

Cover sheet to accompany new proposals
(Discussion paper submitted by the United Kingdom)

Title of the Proposed Draft Recommendation/Resolution: *Conservation of North Atlantic shortfin mako caught in association with ICCAT fisheries*

Title of currently in force recommendation(s) or resolution(s) addressing the same or related issues:

1. Does it create new **reporting obligation(s)** for CPCs? Yes No

Brief description of new reporting obligation(s):

The paper emphasizes the importance of complying with existing requirements to submit information as set out in Rec. 21-09. It does not create or envisage any new reporting obligations.

2. Does it require additional input or **work by the SCRS**? Yes No

Is this work already included in the current SCRS workplan? Yes No

Brief description of new scientific work required (i.e. stock assessment, analysis, external consultant):

The paper emphasizes the importance of the SCRS continuing to provide advice on appropriate mako shark bycatch mitigation measures as already requested via Rec. 21-09. We feel that this should already be included in the SCRS workplan, as SCRS responses to these requests are ongoing as further information becomes available e.g. via CPC submissions and when new research is completed.

3. Does it involve the creation of a **new working group or intersessional process**? Yes No

The paper suggests that an intersessional meeting of Panel 4 should take place in 2025 but an intersessional meeting was already required by Rec. 21-09, and did not happen, so the suggestion is for that to happen in 2025, rather than a completely new meeting.

4. Does it require a new **programme or additional activities to be managed by the Secretariat**?

Yes No

Brief description of new Secretariat work required:

5. What is the proposed timeframe for implementation, and are there different specific timeframes for certain CPCs, fisheries, regions, etc.:

The paper envisages CPCS submitting information as already required by Rec. 21-09, which could be considered at an intersessional meeting of Panel 4 early in the year and then subsequently by relevant sharks/bycatch scientific groups and finally the SCRS in September.

6. Is there any other relevant information regarding the resource and workload implications of the proposal:

Conservation of North Atlantic shortfin mako caught in association with ICCAT fisheries

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Summary:

The UK wishes to draw attention to the high levels of mortality for North Atlantic shortfin mako (N-SMA) caught in association with ICCAT fisheries, which in both 2022 and 2023 were considerably higher than the 250t total allowable fishing mortality agreed in the stock rebuilding plan established by ICCAT Recommendation 21-09. This is a significant concern given the state of the stock and the vulnerability of the species to fisheries impacts, suggesting a need for ICCAT to urgently adopt strengthened measures to reduce mortality and rebuild the stock.

In light of this we draw attention to the need for renewed efforts to implement those requirements of Rec. 21-09 aimed at identifying and evaluating appropriate measures to drive down mortality. Noting that, in its responses provided to the requests set out in Rec. 21-09, the SCRS has not yet recommended any particular mitigation measures, we suggest the scheduling of an intersessional meeting of Panel 4 in 2025 (replacing that required for 2023 by Rec. 21-09), to identify potential measures to drive down mortality on which the SCRS could then give specific advice at its 2025 meeting. To inform this, we encourage CPCs to continue to submit information on measures they have implemented ahead of that meeting, to form the basis of Panel 4's discussions.

The UK's aim in making these suggestions is to ensure that the Commission is in a good position to decide on new and strengthened measures in 2025. This will be essential to making the rebuilding plan a success.

Background:

In 2017 and again in 2019, the SCRS advised that there was a 90% probability of the N-SMA stock being overfished and experiencing overfishing. Given the urgent need for action to reduce N-SMA mortality from interactions with ICCAT fisheries, in 2021 the *Recommendation by ICCAT on the Conservation of the North Atlantic Stock of Shortfin Mako Caught in Association with ICCAT Fisheries* (Rec. 21-09) was adopted.

Rec. 21-09 established a rebuilding programme for N-SMA to end overfishing immediately and gradually achieve biomass levels sufficient to support maximum sustainable yield (MSY) by 2070 with a probability of at least 60%-70%. Key elements of Rec 21-09 included:

- A complete prohibition on retention of N-SMA in 2022 and 2023 (Paragraph 3);
- A total allowable fishing mortality of 250 tonnes, until new SCRS advice is provided (Para 4a);
- An approach to determining whether any retention is permissible after 2023, based on whether or not total fishing mortality exceeded the allowable 250 tonnes (Para 5);
- Prioritisation of SCRS research into options for further measures aimed at improving stock status and reducing shortfin mako mortality (Para 19);
- Requests to the SCRS to provide advice on: which tools and approaches have been most effective at reducing fishing mortality with a view to recommending specific measures to the Commission; on whether size restrictions are effective; and, in 2024, on the most effective technical measures to reduce fishing mortality for shortfin mako (Paras 20, 21 and 24);
- To contribute to the above, a requirement that CPCs submit, by 2023, information on technical and other management measures implemented for reducing total N-SMA fishing mortality (Para 21(a)); and
- An intersessional meeting of Panel 4 in 2023 to promote sharing of best practices to reduce shortfin mako mortality and submit further information to the SCRS (Para 25).

Discussion:

Full and effective implementation of Rec. 21-09 - both those elements aimed at immediately driving down mortality and those aimed at strengthening ICCAT's measures in future - will be essential to successfully rebuilding the N-SMA stock. However, reported dead discards alone totalled 782t in 2022 and 1,213t in 2023. These levels are far higher than the 250t allowable total fishing mortality established by Rec. 21-09 and, noting the projections provided by the SCRS, if these levels of fishing mortality were to continue the probability of the stock being in the Kobe green zone by 2070 would be far below the 60%-70% target. This gives little to no assurance of stock recovery within the agreed timeframe.

Progress on identifying and adopting further measures to drive mortality down to the level established by Rec. 21-09 has been slow. Firstly, only limited information has been provided by CPCs on measures they have implemented to reduce total fishing mortality. This leaves the Commission without a clear picture of the efforts that have already been taken. Secondly, the SCRS, in responding to the requests set out in Rec. 21-09, paragraphs 20, 21 and 24, has not yet recommended any particular measures to the Commission. Finally, the intersessional meeting of Panel 4 required for 2023 to promote sharing of best practices to reduce shortfin mako mortality and submit further information to the SCRS did not take place.

Conclusions:

If the rebuilding plan is to have any chance of success, urgent action is needed to drive N-SMA mortality levels down to the level associated with a 60%-70% probability of the stock being in the Kobe green zone by 2070. The UK therefore suggests that the Commission renews its efforts to implement the elements of that Recommendation that are aimed at identifying and evaluating appropriate measures to drive down mortality. We suggest in particular that:

- CPCs whose fleets interact with N-SMA should provide the SCRS with all information not already provided on measures implemented by their fleets (as required by Rec. 21-09 Paragraph 21(a)), ahead of an intersessional meeting of Panel 4 scheduled for 2025.
- The Commission should hold an intersessional meeting of Panel 4 early in 2025 (replacing the meeting required for 2023 in Rec. 21-09 Para 25). The meeting should involve managers and scientists and should focus on identifying appropriate measures to drive down mortality for further consideration by the SCRS. The meeting should take place in good time ahead of relevant scientific meetings in 2025, so that requests for advice on specific measures formulated by Panel 4 can then be addressed at those scientific meetings, with the aim of responses being provided to the Commission by the SCRS in September 2025.
- The Commission should then review the advice and aim to agree, at the 2025 Commission meeting, appropriate and specific measures to drive down mortality.

Finally, the UK would like to request that time is given to discuss these issues, and the suggested ways forward, at the Panel 4 sessions during the Special Meeting of the Commission in November 2024.