

Panel 4 Statement from The Ocean Foundation

International Commission for Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) 2025 Annual Meeting

The Ocean Foundation, in concert with other observer organizations, appreciates this opportunity to contribute to Panel 4 deliberations and urge the following actions.

Strengthen the Shark Finning Ban: ICCAT's finning ban relies on a complicated fin-to-carass ratio that is hard to enforce and exacerbates inadequacies in catch information. Requiring that sharks be landed with their fins naturally attached, *without exceptions* (as proposed by many CPCs in **PA4-807** and **PA-805**) can:

- ease enforcement;
- eliminate loopholes to fin sharks and high-grade their parts; and
- facilitate collection of species-specific catch data.

Close Protection Gaps for Basking and White Sharks: The retention bans and safe release protocols proposed in **PA4-812** can help minimize bycatch mortality of highly migratory, globally threatened basking sharks (*Cetorhinus maximus*) and white sharks (*Carcharodon carcharias*). Such measures are in line with 2009 and 2025 SCRS advice (to protect low-data elasmobranchs with high vulnerability and conservation concern) and can also serve to:

- bolster national protections;
- amplify guidance for maximizing survival; and
- help to fulfill obligations under environmental treaties.

Rebuild Shortfin Mako Populations: SCRS calculations reveal that fishing mortality of shortfin makos (*Isurus oxyrinchus*) remains excessive. To reverse serious declines, we urge CPCs to:

- extend the current North Atlantic retention ban;
- reduce the South Atlantic TAC to no more than 1000t, consistent with a ~70% probability of rebuilding by 2040; and
- take additional steps to minimize bycatch mortality.

Ensure Blue Shark Sustainability: ICCAT's management of blue sharks (*Prionace glauca*) offers models for other RFMOs and hope for achieving sustainable shark fishing on an international scale. To further this leadership, we urge CPCs to ensure effective domestic quota enforcement and advance the Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) process for both northern and southern populations, as proposed in **PA4-813**.

Prioritize Implementation over Consolidation: Given time constraints, we urge CPCs to prioritize these actions over the consolidation of existing measures. Should consolidation proceed, we urge Parties to:

- extend coverage to mobula rays;
- prevent any relaxation of restrictions; and
- eliminate problematic exceptions for landing bigeye thresher (*Alopias superciliosus*), hammerhead (family Sphyrnidae besides *Sphyrna tiburo*), and silky sharks (*Carcharhinus falciformis*).