC member delegations to support Panama's proposal to establish a Billfish Working Group. This critical step will help ensure the long-term profitability of both recreational and commercial fisheries dependent on billfish. This initiative is already gaining momentum and backing from key partners in the sportfishing industry, including private companies and



NGOs across Central and North America. Recognizing that sustainability requires strong public-private cooperation; the private sportfishing sector stands ready to actively support the working group.

Adopt the Staff's Proposed Management Procedure for Tropical Tuna.

Management procedures proposed by the IATTC scientific staff will help the Commission establish precautionary management cycles to comprehensibly and responsibly manage the three main tuna fisheries under this novel scenario where all these tuna stocks are in healthy condition. We welcome this important outcome which has been the result of sound and science-based tuna fisheries management. At the same time, this scenario of bonanza may be lost if conservation measures are removed without a well thought and comprehensive management plan. Therefore, we urge the Commission to adopt the IATTC staff's proposed management procedure for Tropical Tunas as an interim management plan and evaluate its performance at the end of every management cycle. Furthermore, as fishing closure days are reduced in each management cycle, we recommend monitoring the impact these reductions may have on the fishing mortality of other bycatch species, including sailfish, marlins, sharks and rays, marine turtles and marine mammals.