

ICCAT ANNUAL MEETING

Vilamoura, 14-21 de novembro 2016

Proposta de Intervenção para a cerimónia de abertura

(9 h – 10h 30 m, de 14 de novembro 2016)

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates and Observers:

In my name and in the name of the Portuguese Government, I am pleased to welcome you all to Portugal for the 20th Special Meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas.

Let me first greet ICCAT when it completes 50 years of existence as the regional fishery management body that has carried out its mandate, guaranteeing the fishing activities of tuna and tuna-like species in a sustainable manner throughout the Atlantic.

Secondly I salute all sector representatives and observers, International and intergovernmental bodies, scientists, ONG's which support the objectives of ICCAT.

ICCAT is a really global organization with 51 Contracting Parties worldwide and your decisions have global implications not only for the Atlantic tuna and tuna like species, but also for the fishermen of several Continents who depend on them for their livelihood. I'm proud to say that Portugal was an ICCAT Contracting Party since the very beginning. Actually, tuna and tuna-like species have a huge relevance in the Portuguese fishing, both in mainland and in our Outermost Regions of Azores and Madeira.

A dynamic and sustainable ocean economy is a critical feature to assure a balanced prosperity of humankind.

In fact, the vast ocean that makes the most part of our planet is a key source of food, energy, minerals, health, leisure and transport upon which hundreds of millions of people depend.

Thus, this emergent new strategic importance of the ocean economy is deeply connected with the globalization process we live in, which resides in a civilizational challenge driven by a combination of population growth, rising incomes, rising inequality, intensifying geopolitical competition, dwindling natural resources, responses to climate change and disruptive technologies.



This is why the new Portuguese government (since November 2015) defined the Ocean as one of its priorities and decided to take the Ocean Governance to the next level dedicating a specific minister, after more than 20 years, to the definition of specific policies for the sustainable management of that resource. We want both to maximise the economic return of that vast resource and to protect it, especially because the Ocean is part of the cultural heritage of Portugal, and we want to ensure it remains well preserved for the future generations.

At the moment the Ocean represents three major challenges for the Portuguese government: Economic, Sovereignty and Knowledge.

1 - Economically speaking, the ocean economy represents around 2.5% of our GDP a figure that we consider too small for a country with the geostrategic positioning of Portugal with access to several of the Ocean ecosystems services. To overcome this picture we want to insist in three axis as the “engine” for a change: strengthening the traditional ocean economic activities; empower the emerging economic activities and reinforcing the Portuguese euro-Atlantic uniqueness in terms of ports and logistics.

2 - In terms of sovereignty, and taking into account that Portugal is expected to extend its continental shelf (after 2017), creating a territory with around four millions square kilometres, mainly of deep and ultra-deep ocean, with resources (biological, genetic, mineral, energetic, ...) that need to be protected but that can also be exploited sustainably opening an opportunity to new activities and industries, that can transform the economic paradigm of the country, we will bet in measures like: effective presence at sea; ocean literacy; maritime spatial planning to enrich the economic, environmental and social dimensions of the Ocean; protection of the natural capital and ecosystems services.

3 - The third challenge, the knowledge, is crucial to change the social, economic and environmental relation of our country with the ocean. The knowledge of the ocean is the only way to ensure and maximise the sustainable use of the ocean resources (biological, minerals, biotech or renewable energy) and that challenge demands a strategic investment in ocean sciences and training of highly skilled human resources. We need and we want more and more science based policies and decisions.

However, this enormous potential does not come without risks, which are very complex and diverse. Ocean health is the most critical of all. Unhealthy oceans are caused by



overexploitation of marine resources, pollution, rising sea temperatures and levels, ocean acidification and loss of biodiversity.

Unsustainable use of the ocean and its resources destroys the very basis on which much of world prospers and depends.

In this sense, we have, we must realise that the full potential of the ocean economy will only come to life with a sustainable strategy underlying the economic development.

And reminding that all this only makes sense if we preserve the different ecosystems that compose the global resource that is the Ocean, and at the same time fight for sustainability and equity among human race, we've recently communicated to Commissioner Karmenu Vella the problem that we are facing in Azores due to the proliferation of "Fish Aggregation Devices" (FADs) for tuna fisheries in other regions of the globe, especially on the African coast, and the need to use positive discrimination measures (ensuring equity) towards defending the specificities of traditional fleets of the Outermost Regions and to recognize the selectivity and the sustainability of those fisheries. It's the case of the Portuguese region of Azores where we have highly selective pole and line tuna fishery, duly certified and recognized as "Friend of the sea" and as "Dolphin Safe".

We are sure that the Commission and Delegates are committed to take decisions that ensure a balance between a sustainable management of the referred species and an adequate income for our fishermen. The stocks must have a sustainable future because without them our fishermen themselves have no future too.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Portugal is honoured to host the 20th Special Meeting of the Commission and I hope that in the middle of your very heavy work schedule and wise decisions you may find some time to enjoy your stay in Algarve and that in your luggage when you go back to your countries you take with you a bit of the Portuguese sunshine and a warm greeting from the Portuguese people.

I wish you an excellent meeting and an excellent stay!