

OPENING STATEMENT BY NAMIBIA

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates, Observers, Ladies and Gentleman, On behalf of the Namibian delegation I express our profound gratitude and appreciation to the Government of Spain and the European Union for hosting the 26th Regular Meeting of ICCAT in this beautiful city of Palma de Mallorca. We would equally like to thank the ICCAT Secretariat for the excellent meeting arrangements.

This year's Commission meeting will be probably one of the busiest in recent years. We must develop management measures for tropical tunas. The Commission will consider the results obtained from numerous stock assessments carried out during 2019 in order to develop appropriate recommendations and resolutions to ensure optimal, sustainable utilization and management of marine resources. Namibia continues to broaden its participation in ICCAT activities; in 2020 we pledge to provide information on short fin mako and sharks as contributions to enhancing knowledge on these species. We are also grateful for the support the Commission provides to CPCs, particularly for improving the capacity to provide accurate information with assistance from the Japanese government; to this effect a training workshop on species identification and data analysis will take place in Namibia next week. Furthermore, Namibia attaches great importance to the management of tropical tuna stocks, particularly bigeye tuna. Introduction of effective management measures on this stock is a great challenge for ICCAT. The TAC should be reduced to be in line with SCRS advice to a level which would achieve stock recovery within a reasonable period while containing the total catch to a level below the TAC. At the same time, due consideration should be given to the right of developing coastal States to develop their own fishery.

This year, we had a two-day Panel 1 meeting before the regular meeting of the Commission, and we hope that this time is sufficient to fully review the issues to be addressed. We are confident that major results will be achieved during this year's meeting.

Over the past few years, significant work was successfully carried out through the Working Group on Convention Amendment. This is however long overdue and we hope this time around the Commission will approve the amendments.

Mr. Chairman, the Namibian Delegation is ready to work with other delegations to find solutions and sincerely hopes that the deliberations of the 26th regular meeting will be fruitful.