



H.Con.Res. 229 – Expressing the sense of the Congress that the United States should seek a review of compliance by all nations with the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas' conservation and management recommendations for Atlantic bluefin tuna and other species, and should pursue strengthened conservation and management measures to facilitate the recovery of the Atlantic bluefin tuna, and for other purposes

FLOOR SITUATION

H.Con.Res. 229 is being considered on the House floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Representative Frank Palone (D-NJ) on October 9, 2007. The bill was sent to the House Committee on Natural Resources but was never considered.

H.Con.Res. 229 is expected to be considered on the House floor on November 13, 2007.

SUMMARY

H.Con.Res. 229 expresses a sense of Congress that Congress should:

- Pursue a review and assessment of compliance with conservation and management measures adopted by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (“The Commission”) and in effect for the 2006 Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin tuna fishery, including data collection and reporting requirements;
- Seek to address noncompliance by nations through deducting a proportion of a future quota for a country to compensate for such country exceeding its quota in prior years;
- Pursue a meaningful discussion of the implementation and effectiveness of the Commission recommendation entitled “Recommendation by ICCAT to Establish a Multi-Annual Recovery Plan for Bluefin Tuna in the Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean”, including seeking detailed explanations from Commission members that have failed to fully implement the terms of the recommendation; and
- Seek to strengthen the conservation and management of the Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin tuna by making recommendations to halt the decline of the stock and begin to rebuild it.

BACKGROUND

The International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (“the Convention”) was signed in 1966. The countries signing the original treaty were; Brazil, Dominican Republic, Gabon, Japan, Republic of Korea, United States, and Venezuela. Since that time several additional countries have signed onto the treaty.

The Convention established the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (“the Commission”) to coordinate international research and develop conservation and management recommendations on Atlantic bluefin tuna and other highly migratory species in the Atlantic Ocean and the adjacent seas, including the Mediterranean Sea.

In 1974, the Commission adopted its first conservation and management recommendation to ensure the sustainability of Atlantic bluefin tuna throughout the Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean Sea, while allowing for the maximum sustainable catch for food and other purposes.

The total allowable catches for the Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean stock have been consistently set at levels significantly above scientific recommendations intended to maintain bluefin tuna populations at levels that will permit the maximum sustainable catch.

Despite the establishment by the Commission of fishing quotas for the Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin, compliance with such quotas has been very poor, most recently with harvests exceeding such total allowable catch levels by over 50 percent for each of the last 4 years.

This legislation expresses the Sense of Congress that the Convention’s rules should be adhered to and followed in order to allow a healthy tuna population in the Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean regions.

STAFF CONTACT

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