

## Opening Statement on behalf of the United Kingdom Overseas Territories

The UK Overseas Territories would like to extend their sincere thanks and appreciation to Portugal for hosting the 20th Special Meeting for the ICCAT Commission.

The UK Overseas Territories represents four different United Kingdom Overseas Territories – Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands, Turks and Caicos Islands and the Territory of St. Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha. These are small coastal states in varying stages of development. During the year we have worked hard to meet all our ICCAT obligations and hope that we have managed to do so to the satisfaction of the Commission. The UK Government and its Overseas Territories are committed to ensuring that marine resources are managed to a high standard, a strategy which was highlighted in the UK Government's most recent White Paper on the UK OTs. The UK Overseas Territories also recognise that scientific information is necessary to underpin sound decision-making at ICCAT and are working with the UK Government to improve understanding of marine resources in the Territories.

The UK OTs are interested in the outcome of species specific discussions in Panel 4 again this year; however, we also hope that Contracting Parties can work together in order to safeguard the future sustainability of all species under ICCAT's remit. Measures taken to protect sharks at previous annual meetings have been very welcome, although we would like to see further precautionary management measures to protect vulnerable shark species and support the strengthening of the prohibition on shark-finning. We look forward to these discussions and are confident that ICCAT will once again demonstrate to the world that it can manage the marine resources for which it is responsible in a sustainable and efficient manner.

The UK OTs welcomed the results of the second performance review, which outlined the significant progress ICCAT had made since its performance review in 2008. We welcome further discussions on the recommendations provided in this review to further improve ICCAT's performance in the future.

The UK OTs would also like ICCAT to consider the draft resolution on 'Areas that are Important and Unique for ICCAT Species including the Sargasso Sea', which we are tabling in conjunction with other contracting parties. This resolution seeks to allow continuation by the SCRS of the good work already done under the Sargasso Sea resolution, 12-12, as well as allow for work on other important and unique areas in the ICCAT Convention Area.

Finally, we would like to express our thanks and appreciation to the ICCAT Secretariat for the outstanding work that it continues to do on behalf of the Contracting Parties. We wish them and all others involved in the meeting our best wishes for a constructive and successful meeting, and we wish the ICCAT chair, Dr. Martin Tsamenyi, a speedy recovery.