

Opening Statement

24th Regular Meeting of ICCAT
St. Julians, Malta
10-17 November 2015

Japanese Delegation

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

On behalf of the Government of Japan, our delegation would like to express our deepest appreciation to the Government of Malta and the European Union for hosting this important meeting in this beautiful and historic city, St. Julians. We also thank Mr. Driss Meski, the Executive Secretary, and the other ICCAT Secretariat staff for the excellent preparation and arrangements as well as wish all the best to our Chair, Mr. Depypere.

Japan attaches importance to conservation of bigeye tuna and implementation of an eBCD at this annual meeting. Although the last bigeye stock assessment in 2010 indicated that the stock status was neither overfished nor overfishing, this year's stock assessment showed a totally different picture, that is, the stock is currently under overfished and overfishing. The SCRS recommends to reduce the TAC to a level that would allow the recovery of the stock with high probability and in as short period as possible.

Japan agrees that the Commission should consider reduction of TAC, but at the same time consideration should be given to the reasons why the stock has been deteriorating despite the fact that the total catch has been within the level recommended by the SCRS. Japan understands from the SCRS report that this is due to a large amount of juvenile bigeye catches made by surface fisheries. The SCRS report stated "The proportion of small age 0 and 1 bigeye has shown a continuous increase since the beginning of the time series which may affect the prospect of recovery of the population and worsened the status of the stock as it was forecast in 2010." Thus, it would be meaningless if the Commission only focuses on the extent of the TAC reduction without addressing reduction of juvenile catches. Having this in mind, Japan would like to work with other CPCs towards sustainable use of bigeye resources.

There is no question that the Bluefin Tuna Catch Documentation Scheme (BCD) has been greatly contributing to elimination of IUU products from the market. While the BCD has been very useful to detect illegal products, it has become clear that the current paper-based system has some limitations and also cannot address ever-increasing workload of CPCs and the Secretariat, particularly as the trade amount of Bluefin tuna is expected to increase in the next few years. The Commission should start an electronic BCD system (eBCD) as soon as possible. Towards this goal, Japan submitted a proposal on the implementation schedule, giving due regard to the need for gradual introduction of the system. Japan sincerely hopes that this meeting will be able to agree on this.

Japan also understands that it is expected to finalize the draft Convention amendment as soon as possible based on the work of the Convention amendment working group and adopt an agreed set of amendments. It's our sincere hope that the amendments can significantly contribute to the strengthening of the Commission. One of the important amendments

proposed is that the Convention will cover shark species under its management purview. Since the entry into force of the amended Convention is expected to take a long time, Japan is in a position to consider conservation of shark species even before the amendment takes effect. Japan would like to emphasize, however, that any conservation measure for sharks should be based on good scientific advice from the SCRS, and that any proposed measure should cover major fisheries targeting or incidentally catching the species subject to the measure. Japan would also like to point out that any conservation measure on sharks must be based on a consensus as the existing Convention has no mandate on management of sharks.

Japan is ready to work closely and cooperatively with other delegations to find good solutions and sincerely hopes that this regular meeting will be successfully and fruitfully concluded.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.