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**STATEMENT ON OVERARCHING PRINCIPLE OF MULTILATERAL
COLLABORATION AND PRIMACY OF ICCAT RECOMMENDATIONS**

[Presented by the European Union, Japan, Namibia, Chinese Taipei and Morocco]

The European Union [, Japan, Namibia, and Chinese Taipei] have been recently identified under the USA High Seas Driftnet Fishing Moratorium Protection Act (Moratorium Protection Act) for allegedly not having adopted measures, deemed comparable to those of the USA, for the mitigation of sea turtles bycatch in their longline fisheries operating in the ICCAT Convention area. We have been requested to adopt measures determined by the USA as comparable with U.S. domestic legislation to avoid the imposition of sanctions by the USA, such as denial of USA port privileges for its flag vessels, or potential prohibitions on certain seafood products exported to the USA.

We consider that this identification, which took place outside the ICCAT context and did not involve appropriate consultations with relevant ICCAT Contracting Parties and Fishing Entity, runs counter to Article IX(3) of the ICCAT Convention Article 118 UNCLOS and Article 8 of UNFSA. Those provisions uphold cooperation as the main obligation in the conservation and management of living resources in the high seas, which should be done through regional fisheries organisations.

We are fully committed to working collectively under the auspices of ICCAT and through its commonly agreed rules of procedures. We are determined to ensure the conservation and sustainable exploitation of target species and to guarantee the protection of bycatch species such as sea turtles, based on the best available scientific advice.

Any unilateral action outside this multilateral legal framework in the areas of conservation and management of living resources falling within the remit of ICCAT, undermines the international architecture, the mandate and the work of ICCAT. ICCAT is currently assessing the impact of the pelagic longline fleet on sea turtles in the Atlantic Ocean, to further strengthen the existing recommendation on the bycatch of sea turtles (ICCAT REC 13-11) and to provide an appropriate level of protection to these vulnerable species, while ensuring that any possible negative trade-offs for other species are identified, duly taken into account and minimised.

We invite the USA to suspend its unilateral action on sea turtles bycatch and join forces within ICCAT for achieving this common goal.