

## OPENING STATEMENT BY CANADA

Canada is very pleased to be a part of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Special Meeting of ICCAT. Over the last few years Contracting Parties have demonstrated exceptional commitment while continuing to make progress virtually. We are delighted to gather with most ICCAT Contracting Parties this week in person again, in Vale do Lobo, Portugal. We are grateful to the EU, and Portugal, for providing us with such a beautiful venue, and wonderful hospitality for what we are sure will be a productive meeting.

After seven years of work to build and conduct a management strategy evaluation for both stocks and areas of Atlantic Bluefin tuna, the Commission now has an array of candidate management procedure variations from which to select, according to the tradeoffs between different management priorities. It is important that the Commission come to consensus and select a management procedure that is consistent with the best available scientific advice and the precautionary approach and that effectively and equitably manages both stocks and both areas, and move into the implementation phase without delay.

This meeting provides a vital opportunity to make meaningful incremental reforms to the Tropical Tunas management measure. For both Bigeye and Yellowfin tunas, juvenile mortality rates must be addressed as they continue to threaten the future of these stocks. The Commission must also ensure that the total allowable catch levels set for tropical tuna species are consistent with the best available science in order to assure a sustainable future for these fisheries. For Canada, among others, it will also be important that the category of CPCs that harvest relatively small amounts of Bigeye tuna continue to hold catch limits outside of the allocation key.

Canada remains committed to establishing a Joint International Inspection Scheme in ICCAT, and with the encouragement of other CPCs we have submitted a more ambitious proposal for a single scheme that covers all areas beyond national jurisdiction in the Convention Area. This enhanced proposal reflects the importance of using all tools at our disposal to combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing, thereby supporting the sustainability of fish stocks and the livelihoods that depend on them.

Canada will also join the rest of ICCAT's members in seeking progress on the management of several important non-tuna species. These include the sustainable management of Atlantic Swordfish, strengthened conservation and management of Shortfin Mako sharks, reduction of the impacts on ICCAT fisheries on sea turtles, and modernization of shark management to include requirements for fins to remain naturally attached. The Commission's management of non-tuna and bycatch species is gaining attention in the wider world and has an increasing impact on ICCAT's credibility as stewards of shared environmental resources.

Finally, we note from the 2022 Administrative Report that five CPCs have ratified, accepted, or approved the Palma de Mallorca Protocol. In particular, we welcome Belize's ratification of the Protocol in February. Given the importance of a modernized Convention to strengthen the effectiveness of the Commission, Canada encourages other CPCs to continue making progress toward ratification, acceptance or approval of the Protocol.