

ICCAT ANNUAL MEETING 2015

OPENING STATEMENT EUROPEAN UNION

The European Union would like to express its deep appreciation to Malta for hosting the 24th Regular Meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) in the beautiful venue of St Julians. There is no better place for discussing ocean governance and fisheries management than on an island in the midst of the sea. We would also like to praise the hard and excellent work done by the Executive Secretary, Mr. Meski, and his wonderful team throughout the year and for the preparation of this meeting. We wish also the best to the Chair, Mr. Depypere.

In recent years, ICCAT and its CPCs have delivered efficiently on an increasing range of issues and have therefore contributed in raising high expectations from the civil society and the fishing industry on the role of ICCAT and its capacity to manage fish stocks under its purview. As a result ICCAT has become today a model of best practice in the RFMO world. However, this should not prevent us from taking stock and launching a second performance review this year, while at the same time making progress and hopefully reach consensus on the Convention Amendment. This would present a considerable governance improvement and turn ICCAT into an even more modern organisation.

The European Union firmly believes that ICCAT should also continue promoting ambitious measures for the sustainable management of resources under its purview. This year it will be particularly important to bring bigeye tuna back to a healthy stock situation. The continuation of the Working Group on FADs will also be essential in this respect and consideration should be given to the creation of a joint tuna-RFMOs FAD Working Group. We also would like to have an earlier stock assessment for the Mediterranean swordfish in order for us to prepare an ambitious management framework in the near future.

The European Union wants also to ensure that shark stocks that are caught in association with ICCAT fisheries are managed in a precautionary way. This is particularly the case for blue shark stocks, which were evaluated this year. The European Union will also continue promoting the protection of other vulnerable shark species, in particular porbeagle and shortfin mako as well as the introduction of a fins naturally attached policy for which the European Union welcomes the increasing support by many Contracting Parties. The adoption of these proposals would further contribute in

positioning our Organisation as the lead RFMO in the management of sharks.

The European Union is pleased with the developments towards better science, including the dialogue between scientists and fisheries managers. Better science comes at a cost. The European Union has recognised this by providing substantial amounts of funding to the GBYP research programme (8 million € over the last 6 years) and more recently the important programme for the Tagging of Atlantic Tropical Tunas (13.7 million € for over the next five years). The European Union hopes that other Contracting Parties or associations will be in a position to provide the necessary co-financing of 10% over the period covered by the programme.

As in the past, the European Union continues to attach the utmost importance to the compliance process. Compliance should be at the core of the work we are doing, and we should also assist the CPCs to fully implement and respect the rules. Only full compliance by everybody guarantees a level playing field across the entire Convention Area and among all ICCAT members and their industries. We are committed to ensure that ICCAT maintains a high effort for the compliance review and assessment and we are confident that this process will continue to be guided by a solution-oriented and pragmatic approach in order to further enable ICCAT to stand by its global mission.

The European Union also considers it is now time to finalise the impressive work done so far on the electronic Bluefin tuna catch document. We are truly committed to work with all the Contracting parties during this session to achieve this objective which is essential for the control of the BFT fishery and for any future development that ICCAT would like to pursue for traceability of other species.

The European Union is looking forward to working constructively with all CPCs in order to achieve these ambitious goals at the 24th Regular Meeting of ICCAT.