

**OPENING ADDRESS OF THE ICCAT EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
AT THE OFFICIAL CEREMONY, 21ST SPECIAL COMMISSION MEETING**

Hon. Vice President and Minister of Agriculture of the Republic of Croatia
Hon. Prefect of Dubrovnik - Neretva - County
Hon. Mayor of the city of Dubrovnik,
Hon. ICCAT Chairman,
Hon. Vice Chairs of the Commission,
Commission Officers,
Delegates
Partners
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Colleagues,

Firstly, I would like to sincerely thank the European Union and the Croatian Authorities, on the one hand, for financing, hosting and organizing this 21st Special Commission meeting of ICCAT, and on the other, for the very warm welcome we have received in this wonderful city of Dubrovnik, a city full of rich history.

It am particularly humbled and honoured to be here in front of you today at this important 21st Special Commission meeting of ICCAT. Furthermore, I would like to express my full appreciation for the trust you have placed in me by electing me fifth Executive Secretary of the Commission just a year ago. Allow me, at this stage, to acknowledge and pay high tribute to all my predecessors, late Olegario RODRÍGUEZ MARTÍN, late Antonio FERNÁNDEZ, Mr. Adolfo RIBEIRO LIMA and Mr. Driss MESKI, who passed on the baton to me. This tribute is also paid to all the teams who have outstandingly accompanied them throughout the consolidation of highly significant progress witnessed by the Commission, namely the Secretariat staff. Dear colleagues of the Secretariat, I am very proud of you, and I am convinced that this pride is widely shared by the Commission.

Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am still convinced that this session, which is an exceptional space for discussion, will offer, once more, new opportunities for agreeing on and taking significant steps in the management of our resources.

Moreover, the increasing challenges associated with the achievement of ICCAT objectives, clearly requires its different bodies to continuously adapt to an equally changing environment. In fact, the emerging challenges for an effective management of tuna resources, as reflected in the work of the SCRS, entails a multiplication of tasks which are more and more intense and complex.

For the Secretariat, this situation has led to increasing pressure which requires an adjustment of its material, financial and human resources, in order to continue improving its performance to achieve its mission. Enormous efforts are already being made by the Secretariat.

However, I am certain that whatever the new challenges, we will face them together, through our various contributions to achieve ICCAT's goals. In this regard, it is important to note for example, that the development of an ICCAT Integrated Online Management System (IOMS) will be a crucial step and its impact will positively influence all the work of the Commission.

For my part, in synergy with all the bodies of the Commission and all the partners and other sister organisations, I shall do my utmost to continue building upon the foundations that I found, and I will involve the Secretariat further to improve our contribution. Likewise, I would like to reiterate my commitment to serving fairly, loyally, and transparently and with respect for all Parties.

Finally, through me, all the Secretariat reiterates its total commitment and full availability.

I thank you very much for your kind attention.