

24<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE CONSERVATION OF  
ATLANTIC TUNAS (*Malta, 10-17 November 2015*)

Opening Remarks by

**HON. SHERRY AYITTEY**

*Minister for Fisheries and Aquaculture Development, Republic of Ghana*

It gives me great pleasure to convey warm greetings from the Government and people of the Republic of Ghana. Let me begin by thanking our hosts, the European Union and the Government of Malta for hosting this meeting and for their hospitality. I also wish to express appreciation to the ICCAT Secretariat for their excellent preparation for the 24<sup>th</sup> Annual meeting.

ICCAT is one of the most important international organizations for Ghana. Ghana ratified the ICCAT Convention in April 1968, the fourth Contracting Party to do so and has actively participated in the work of the Commission since then. On the occasion of the 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of ICCAT, let me assure you of Ghana's unwavering commitment to collective efforts to achieve the long term sustainability of tropical tunas and dependent and associated species in the ICCAT Convention area. We are committed to taking all necessary actions to comply with our ICCAT obligations.

We recognise that the tuna resources in our waters are shared resources and we are committed to working cooperatively with all ICCAT Contracting Parties to ensure the long term sustainability of these resources. More fundamentally, we are committed to the on-going efforts to modernize ICCAT through the Convention amendment process to ensure fairness and equity for all members of the ICCAT family.

Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing poses a major threat to the long term sustainability of our shared tuna resources. The eradication of IUU fishing requires collective efforts at the regional and global levels. Ghana is, therefore, committed to regional and global initiatives to combat IUU fishing. To this end, Ghana has already taken a number of far reaching actions at the national level. We have modernized our fisheries legislation to provide comprehensive framework to implement our international and regional obligations and to address IUU fishing. We have significantly increased the penalties for IUU fishing. We have developed a new fisheries management plan to ensure that our fisheries resources are managed sustainably. We have upgraded our vessel monitoring system in line with ICCAT standards and specifications; and we have commenced the internal process to ratify the Port State Measures Agreement and the UN Fish Stocks Agreement.

I thank you sincerely for your attention and wish you all a very productive meeting.