

**Draft Recommendation by ICCAT to replace Recommendation 19-07
on management measures for the conservation of
North Atlantic blue shark caught in association with ICCAT fisheries**

(submitted by the European Union and the United Kingdom)

RECALLING that the Commission adopted the *Resolution by ICCAT on Atlantic Sharks* (Res. 01-11), the *Recommendation by ICCAT concerning the conservation of sharks caught in association with fisheries managed by ICCAT* (Rec. 04-10), the *Supplemental Recommendation by ICCAT concerning sharks* (Rec. 07-06), including the obligation of CPCs to annually report Task 1 and 2 data for sharks in accordance with ICCAT data reporting procedures and the *Recommendation by ICCAT on the Development of Harvest Control Rules and of Management Strategy Evaluation* (Rec. 15-07);

FURTHER RECALLING that the Commission has adopted management measures for the protection of endangered shark species caught in association with fisheries managed by ICCAT and the conservation and sustainable use of commercial shark species;

FURTHER RECALLING that the Commission adopted Recommendation 16-12 on management measures for Atlantic blue shark (*Prionace glauca*) and subsequently adopted catch limits for the North Atlantic stock of blue shark in Recommendation 19-07 and as amended in Recommendation 21-10;

RECOGNIZING that Atlantic blue shark is caught in association with fisheries managed by ICCAT and that its stocks can be managed sustainably based on the advice of the SCRS;

CONSIDERING that following the stock assessment undertaken in 2023, the SCRS report states that the North Atlantic blue shark stock is not overfished and is not subject to overfishing;

FURTHER CONSIDERING that the 2023 SCRS Report stated “that there is a 49.6% probability that the stock currently falls within the yellow quadrant of the Kobe plot (overfished but not subject to overfishing)”, implying that a more precautionary approach to ensuring the stock remains in the green quadrant is required;

FURTHER CONSIDERING that since 2019 the average yield has been below the MSY level estimated at the 2023 stock assessment;

NOTING that according to the 2023 SCRS report the full utilisation of the TAC established by Recommendation 19-07 (39,102 t) would lead to a very low probability (3%) of maintaining the stock in the green quadrant of the Kobe plot by 2033;

CONSIDERING that the SCRS, having completed its latest stock assessment in 2023, recommended that the current TAC be reduced “to catch levels that will maintain the stock in the green quadrant of the Kobe plot with a high probability”;

[*FURTHER CONSIDERING* that the catch options from the 2023 assessment that result in a $\geq 60\%$ probability of being in the green quadrant after 10 years are annual catches of 30,000 t or less;

SEEKING, therefore, to ensure that total catch does not exceed 30,000 t through the establishment of an annual Total Allowable Catch (TAC);]

FURTHER RECALLING that the SCRS was requested to provide options for harvest control rules (HCRs), with associated limit, target and threshold reference points, following the blue shark stock assessment in Recommendation 19-07;

RECALLING the provisions of the *Resolution on Criteria for the Allocation of Fishing Possibilities* (Res. 15-13);

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE CONSERVATION
OF ATLANTIC TUNAS (ICCAT) RECOMMENDS THAT:

1. To ensure the conservation and sustainable management of the North Atlantic blue shark stock in the Convention area, the following shall apply;

Catch limits for blue shark

2. An annual TAC of 30,000 t for North Atlantic blue shark is established.
3. The following CPCs shall be subject to the following annual catch limits:

<i>CPC</i>	<i>Catch limit</i>
EU	24,797 t ¹
Japan	3,055 t ²
Morocco	<u>1,644 t*</u>
United Kingdom	25 t

*This includes annual transfers of 348 t from the EU and 43 t from Japan until the next stock assessment of North Atlantic blue shark by the SCRS, and is without prejudice to future allocation discussions.

4. All other CPCs shall endeavour to maintain their catches below the level of their highest annual catches over the last ten years.
5. a) Any amount caught more than the annual catch limits established in paragraph 3 shall be deducted from the respective catch limits during or before the adjustment year, in the following way:

<i>Catch year</i>	<i>Adjustment year</i>
2024	2026
2025	2027
2026	2028
2027	2029
2028	2030
2029	2031

- b) Notwithstanding subparagraph (a) above, if any CPC exceeds its catch limit during any two consecutive years, its catch limit shall be reduced by 125% of the excess harvest of the second year, and the Commission may recommend additional actions, as appropriate.
- c) If in any year the total catches of the North Atlantic blue shark exceed the TAC, the Commission shall review the implementation of these measures.

Recording, reporting, and use of the catch information

6. Each CPC shall ensure that all catches of North Atlantic blue shark in association with ICCAT fisheries in the Convention area are recorded in accordance with the requirements set out in the *Recommendation by ICCAT Concerning the Recording of Catch by Fishing Vessels in the ICCAT Convention Area* (Rec. 03-13).
7. CPCs shall implement data collection programmes that ensure the reporting of accurate North Atlantic blue shark catch, effort, size and discard data to ICCAT in full accordance with the ICCAT requirements for provision of Task 1 and Task 2 data.

¹ The EU shall transfer 348 t of its annual catch limit to Morocco, until the next stock assessment of North Atlantic blue shark by the SCRS.

² Japan shall transfer 43 t of its annual catch limit to Morocco, until the next stock assessment of North Atlantic blue shark by the SCRS.

8. In cases where North Atlantic blue shark is not retained, CPCs shall make all reasonable efforts so that specimens caught incidentally in ICCAT fisheries be released unharmed and as soon as possible. CPCs shall report to the ICCAT Secretariat, in accordance with ICCAT data reporting requirements, the number of specimens released, including their status upon release (i.e., dead discards and live releases).
9. CPCs shall include in their shark implementation check sheet submitted to ICCAT pursuant to Recommendation 18-06 information on the actions they have taken domestically to monitor catches and to conserve and sustainably manage North Atlantic blue sharks.

Scientific research

10. CPCs are encouraged to undertake scientific research that would provide information on key biological/ecological parameters, life-history, migrations, post-release survivorship and behavioural traits of blue sharks. Such information shall be made available to the SCRS.
11. Following up on the task given in Recommendation 19-07, the SCRS shall inform the Commission, by 2025 on the feasibility, cost, options and tentative roadmap for developing an MSE framework (including *inter alia* HCR with the associated limit, target and threshold reference points, etc.) for the management of this stock in the ICCAT Convention area.

Implementation and review

12. This recommendation shall be reviewed in light of the outcome of the next stock assessment of the North Atlantic blue shark by the SCRS.
13. This Recommendation repeals and replaces *Recommendation by ICCAT amending the Recommendation 16-12 on management measures for the conservation of the North Atlantic blue shark caught in association with ICCAT fisheries* (Rec. 19-07).