

**28th Regular Meeting of the International Commission
for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT)
Cairo, Egypt - November 13-20, 2023**

Statement to Panel 4

Adoption of an MSE for North Atlantic Swordfish

As in previous years, Sciaena will closely follow the decisions regarding the pelagic longline fishery, as it is of the utmost importance for Portugal and the EU. A key decision in ensuring that this fishery embraces sustainability will be the adoption of an MSE for the North Atlantic Swordfish, and we are certain that CPCs will not hesitate to take this decision, in order to culminate the extremely well lead process and to fulfil the SCRS work plan on MSEs.

Sciaena hopes that the proponents of proposals PA4-817 and PA4-819 can agree to merge their proposals, in order to ensure the adoption of a management procedure at the end of this year's meeting.

Define sustainable limits for the Blue shark stocks

Following the historic measures adopted by ICCAT on other shark species in recent years, namely for the Shortfin mako stocks in the Atlantic, ICCAT will have to follow the SCRS advice and set sustainable catch limits for another species of key importance for the longline fisheries and the health of the Atlantic's pelagic ecosystems, the Blue shark. Sciaena recommends a TAC of 20.000 tonnes, for the northern Atlantic stock, and a TAC of 25.000 tonnes for the southern stock, to ensure at least 60% probability of each stock being in the green quadrant of the Kobe plot by 2026 for the North Atlantic and for the next 10 years for the South Atlantic. Sciaena will also be supportive of additional measures that protect this key species, such as setting an allocation key for the southern stock.

Sciaena is also supportive of steps towards developing MSE frameworks for the two Atlantic Blue shark stocks, such as the elements in this regard in proposals PA4-813 and PA4-814.

It should be noted that regarding the two stocks of Blue shark, Sciaena is very much in support of statement PA4-820, submitted by fellow observer organisations.

We also welcome and urge the adoption of proposals PA4-807, PA4-808 and PA4-809, as they would contribute to reducing the impact of ICCAT fisheries on sensitive elasmobranch species and, thus, improve the health of pelagic ecosystems. Sciaena is also supportive of proposal PA4-811, which aims to improve the existing measures to reduce sea turtle bycatch, in light of the new scientific advice.

