

**STATEMENT FOLLOWING THE SUBMISSION OF
DRAFT PROPOSALS PA4-805 AND PA4-806 (NORTHERN SHORTFIN MAKO)**

(Submitted by the European Union)

The European Union has carefully analysed proposals PA4-805 (US) and PA4-806 (Canada) regarding northern shortfin mako sharks. In addition to the EU proposal (PA4-804), these initiatives reflect the commitment of ICCAT CPCs to proactively address the current situation of the stock.

The European Union is in agreement with the views expressed by the US that a retention ban will not address the core issue related to the need to reduce fishing mortality, for the reasons already provided in the explanatory note to proposal PA4-804. Instead, it will be necessary to adopt a more comprehensive approach and to continue seeking scientific and operational information in order to identify increasingly efficient measures to reduce mortality rates, for example through the avoidance of encounters of shortfin mako by the fleets.

It is also important to underline that the Canadian proposal restricts a potential retention ban to CPCs without a landing obligation. Aside from unfairly penalising the fishermen by making illegal the sale of fish caught already dead and without this offering any conservation benefits, this retention ban would therefore not be applicable to the EU fleets, which are managed in the context of the Common Fisheries Policy and are subject to a landing obligation. It is therefore surprising and incoherent for some observers to, on the one hand express their concerns about the scale of the catches by the EU (although these catches have been reduced by in excess of 900 t in 2 years, accounting for over 70% of the catch reduction in ICCAT), while at the same time supporting a retention ban which would not apply to the EU fleets. This raises questions about the real objectives of such a policy and particularly about the long-term impacts that this would have for the activities of all longline fisheries in ICCAT.

Regarding proposal PA4-805, the European Union continues to have reservations regarding the reference to the compulsory use of circle hooks, especially in the context of the existing evidence that they result in higher catches of shortfin mako sharks. The explanations provided by the US remain speculative and further work is required by SCRS to fully establish the pros and cons of such gear before an informed decision can be taken on whether it should be rolled out for all ICCAT longline fisheries. In addition, the use of monofilament leaders is relevant in only a restricted number of fisheries and for example would not be a viable option for the fleets for which blue sharks are an important component of the overall catches. A recent meta-analysis study¹, presented at the Sub-Committee on ecosystems, provides support to the above considerations. Finally, considering the dire situation of the stock and the urgent need to take action, it seems odd to suggest that some operators should be allowed to continue to deliberately kill northern shortfin mako and the EU would find it difficult to support such an exemption.

Despite the concerns expressed above, which currently prevent the European Union from supporting proposals PA4-805 and PA4-806, we would be keen to work with both Canada and the US, as well as any other CPCs, to improve the current management measures for northern shortfin mako. In particular, the EU believes that it is urgent to adopt catch limits ending overfishing in 2021.

¹ <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/da6d2ad9-1418-11eb-b57e-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-167066032>