



Oceana Opening Statement to the Plenary

24th Regular Meeting of the Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas

Oceana would like to thank the European Union for hosting this promising meeting. Our hope is that it will deliver a real discussion that translates into sustainable fisheries management for highly migratory species in the Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean Sea.

In this important year for ICCAT, Oceana would like to stress that the only path to fulfilling the Convention's objectives is through applying the precautionary principle and putting an end to overfishing. In this context, Oceana encourages Contracting Parties to adopt adequate management measures to guarantee the recovery and sustainable exploitation of species under ICCAT's purview that have been too long neglected.

These immediate actions are urgently required:

- **Mediterranean swordfish: Adopt a recovery plan to rebuild the stock, in line with Convention objectives.** According to the SCRS¹, this stock has been reduced to 1/3 of the levels of the 1980s. The 2014 stock assessment showed similar results to previous assessments since 2003: the stock is overfished and subject to continued overfishing. The absolute absence of management measures aimed at rebuilding biomass is blatantly undermining the Convention objectives. In addition, inaction sets a different management standard for swordfish stocks depending on their geographical distribution. While the overfishing of North and South Atlantic swordfish was addressed a long time ago, administrative silence prevails in the Mediterranean region. Inaction should no longer be an option.
- **Commercially exploited sharks (blue shark and shortfin mako): Adopt precautionary management measures for these species.** It is particularly important to note that targeted fishing of sharks has increased in recent years². Blue shark is the 4th most important ICCAT species in terms of reported catches, yet lacks any management within the ICCAT Convention area. Precautionary catch limits should be adopted in order to ensure blue shark fisheries remain within the exploitation boundaries established by the Commission. A similar approach should also be applied to shortfin mako sharks.
- **Eliminate loopholes allowing shark finning.** Due to a minority blockade, ICCAT has repeatedly failed to amend its flawed recommendation on finning. It is time for ICCAT to become the leading tuna RFMO in shark policy by adopting a strict prohibition on finning that requires sharks to be landed with their fins attached. Failing again is not an option.
- **Porbeagle sharks:** CPCs should reconsider the proposal for prohibiting the capture and retention of this highly vulnerable shark species.

¹ Report of the 2014 ICCAT Mediterranean Swordfish Stock Assessment Meeting (Heraklion, Greece – July 21 to 25, 2014)

² Report of the 2015 ICCAT blue shark stock assessment session (Lisbon, Portugal - July 27 to 31, 2015)