

**Explanatory note on Draft Recommendation by ICCAT to replace Recommendation 19-07
on management measures for the conservation of
North Atlantic blue shark caught in association with ICCAT fisheries**

(Submitted by the European Union)

The EU submits this proposal with the aim to set the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) at a level expected to maintain the North Atlantic blue shark stock in the green quadrant of the KOBE plot with at least 50% probability based on the information and recommendation provided by the SCRS in 2023. In the current Recommendation 19-07, the TAC is set at 39,102 t while the SCRS sets the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) at 32,689 t. While the current annual yield is below the TAC and below the MSY level, harvesting North Atlantic blue shark at levels allowed by Recommendation 19-07 would clearly be unsustainable as it would lead to a very low probability (3%) of maintaining the stock in the green quadrant of the KOBE plot. Therefore, the EU proposes to align the TAC with the scientific advice while keeping the current allocation key. The provision to cater for catches of all other members shall remain at 870 t, as was the case in Rec. 19-07.

Further changes have been made and new provisions have been introduced to the text of Rec. 19-07. Firstly, a mechanism for paying back any overharvesting, has been included. Moreover, the request to the SCRS has been further specified and developed to include the possibility to start the reflection on an MSE framework for this stock.

**Draft Recommendation by ICCAT to replace Recommendation 19-07
on management measures for the conservation of
North Atlantic blue shark caught in association with ICCAT fisheries**

(Submitted by the European Union)

RECALLING that the Commission adopted the *Resolution by ICCAT on Atlantic Sharks* (Res. 01-11), the *Recommendation by ICCAT Concerning the Conservation of Sharks caught in association with fisheries managed by ICCAT* (Rec. 04-10), the *Supplemental Recommendation by ICCAT concerning Sharks* (Rec. 07-06), including the obligation of CPCs to annually report Task 1 and 2 data for sharks in accordance with ICCAT data reporting procedures and the *Recommendation by ICCAT on the Development of Harvest Control Rules and of Management Strategy Evaluation* (Rec. 15-07);

FURTHER RECALLING that the Commission has adopted management measures for the protection of endangered shark species caught in association with fisheries managed by ICCAT and the conservation and sustainable use of commercial shark species;

RECOGNIZING that Atlantic blue shark (*Prionace glauca*) is caught in association with fisheries managed by ICCAT and that its stocks can be managed sustainably based on the advice of the SCRS;

CONSIDERING that following the stock assessment undertaken in 2023, the SCRS report states that the North Atlantic blue shark stock is not overfished and is not subject to overfishing;

[...]

FURTHER CONSIDERING that since 2019 the average yield has been below the MSY level estimated at the 2023 stock assessment;

NOTING that according to the 2023 SCRS report the full utilisation of the current TAC (39,102 t) would lead to a very low probability (3%) of maintaining the stock in the green quadrant of the Kobe plot by 2033;

[...]

ALSO NOTING that according to the 2023 SCRS report a TAC at MSY level (32,689 t) would increase the probability of maintaining the stock in the green quadrant of the Kobe plot by 2033 to 51%;

RECALLING the provisions of the Resolution 15-13 on Criteria for the Allocation of Fishing Possibilities, notably the criteria for the allocation of fishing possibilities set out in part III, and the need to ensure that these are applied in a fair, equitable and transparent manner;

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE CONSERVATION
OF ATLANTIC TUNAS (ICCAT) RECOMMENDS THAT:

1. To ensure the conservation and sustainable management of the North Atlantic blue shark stock in the Convention area, the following shall apply;

Catch limits for blue shark

2. An annual TAC of 32,689 t for North Atlantic blue shark is established.
3. The following CPCs shall be subject to the following catch limits:

| <i>CPC</i> | <i>Catch limit</i> |
|------------|--------------------|
| EU | <u>27,113 t</u> |
| Japan | <u>3,337 t</u> |
| Morocco | <u>1,368 t</u> |

[...]

4. All other CPCs shall not increase their catches above the average of their catches in 2019-2021.
5. a) Any amount landed more than the annual landing limits established in paragraph 3 shall be deducted from the respective landing limits during or before the adjustment year, in the following way:

| <u>Catch year</u> | <u>Adjustment year</u> |
|-------------------|------------------------|
| <u>2024</u> | <u>2026</u> |
| <u>2025</u> | <u>2027</u> |
| <u>2026</u> | <u>2028</u> |
| <u>2027</u> | <u>2029</u> |
| <u>2028</u> | <u>2030</u> |
| <u>2029</u> | <u>2031</u> |

- b) Notwithstanding subparagraph (a) above, if any CPC exceeds its landing limit during any two consecutive years, its landing limit shall be reduced by 125% of the excess harvest of the second year, and the Commission may recommend additional actions, as appropriate.

Recording, reporting, and use of the catch information

6. Each CPC shall ensure that all catches of North Atlantic blue shark in association with ICCAT fisheries in the Convention area are recorded in accordance with the requirements set out in the Recommendation by ICCAT Concerning the Recording of Catch by Fishing Vessels in the ICCAT Convention Area (Rec. 03-13).
7. CPCs shall implement data collection programmes that ensure the reporting of accurate North Atlantic blue shark catch, effort, size and discard data to ICCAT in full accordance with the ICCAT requirements for provision of Task 1 and Task 2 data.
8. In cases where North Atlantic blue shark is not retained, CPCs shall make all reasonable efforts so that specimens caught incidentally in ICCAT fisheries be released unharmed and as soon as possible. CPCs shall report to the ICCAT Secretariat, in accordance with ICCAT data reporting requirements, the number of specimens released, including their status upon release (i.e., dead discards and live releases).
9. CPCs shall include in their shark implementation check sheet submitted to ICCAT pursuant to Recommendation 18-06 information on the actions they have taken domestically to monitor catches and to conserve and sustainably manage North Atlantic blue sharks.

Scientific research

10. CPCs are encouraged to undertake scientific research that would provide information on key biological/ecological parameters, life-history, migrations, post-release survivorship and behavioural traits of blue sharks. Such information shall be made available to the SCRS.
11. Following up on the task given in Recommendation 19-07, the SCRS shall inform the Commission, by 2024 on the feasibility, options and tentative roadmap for developing an MSE framework (including *inter alia* HCR with the associated limit, target and threshold reference points, etc.) for the management of this stock in the ICCAT Convention area.

Implementation and review

12. This recommendation shall be reviewed in light of the outcome of the next stock assessment of the North Atlantic blue shark by the SCRS.
13. This Recommendation repeals and replaces Recommendation by ICCAT on management measures for the conservation of North Atlantic blue shark caught in association with ICCAT fisheries (Rec. 19-07).