

**Whale Sharks and Mobulid Rays caught in association with ICCAT fisheries –
Entry into force of ICCAT Recommendations 23-12 and 23-14**
(Submitted by the European Union and the United Kingdom)

At the 28th Regular Meeting of the Commission in 2023, the Commission adopted the *Recommendation by ICCAT for the conservation of whale sharks (Rhincodon typus) caught in association with ICCAT fisheries (Rec. 23-12)* on whale sharks, and the *Recommendation by ICCAT on mobulid rays (family mobulidae) caught in association with ICCAT fisheries (Rec. 23-14)* on mobulid rays caught in association with fisheries managed by ICCAT, based on proposals submitted by the EU and UK, respectively.

The entry into force of these Recommendations in 2025 is conditional on the Commission reaching consensus on its interpretation of advice from the SCRS, which was asked to review existing data and confirm whether whale sharks and mobulid rays are taxa of the greatest biological vulnerability and conservation concern, and if so, advise on the appropriateness of applying precautionary measures in ICCAT fisheries, such as retention bans.

The SCRS issued the following advice in September 2024, based on its review of scientific evidence presented at the meetings of the Subcommittee on Ecosystems and Bycatch and the Sharks Species Group in 2024:

- *Whale sharks (page 292, 19.23): “The Committee recommends that the Commission give full effect to Rec. 23-12. Given the dearth of data on whale shark interactions in ICCAT fisheries, the Committee considers that it is particularly important to comply with the reporting provisions in paragraph 5 of Rec. 23-12.”*
- *Mobulids (page 293, 19.24): “The Committee recommends that the Commission give full effect to Rec. 23-14. Given the dearth of data on mobulids interactions in ICCAT fisheries, the Committee considers that it is particularly important to comply with the reporting provisions in paragraph 3 of Rec. 23-14, paying particular attention to reporting information at a species level, if possible.”*

Given the clarity of this advice from the SCRS, the UK and EU consider that these two Recommendations should fully enter into force no later than 1 January 2025 for whale sharks (in accordance with Para 11 of Rec. 23-12) and 1 July 2025 for mobulid rays (in accordance with para 9 of Rec. 23-14) and urge the Commission to confirm its consensus in this regard.