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OPENING STATEMENT BY JAPAN

On behalf of the Japanese Delegation, I extend my deepest gratitude to the ICCAT Secretariat for wonderful arrangement of the 27th regular meeting of the Commission.

Last year, the Commission could not hold a physical meeting, and most of the existing conservation and management measures have been rolled over.

Though the Commission Members cannot meet face-to-face this year, it should not be an excuse for delaying important decision makings. There are many important issues to be discussed this year. Japan wishes cooperate with the respective Chairpersons and other CPCs to produce good outcomes for these issues.

Among other things, Japan attaches great importance to management of tropical tuna stocks, particularly Bigeye tuna. Introduction of effective management measures on this stock has been a great challenge for ICCAT. While the latest stock assessment by the SCRS shows somewhat optimistic result including potential increase of the TAC, the necessity to introduce a management scheme that keeps the total catch below the TAC remains urgent. Furthermore, we must consider how to accommodate the growing aspirations of developing CPCs. The potential increase of the TAC can be used for this purpose.

Conservation of shortfin mako is another important issue. While we recognize the divergent views on possible measures on this stock among different CPCs, sticking to their respective positions would produce nothing, thereby further risking this stock. That is why Japan provided a new idea at the Panel 4 intersessional meeting in September. Japan welcomes CPCs discussing a possible compromise text, which contains this idea and hopes that the Commission can reach a consensus at this meeting.

Western BFT was one of the most controversial issues last year. While the last year's discussion revolved around whether to reduce the TAC, the latest stock assessment conducted this year indicates the possibility of increasing the TAC. Though careful consideration is necessary in interpreting the SCRS advice, Japan expects a constructive discussion on the TAC in 2022.

With regard to BFT farming, Japan has been expressing concern about very high growth ratios. Though Japan appreciates active cooperation from several farming CPCs on this issue including exchange of farming information, we believe that more work should and could be done to address such concern. We will provide updates of our investigation as well as some ideas for improving the management of farming.

Last but not least, we are honoured to announce that Japan deposited with the Director-General of FAO its instrument of acceptance of the Protocol to amend the ICCAT Convention on July 30th this year. We strongly hope that other CPCs will expedite their respective internal acceptance procedures so that this Protocol may enter into force as soon as possible.

Japan is ready to work together with other delegations and sincerely wishes successful and fruitful conclusion of this meeting.