



ASSOCIATION OF NATIONAL ORGANISATIONS
OF FISHING ENTERPRISES IN THE EU

Statement for ICCAT's 28TH regular meeting of the Commission

PANEL 4

Cairo, Egypt, November 13th to 20th

Prohibiting shark finning

Europêche supports conservation measures of sharks caught in association with fisheries managed by ICCAT, which included the obligation to provide more data to the scientists and to land the fins naturally attached to the carcasses, an obligation already implemented in the European Union.

Europêche urges Panel 4 to adopt draft recommendation PA4-809/2023 concerning the conservation of sharks caught in association with fisheries managed by ICCAT.

Maintaining catch levels for blue shark, which is not overfished

According to the SCRS, North Atlantic blue shark is neither overfished, neither in a situation of overfishing. The current catches are below what the SCRS considers MSY. Data collected indicate that the population has increased, and fishing-related mortality has decreased since the last assessment. Despite the stock's healthy condition, there is a proposal to reduce the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) by 17%, from 39,000 tons to 32,600 tons.

South Atlantic blue shark is not overfished but subject to occasional overfishing as current catch levels appear to exceed the SCRS recommendations. There is a proposal to reduce current catch levels by 18% compared to the 2019-2021 period for all fleets, which would represent a more significant effort for the EU fleet compared to other fleets.

Europêche recommends:

- Maintaining the current TAC for North Atlantic blue shark, as any decrease would be unnecessary and will adversely affect the European fishing sector;
- realizing a continual assessment of the current trend and information on southern blue shark;

- considering the high variability of South Atlantic blue shark fisheries while deciding on measures to reduce catches, as the stock is not overfished. Catch reductions should not unduly burden the fishing industry.

Europêche also regrets that, as it is the case for all species in general, and for blue shark in particular, there is clearly a lack of consideration of social and economic values for coastal communities.

Northern Atlantic swordfish

While Europêche acknowledges that HCRs can contribute to stability in fisheries management, timing may not be ideal this year due to more pressing issues, as the North Atlantic Swordfish is neither overfished neither in a situation of overfishing.

Europêche then recommends:

- As regard new results obtained recently on the development of a management procedure, adoption of an HCR-based management for northern swordfish in a future ICCAT meeting;
- Encouraging close collaboration between relevant stakeholders, including scientific institutions and industry representatives to ensure that the future management measures for swordfish are well-considered and supported by comprehensive data and expertise.

In addition to the above detailed recommendations, Europêche invites Panel 4 to adopt:

- **PA4_807:** Draft Recommendation by ICCAT for the conservation of whale sharks (*Rhincodon typus*) interacting with ICCAT fisheries;
- **PA4_808:** Recommendation by ICCAT on manta and mobulid rays (family *Mobulidae*) caught in association with ICCAT fisheries.

In the event of discussions on management measures, Europêche points out that the fishing sector must be at the heart of the process and each management measure must be studied on a case-by-case basis in the interests of effectiveness.