Statement to the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission
12th Regular Session of the Northern Committee
29 August - 2 September 2016 - Fukuoka, Japan

The Pew Charitable Trusts and Greenpeace welcome the opportunity to participate in the 12th Regular Session of the Northern Committee (NC12) of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC). While the responsibility for adopting and implementing sustainable management ultimately falls on members of the Commission, the Northern Committee has a critical and essential role in determining appropriate management measures for Northern Stocks and recommending these for Commission adoption. Unfortunately for Pacific bluefin tuna, current management is failing to live up to this responsibility – subjecting the Pacific bluefin population to decades of overfishing and leaving it at historically low levels. Despite clear indications that the Pacific bluefin population is severely depleted, repeated calls to implement policies that would rebuild the population to the healthy levels have been rejected.   For this reason, **we are calling for the WCPFC to immediately implement an initial 2-year moratorium on all commercial fishing for Pacific bluefin tuna to immediately end overfishing. The moratorium should remain in place until there is adoption of a Pacific-wide rebuilding plan that puts measures in place that will return the population to healthy, sustainable levels.**

The latest stock assessment for Pacific bluefin, released in 2016, found that the population has been heavily depleted to just 2.6 percent of its historic unfished size by nearly a century of overfishing that continues even today. Projections done by scientists show that, under current management and recruitment conditions, the stock will not reach the rebuilding target of 42,592 tons by the 2024 deadline set by the WCPFC with the required 60 percent probability, and there is a less than a 1 percent chance that the population will return to healthy levels by 2034. Recent recruitment estimates are near the lowest levels ever recorded, further threatening the continued viability of the population.

In light of the unprecedented level of depletion, and in order to begin the process of rebuilding the population for the future, the Northern Committee should recommend that the WCPFC and its members enact an initial 2-year moratorium for all commercial fishing and, if needed, extend the moratorium until the Commission acts to:

- Implement a cross-Pacific recovery plan that will rebuild the population to $20\%SSB_{current, F=0}$ within 8 years (two generations times, as per best practice) and then further recover the stock to a target reference point of at least $40\% SB_{current, F=0}$ by 2030
- Adopt limit reference points for Pacific bluefin of at least $20\%SB_{current, F=0}$ and a related F_{limit} point. Limit reference points should be defined as the points at which, if breached, the fishery will be suspended and scientific monitoring will be instituted until the fishery and population return to the limits.
- Adopt target reference points for Pacific bluefin of at least $40\% SB_{current, F=0}$ and a related F_{target} point that would provide an appropriate buffer to avoid breaching the limit reference points.

- Adopt harvest control rules that lead to a less than 5% chance of breaching the limit reference points, and have a 90% or greater chance of achieving the target reference points.

The Pacific bluefin population will not recover without additional help. If the measures noted above are not in place by 2018, an international trade ban through a CITES listing should be pursued as the only remaining option to safeguard the species.

Pacific bluefin cannot afford another year of inaction. At this year's meeting, we urge members of the Northern Committee to recommend the science-based, sustainable measures that fulfill the mandate of the Commission and that are desperately needed to return the Pacific bluefin population to healthy levels.