

### Opening statement by Canada at the 28th Regular Meeting of the Commission

Canada is pleased to participate in the 28th Regular Meeting of ICCAT. We welcome the opportunity to again meet in a hybrid format that allows CPCs to participate both in person and virtually. In particular, we are delighted to be able to meet with most ICCAT CPCs in person here in New Cairo, and are grateful to the Egyptian Government for hosting us in this beautiful venue. We also thank the Secretariat for their dedication and commitment to the preparations for the meeting.

Following on last year's adoption of a management procedure for Atlantic bluefin tuna, we hope the Commission can build on that success in the context of North Atlantic swordfish, where a management strategy evaluation has been underway for a number of years. Canada looks forward to making progress this week toward adoption of a management procedure for this stock. However, in doing so we feel it is critical to address the ongoing issue of overallocation of the TAC while providing for an equitable distribution of fishing opportunities. We hope our proposal, which would consolidate all existing northern swordfish measures, can help to move the Commission in this direction and we look forward to further discussion this week.

The meeting also provides an opportunity to adopt a new measure for tropical tunas, following intense work throughout 2023. 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 furthermore 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.

We look forward to discussions on the management of several shark species. Canada welcomes improvements in reporting of dead discards and live releases of North Atlantic shortfin mako sharks, but we remain concerned about the high levels of mortality that have continued since the adoption of a revised measure in 2021. We also welcome the opportunity to discuss the management of northern and southern blue sharks to ensure that the Commission takes appropriate steps to implement sustainable catch levels, including through improved reporting.

Canada remains firmly committed to establishing a Joint International Inspection Scheme in ICCAT. This year has seen positive and constructive discussions about such schemes, particularly at the seminar held in Vigo on September 13-14, 2023, which provided a forum to share experiences, discuss concerns, and explore potential ways forward. A proposal similar to that Canada co-sponsored with Senegal in 2022 comes to this meeting with the endorsement of the Working Group on Integrated Monitoring Measures. Furthermore, the implementation of this proposed Scheme would be supported by an ad hoc Working Group proposed by the European Union following the Vigo seminar. We hope that, after extensive discussions over a number of years, ICCAT will at last be ready in 2023 to move forward in pursuing this valuable tool to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and support compliance with ICCAT's conservation and management measures. Also notable from the perspective of improved monitoring and enforcement is the proposal for minimum standards for electronic monitoring systems, which would represent a significant step forward for ICCAT.

Canada welcomed the important discussions that the Commission undertook this year on climate change, its effects on ICCAT-managed fisheries, and the implications of climate change for our current and future work. We hope that the Commission will build on these discussions this week by agreeing on a plan of action to better incorporate and account for climate change in its scientific and management work.

Finally, given the importance of a modernized Convention to strengthen the effectiveness of the Commission, Canada encourages other Contracting Parties to continue making progress toward ratification, acceptance or approval of the Palma de Mallorca Protocol.