

**Opening Statement on behalf of the United Kingdom Overseas Territories  
25th Regular Meeting of ICCAT**

The UK Overseas Territories would like to extend their sincere thanks and appreciation to Morocco for hosting the 25<sup>th</sup> Regular Meeting for the ICCAT Commission.

The UKOTs represents four different United Kingdom Overseas Territories; British Virgin Islands (BVI), Bermuda, Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI) and St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha. Two of those territories, BVI and TCI, have experienced unprecedented devastation in September this year from hurricanes Irma and Maria.

These four territories are small coastal states in varying stages of development. During the year we have worked hard to meet all our ICCAT obligations, in the face of some unavoidable challenges, and hope that we have managed to do so to the satisfaction of the Commission. The UK Government and its Overseas Territories are also committed to ensuring that marine resources are managed to a high standard, and will further this goal through the Government's continued work with the Territories on the implementation of its new Blue Belt policy in the coming years. The UK Overseas Territories 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.

While we acknowledge that the main focus of the meeting will be on Atlantic Bluefin where the TAC measures are set for revision, we hope that Contracting Parties can work together in order to safeguard the future sustainability of all species under ICCAT's remit. The effective management of Bigeye tuna and Yellowfin tuna are of particular interest to the UKOTs. Measures taken to protect sharks at previous annual meetings are 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 UKOTs were pleased to welcome Martin Tsamenyi back briefly after his long recovery period, for the SWGSM in June, and are grateful to the Secretariat for all the work it has done to fill the position of the ICCAT Executive Secretary this year. The UKOTs look forward to the announcement of a new Executive Secretary.

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, the chair of ICCAT, the other chairs of the various Committees and Panels and other Contracting Parties our best wishes for a constructive and successful meeting.