Statement by Pro Wildlife to Panel 4 of the 29th Regular Meeting of the Commission of ICCAT

I. Sharks at stake

Global shark populations are in steep decline with many shark species threatened with extinction[1], largely due to overfishing. More than 100 million sharks are killed each year – yet most populations remain poorly assessed and weakly managed.

ICCAT acknowledges its responsibility for shark mortality in Atlantic fisheries, but current measures have failed to stop overfishing or rebuild depleted stocks. Key species, including blue shark, still lack management comparable to that for tuna.

Stronger, precautionary, science-based leadership is urgently needed. Healthy shark populations are essential for marine biodiversity, ecosystem integrity, sustainable fisheries, food security, and coastal livelihoods. ICCAT must adopt a truly ecosystem-based approach that addresses all fishery impacts – including bycatch of threatened sharks, rays, marine mammals, turtles, and seabirds – supported by robust monitoring, control, and enforcement. Transitioning to comprehensive ecosystem-based management is now indispensable.

We welcomed the constructive discussions of the CPCs during the meeting and congratulate the CPCs on the progress made on great white and basking shark (**PA4_812**). We are looking forward to seeing this proposal adopted in plenary.
Yet, we are disappointed that little consensus was reached so far on the other shark-related proposals and encourage CPCs to maintain a cooperative spirit working jointly towards concrete outcomes during plenary. Thereby, we want to draw the attention to the following issues and urge the Commission to take into account our recommendations regarding:

- **Fins naturally attached without exceptions** – a long discussed and necessary measure highly supported by 33 co-sponsors – is still not reaching consensus amongst CPCs. We highly encourage to find a progressive way forward and adopt a FNA without exception policy. (**PA_805/PA_807**)
- The proposal for **blue shark management objectives** should be adopted, in such a way that it is conducted in a **cost-effective two-year process starting 2026 with adoption of MPs for both stocks in 2027**. (**PA_813**)
- Regarding the status of the **shortfin mako shark in the south Atlantic**, immediate action is imperative. Thus, we urge to adopt the respective proposal. However, the proposed reduced TAC to 1,000 t (from 1,295 t) would only allow the **shortfin mako shark south Atlantic stock** to be in the green quadrant of the Kobe plot by 71% by 2040. Yet, regarding

[1] IUCN (2024), 'The global status of sharks, rays and chimaeras'.

the dire status of the stock, the **aim should be a recovery within the next 10 years by lowering the mortality of all sources to 500 t at most**. (**PA_814**)