

DECLARATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA

In 2010 Cuba declared the GT of its vessels and its desire to join the fishery. We also expressed our intention to fish up to 50 thousand tons.

For reasons already explained, we have not yet begun to fish. At this meeting and based on the results of the Science Working Group recommendations, we considered that a 50% reduction of that pretention, that is, 25 thousand tons, would not be reasonable, so we then asked to be allowed to catch 17 thousand tons based on 50% of our historical catch.

Thereafter, and clearly understanding the sacrifice of a reduction, we expressed a new pretention, which represents a 3% reduction for all others, and a 63% reduction of our own historical catches, to 13 thousand tons.

But there is still no echo in favour of Cuba after five days of meetings even though we expressed our views right from the beginning about what is really happening today: a quota allocation. Cuba is the only one that to date has repeatedly asked to be considered a special case considering its historical catch rights and has explained the importance of this resource for the food safety of its people. We reiterate, this catch is exclusively for human consumption (not necessarily the case with others here today). The special rights of small island developing states have not been taken into account either, nor the importance of this activity to our economy, something which other countries have claimed. They have received full support from this Convention.

Cuba has not requested an increase to the maximum level recommended by the Science Working Group. Instead, it asks for its redistribution, in order to receive 3% of the total agreed amount. That request is fair; it allows the entry into the fishery of one of four countries that have historical fishing rights in the area but is not yet fishing. This important aspect, reflected in Article 21 of our Convention, should be taken into account when allocating quotas, but is currently being ignored. There should be no confusion.

We cannot wait until the entry into force of this Convention to approve how quotas will be allocated. Cuba needs to be included now. Millions have been invested and need to be offset not only for economic profit but also, most importantly, to feed our people.

This meeting has only used the 2009 interim measures as reference to assign quotas, something which Cuba expressed its disagreement with right from that time and claimed its need to include its vessels. We do not understand why only current fishing rights are taken into account. Are these stronger than the historical rights of a country to enter the fishery? We are members of and participate in other RFMOs and we do not consider that the method used here is aligned with the international principles that regulate the possibility of countries to fish in international waters.

We are all aware of the reserves with the GT authorized to fish in 2010 and which were really declared as active in the fishery. The quality of the information provided by the countries has been constantly challenged at this meeting as well as compliance with the Interim Measures.

So we wonder, why accept these if there are doubts about the catch and fishing effort reported by countries but which are not verified to know how much each one really needs? This, distinguished delegates, puts Cuba on a different footing than the rest of the countries to join the fishery. If these exceptions and concessions related to the interim measures apply to some, they must also allow Cuba to join the fishery at this time.

The Cuban delegation is very discouraged at the level of understanding at this meeting. We have explained many possibilities and ways for our vessels to enter the fishery now, we have resorted to all possible negotiations with members of this Convention, from face-to-face meetings with delegates to proposals and statements in this meeting room. And we have only received denials or silence as response, showing that the sense of cooperation and understanding for the fair and equitable participation of all possible members herein does not exist.

Yesterday Cuba expressed its deep confidence in the future of this RFMO and, moreover, accepted the principles that will rule its future, focused on the protection of the fisheries resources under its jurisdiction, with a sustainable and precautionary approach, highlighting the rights of the countries to a fair and equitable distribution of the resources among all members. We have dedicated much time and effort to produce a Convention that gathers all these principles. Cuba joined these discussions since 2007, and we therefore claim our rights under that text, as well as under all relevant international legal instruments.

The future of this organization is perfectly clear to us, but when will the time come? When will the convention enter into force in order to implement what we agreed therein? Because what we have on the table today is a scenario that will not consolidate these aspirations in the near future, given that only 12 countries have signed the text and 2 have ratified it, including my own country. We therefore question whether the participants are really making their best effort to accomplish the entry into force of this RFMO, whether we really want to fully protect the fisheries resources in the area, whether we are doing everything possible to ensure that all countries that have participated or aim to do so have the same right to harvest those resources.

Yesterday we signed and accepted the ratification of the Convention and the document should be deposited next week in NZ, the depositary, and are thereby members with full rights of this organisation and demand these rights, reiterating that we cannot depend on the good will of the participants in order to fish.

We must state, therefore, that this meeting is leading us to do something Cuba does not want to do, namely, not to approve the interim measures and to invoke the voluntary nature of compliance mentioned in them, because, above all, we have the high responsibility of guaranteeing the supply of food to 11 million Cubans.

Today we shall submit to the Secretary of the organisation the declaration of the two fishing vessels moving to the fishing grounds and we publicly state that Cuba will capture the tonnage requested yesterday. The participants in this meeting are leaving us no other option

We urge the Secretariat of this RFMO and the non governmental organizations present at the meeting, to analyze our proposal, since in the Working Group meeting we have not been able to make people understand our case, by evaluating whether the rights to equity and transparency governing the distribution of quotas in RFMOs as an international policy, are being fulfilled.

Finally our delegation requests that this declaration be made part of the official documents of this meeting.

Thank you.

Cali, 28 January 2011