



## **Shark Guardian Position Statement to Panel 4 of the 27th Regular Meeting of the ICCAT Commission**

19 November 2021

Shark Guardian appreciates that CPC's have agreed to collaborate on measures to begin rebuilding overfished Atlantic shortfin mako populations (Proposal [PA4\\_809](#))<sup>1</sup>.

However, this intent must be matched with concrete measures resulting in tangible positive results for sharks. Avoiding past failures is imperative if overfished shortfin mako shark populations are to recover.

Improvements are urgently needed to save this shark population which will already take around fifty years to rebuild with a probability of 70%. Noting that for Atlantic sharks NOAA's "*general objective is to rebuild the stock within the rebuilding period with a 70-percent probability*"<sup>2</sup>, Shark Guardian is alarmed that Proposal PA4-809A still does not even confirm such 70% probability for rebuilding.

None of the alternatives presented in paragraph 2 of Proposal PA4-809A so far acknowledges that any potential retention should be based on sound science and sufficient data. Currently, insufficient data exists to estimate future total mortality, nor does a scientific rationale exist to support any retention in the near future.

Unless decisive action is taken, this stock will continue to crash until 2035. Shark Guardian strongly urges CPCs to immediately implement a retention ban, at least until such time as scientific data based on a new stock assessment becomes available from ICCAT's SCRS.

Shark Guardian urges all parties to at minimum agree to a retention ban, at least until the date of the next stock assessment in 2026. At that date more reliable information on live and dead discards over a range spanning several years should have become available, including reported discards, which would allow for a better estimate of total mortality to be used for any future retention allocations.

Shark Guardian also hopes to see 'Fins Naturally Attached' Proposal [PA4\\_807\\_A](#)<sup>3</sup> endorsed by ICCAT. The adoption of this Proposal by ten ICCAT sponsoring parties would mark an important conservation measure for ICCAT to demonstrate its commitment to the sustainable management of its shark populations.

Adopting global best practice to stop shark finning at ICCAT, after many disastrous past failed attempts, is overdue. (It should be noted by CPC's that RFMOs like NAFO and GFM have long since adopted global best practices to end shark finning, and many ICCAT contracting parties already enacted domestic 'Fins Naturally Attached' laws to regulate their own domestic fleets.

In summary, we urge ICCAT to take the following bold action for sharks this year:

- *provide a realistic chance of rebuilding overfished North Atlantic shortfin mako shark populations.*
- *adopt the precautionary approach and stop overfishing of South Atlantic shortfin mako sharks.*
- *adopt a 'Fins Naturally Attached' policy.*

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.iccat.int/com2021/ENG/PA4\\_809\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.iccat.int/com2021/ENG/PA4_809_ENG.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [https://gulfcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/M-4a-Draft-Amendment-14\\_FINAL.pdf](https://gulfcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/M-4a-Draft-Amendment-14_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.iccat.int/com2021/ENG/PA4\\_807\\_ENG\\_SPONS\\_1.pdf](https://www.iccat.int/com2021/ENG/PA4_807_ENG_SPONS_1.pdf)