

**International Commission for Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT)
2023 Annual Meeting**

Opening Statement from the Shark Trust

The Shark Trust, in alignment with other shark conservation observers, appreciates this opportunity to represent civil society and conservation interests at the 2023 ICCAT annual meeting in this extraordinary city. This year, ICCAT Parties have the chance to continue leading the world in international management of heavily fished blue sharks and to catch up with other international bodies in the protection of endangered, filter-feeding elasmobranchs and the prevention of finning. We continue to encourage immediate, concrete actions — grounded in science and the precautionary approach — to ensure conservation of these exceptionally vulnerable species.

Our concerns and positions are detailed in our statement for Panel 4. In brief, we are urging Parties to actively support adoption of ICCAT measures to:

- protect endangered **manta and devil rays** (*Mobula spp.*) — the most inherently vulnerable species under ICCAT’s purview — by prohibiting retention and promoting safe release (in line with proposal PA4 808 from the United Kingdom);
- assist the recovery of endangered **whale sharks** (*Rhincodon typus*) by prohibiting retention and promoting safe release (in line with proposal PA4 807 from the European Union);
- enforce the finning ban and improve species-specific shark catch data by requiring that sharks be landed with **fins naturally attached**, *without exceptions* (in line with proposal PA4 809, led by the United States);
- ensure long-term sustainability of **blue sharks** (*Prionace glauca*) by reducing and allocating North and South Atlantic TACs in line with new advice from the Standing Committee on Research and Statistics (SCRS) advice and a 70% chance of success (in the near-term), that is:
 - less than 20,000t for the North Atlantic, and
 - no more than 25,000t for the South Atlantic.
- rebuild **shortfin mako** populations by minimizing incidental mortality and extending the North Atlantic retention ban long-term.

Last, we invite Parties to read our new Shark League report¹, *Bridging the Gaps that Hinder Shark Conservation*, which we launched during the Compliance Committee meeting, as many of its findings and recommendations are directly applicable to the proposals for this meeting.

Mindful of our vital role in contributing to sound policy, supporting good governance, and promoting accountability, we look forward to a productive meeting.

¹ Fordham, S.V., Hood, A.R., Arnold, S.J., Kachelriess, D., and Lawson, J.M. 2023. Bridging the Gaps that Hinder Shark Conservation: An analysis of ICCAT Parties’ policies for CITES-listed Atlantic elasmobranchs. The Shark League. London.