

Explanatory note on Draft Recommendation by ICCAT to replace Recommendation 19-08 on management measures for the conservation of South Atlantic blue shark caught in association with ICCAT fisheries

(submitted by the European Union)

The EU submits this proposal with the aim to reduce the current levels of harvesting of South Atlantic blue shark which are exceeding the TAC set in Recommendation 19-08 and the levels recommended by the SCRS. In its report of 2023, the SCRS estimated the 2021 stock status not to be overfished but being subject to overfishing.

This proposal also makes good on the commitment taken in Recommendation 21-11 to allocate the TAC by 2023. It introduces an allocation table for the five Contracting Parties (CPCs) that are historically the main harvesters of South Atlantic blue shark. By setting aside a portion of the TAC (average catches of the minor harvesters over the last three years) this proposal also caters for other CPCs harvesting the resource more irregularly or at lower levels.

The remaining TAC is allocated among the five main harvesters taking into account the recent level of harvesting as well as the development status of the CPC. As the current yield is above the level advised by the SCRS, the newly adopted allocation shall result in reductions for the main harvesting fleets (18.3% reduction from the 2019-2021 period for all fleets). The EU, Japan and Chinese Taipei would be required to reduce their average catches of the last three years (2019-2021) by 20%. The remaining attribution should be allocated to Namibia and Brazil proportionate to their recent catch levels, resulting in a 14.8% reduction from their 2019-2021 average catches.

Draft Recommendation by ICCAT to replace Recommendation 19-08 on management measures for the conservation of South 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 shark species considered vulnerable to overfishing and caught in association with fisheries managed by ICCAT;

RECOGNIZING that Atlantic blue shark (*Prionace glauca*) is caught in association with fisheries managed by ICCAT;

CONSIDERING that the last stock assessment of South Atlantic blue shark undertaken by the SCRS in 2023, concluded that the stock was not overfished but subject to overfishing;

ACKNOWLEDGING that catches of blue shark in the South Atlantic have been fluctuating recently at levels higher than the TAC in Recommendation 19-08 and the 2021 MSY estimated in the 2023 Stock Assessment;

NOTING that the SCRS advises that maintaining current catch levels is expected to lead to a rapid decline in the stock's biomass, with a risk of falling below 20% of the estimated B_{MSY} reference level;

FURTHER CONSIDERING that according to the 2023 SCRS report a TAC of 27,711 t or less would immediately stop overfishing and will keep the stock in green quadrant of the Kobe plot with at least a 54% probability until 2033;

RECOGNIZING the need to stabilize the exploitation patterns for this fishery, in particular to avoid large fluctuations of catches to the extent possible;

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

1. Contracting Parties and Cooperating non-Contracting Parties, Entities or Fishing Entities whose vessels fish blue shark in association with ICCAT fisheries in the Convention area shall implement management measures to ensure the conservation and sustainable management of the South Atlantic blue shark (*Prionace glauca*) in line with the ICCAT Convention objectives.

Catch limits for blue shark

2. An annual Total Allowable Catch (TAC) of 27,711 t for South 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 | 17,753 t |
| Brazil | 3,304 t |
| Namibia | 3,074 t |
| Japan | 1,550 t |
| Chinese Taipei | 829 t |

- a) All other CPCs shall endeavour to maintain or reduce their catches.
 - b) If the annual catches of a CPC not included in the allocation table exceed 1,000 t in any given year, that CPC shall be automatically included in the allocation table. The catch limit of that CPC shall be set at the level of that year. If the CPC is not a developing coastal state, a reduction of 23,5% shall be applied to that limit.
 - c) If the total of the catch limits included in the allocation table exceeds the TAC established in paragraph 2 above, the Commission shall review the catch limits to bring harvesting levels in line with the TAC.
4. a) Any excess of the annual catch limits established in paragraph 3 shall be deducted from the respective catch limits during or before the adjustment year, in the following way:

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

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

Recording, reporting, and use of the catch information

5. Each CPC shall ensure that its vessels catching South Atlantic blue shark in association with ICCAT fisheries in the Convention area record their catch 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).
6. CPCs shall implement data collection programmes that ensure the reporting of accurate South 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.
7. In cases where South 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 (alive, dead, moribund, unknown).
8. CPCs shall include in their shark implementation check sheet to ICCAT information on the actions they have taken domestically to monitor catches and to conserve and manage sustainably South Atlantic blue sharks.

Scientific research

9. 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.
10. Following up on the task given in Recommendation 19-08, the SCRS shall inform the Commission, by 2024 on the feasibility, cost, options and tentative roadmap for developing an MSE framework (including inter alia candidate HCR with the associated candidate limit, target and threshold reference points, etc.) for the management of this stock in the ICCAT Convention area.
11. This Recommendation shall be reviewed in light of the outcomes of the next stock assessment of the South Atlantic blue shark by the SCRS.
12. This Recommendation repeals and replaces *Recommendation by ICCAT on management measures for the conservation of South Atlantic blue shark caught in association with ICCAT fisheries* (Rec. 19-08).