

U.S. STATEMENT TO THE COC

The United States continues to have serious concerns about apparent underreporting of North Atlantic shortfin mako catch data by CPCs with large-scale longline fisheries. Landing and discard data reported by some CPCs have been unusually low in the period right before and since the entry into force of Rec. 17-08. Given the scale and scope of these CPCs' longline fisheries and that some use J-hooks and wire leaders, which are lethal to sharks, these low – or nonexistent – catch reports strongly suggest significant underreporting. This is concerning; it introduces more uncertainty into the stock assessment, undermines the conservation and management of the stock, and places an unfair burden on CPCs, including the United States, that adhere fully to reporting and other requirements of the *Recommendation by ICCAT on the conservation of North Atlantic stock of shortfin mako caught in association with ICCAT fisheries* [Rec. 19-06]. In our case, compliance with these requirements has substantially reduced mortality, to a level fully consistent with scientific advice. ICCAT's effectiveness hangs on ensuring accurate reporting and compliance with conservation measures. Considering the number of years that lack of compliance with data reporting and other North Atlantic shortfin mako obligations has been of concern, we look to the Compliance Committee to take the necessary actions to ensure such non-compliance is rectified, including those outlined in ICCAT's Schedule of Actions (*Resolution by ICCAT Establishing an ICCAT Schedule of Actions to Improve Compliance and Cooperation with ICCAT Measures* [Res. 16-17]). The United States notes that the Secretariat has not yet provided information to COC to support implementation of the *Recommendation by ICCAT to replace Recommendation 16-01 by ICCAT on a multi-annual conservation and management programme for tropical tunas* [Rec. 19-02], paragraph 31, which requires CPCs with FAD fisheries to provide historic FAD data by 31 July 2020. Failure to provide these data – which have been required since 2011 – results in the automatic prohibition of setting on FADs until it is received. Without information on who has or has not reported their required data, the COC cannot ascertain what automatic FAD fishing prohibitions should apply. The United States requests the COC Chair and Secretariat to work together without delay to identify CPCs who may be out of compliance with paragraph 31 of Rec. 19-02. This information should be provided to the Compliance Committee as soon as possible so that non-compliant CPCs can be notified of the automatic suspension of their FAD fisheries until the required historical FAD data are provided.

The United States supports the Secretariat's request to ensure clarity whether CPCs have implemented ICCAT's sea turtle measures in a legally binding way, and we call on CPCs to reference their relevant domestic rules in their 2021 annual reports.

The United States remains concerned with the state of reporting for blue and white marlin, including landings and discard data in recreational fisheries. ICCAT could not adopt the 2019 compliance tables for these stocks due to these reporting deficiencies; yet, the United States remains the only CPC reporting recreational data, despite clear evidence that many other CPCs have recreational marlin fisheries. We strongly encourage efforts by the Secretariat and Compliance Committee to seek improved marlin compliance. To that end, the United States supports rescheduling the two-day COC special session, originally planned for 2020, in 2021. It should focus, inter alia, on marlin compliance, as well as compliance with shark measures and observer requirements.