

## OPENING STATEMENT BY JAPAN TO THE PLENARY

On behalf of the Japanese Delegation, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the Government of Portugal as well as the European Union for hosting this important meeting in this beautiful location, Vale do Lobo. We also thank the ICCAT Secretariat staff for the excellent preparation and arrangement of the 23rd Special Meeting of the Commission.

For the last two years, the Commission could not meet in person, and even though it made its utmost effort to address many issues and indeed achieved several important progresses, we have to admit that virtual meetings are not the best format to discuss very complicated and controversial issues.

This year's Commission meeting will tackle one of the most difficult negotiations, TAC and allocation, for the symbolic species of ICCAT, bluefin tuna and bigeye. There are also many other important issues to be discussed this year. Japan wishes to cooperate with the respective Chairpersons and other CPCs to produce good outcomes for these issues.

The Commission has been discussing the introduction of effective management measures on bigeye for years. While the stock assessment in 2021 shows a somewhat optimistic result including potential increase of the TAC, it is still challenging to accommodate the growing aspirations of developing CPCs. Maintaining or even increasing the productivity of the stock is essential in order to accommodate a wide range of interests of CPCs.

Japan commends the hard work and dedication of all the scientists involved and developers who have almost completed necessary work for the adoption of MP for BFT. It has been a long journey, and the Commission is now in a position to introduce a more robust management scheme to this important species. While agreeing on one MP is not an easy task, Japan is willing to participate in the discussion in a constructive and flexible manner.

With regard to BFT farming, Japan, as one of the responsible market CPCs, has been expressing concern about very high growth ratios. Several significant progresses have been made in 2022 such as update of growth rate table and pilot study on automatic length measurement. Taking into account these developments, Japan would like to discuss how to improve the management of BFT farming.

Last but not least, Japan strongly encourages other CPCs to expedite their respective internal acceptance procedures for the Protocol to amend the ICCAT Convention so that this Protocol may enter into force as soon as possible.

Japan is ready to work together with other distinguished delegations and sincerely wishes successful and fruitful conclusion of this meeting.