

Madrid, 6 June 2018

ICCAT CIRCULAR # 3864 / 2018

SUBJECT: FAREWELL LETTER FROM THE ICCAT EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

I have the honour to transmit to you a farewell letter from the ICCAT Executive Secretary.

Please accept the assurances of my highest consideration

Driss Meski
Executive Secretary

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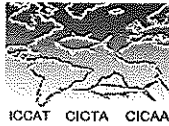
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Attachment: Farewell letter from ICCAT Executive Secretary.





Commission Officers,
Delegates,
Colleagues and friends,
Fellow workers at the Secretariat

My appointment as ICCAT Executive Secretary will end on 30 June 2018 following 14 years of service. I must admit that I had never imagined that I would remain in the same post for such a long time. Indeed my longest posting has been with ICCAT after having changed position eight times over the course of my career which has spanned 41 years. I had not spent more than eight years in the same position since 1977, which is when I entered the world of work.

It is always emotional to cease a regular activity, particularly when it is enjoyable. However, as the saying goes, all good things must come to an end and it is a good time for me to leave as I am still physically fully able. It is very satisfying to end on a positive note as I still command the respect of delegates, staff and all of those with whom I have had the opportunity to work. I am also pleased with the contribution that I have been able to make to ICCAT through my experience. I am delighted that I have been able to utilize the human and financial potential of the ICCAT Secretariat to make it an effective tool in serving the organisation.

When I arrived at the ICCAT Secretariat in April 2004, I encountered a fairly modest structure with limited human resources and precarious finances. My first and foremost task was to overcome these financial difficulties and to equip the Secretariat with human and material resources commensurate with its assigned role. The route to a better financial situation was through ratification and entry into force of the Madrid Protocol, which amended the ICCAT financial regulations. It was therefore necessary to urge Contracting Parties that had not ratified the agreement to do so, so that it could start to be implemented. My efforts to make contacts and apply pressure were quick to yield results as the quorum for ratification was achieved in late 2004. From that point onwards, ICCAT's financial position improved substantially to the extent that several Contracting Parties began to criticize my savings policy. In this context, the Commission adopted a recommendation to establish an ICCAT meeting participation fund. The establishment of this fund, in conjunction with voluntary contributions, has enabled the participation to be financed of around 80% of scientific representatives and 60% of Commission delegates from developing ICCAT Contracting Parties in each ICCAT meeting. At the time of writing, the ICCAT Working Capital Fund, which was almost inexistent at the beginning of my term of office, far exceeds 15% of the budget, which is the proportion recommended by the auditors, and the rate of contributions collection for 2018 has reached 63%. In this connection, I am very happy to leave to my successor the financial resources to enable him to commence his term of office successfully.

The second challenge that I faced was to strengthen the Secretariat's human resources so as to carry out the numerous tasks required by the Commission. When I took control of the Secretariat there were just four senior staff members and one of them resigned shortly after I took up my appointment. The Secretariat currently has more than 20 staff members in the professional category with a range of skillsets, all of whom are highly proficient.

The third constraint concerned the space occupied by the Secretariat. At the time, the Secretariat covered one and a half floors of the building that houses the offices of the Spanish Oceanographical Institute (IEO). It was therefore necessary to approach the Spanish authorities to secure adequate office space. In this regard, I applaud the assistance and the efforts of the Spanish State and I extend my gratitude to senior management of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries for their response to my request. I have managed to secure two floors in the same building with two large, well-equipped meeting rooms. The current space is sufficient to enable the Secretariat to carry out its work in good conditions.



As everyone knows, the Secretariat's workload has increased greatly in recent years. It has therefore been necessary to restructure the entire Secretariat to cope with this significant increase. The Secretariat's new structure broadly reflects ICCAT's core activities i.e. science, compliance, publications and administration and finance. Moreover, all modern technology has been implemented.

Important research programmes have been implemented since the beginning of my term in office as a result of the sizeable voluntary contributions that have been made, in particular by the European Union. Other Contracting Parties such as Japan, the United States, Canada, Norway, Morocco, China and Tunisia have also made voluntary contributions to finance capacity building. I would like to extend my most sincere thanks to them for the trust they have placed in me over my three terms of office.

As has been noted, my tasks were not easy, but with the assistance of all Contracting Parties who have deposited their trust in me, I have been able to achieve my objectives.

All this work would not have been possible without the valuable contribution of a committed professional staff of whom the ICCAT Secretariat is proud. I would like to extend to them my profoundest gratitude and respect for their loyal services.

Throughout my term in office, I have not spared any effort in making the ICCAT Secretariat what it is today. It is wholeheartedly considered that it has played a pioneering role in the management of tuna resources. I have invariably tried to manage Secretariat affairs impartially and with full transparency, putting the interests of ICCAT before my own personal interests. But it has come at the expense of my private life. I would like to pay my respects to my wife and family who have supported me throughout my professional commitments.

Finally, I am leaving office without any regrets and with a great sense of satisfaction. To those of you who wish to know what I intend to do in the future, my answer is that I will try to be as helpful as possible. I intend to undertake short-term assignments as an adviser and consultant on institutional management of marine resources at regional and international level. I would like to remain connected to the role of RFMOs worldwide in maintaining a sustainable marine environment. I will be available to offer my modest experience to those who request it.

As from 30 June, you can contact me via e-mail me at drissmeski96@gmail.com or driss.meski@outlook.com and my telephone number remains unchanged: +34 629 178 257.

It will be a great pleasure to remain in contact with everyone I have had the honour to meet.

In any case, and as decided by the Commission at its most recent meeting in Marrakesh, I will have the opportunity to see you again in Dubrovnik.

Thank you to everyone and farewell.

Driss Meski
Executive Secretary