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Panel 4 Statement by

Deutsche Stiftung Meeresschutz (DSM)/German Foundation for Marine Conservation
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The Writing on the Wall for Sharks as highlighted in our [Statement to the Plenary](#) should cause ICCAT to step up Shark Conservation and Management - NOW.

Although ICCAT has been a pioneer among tuna RFMOs in adopting measures for several shark species over the years, these measures have so far failed to reduce shark mortality to sustainable levels. Beyond the three main ICCAT sharks (blue shark, shortfin mako, and porbeagle) measures are limited to retention bans for a few threatened shark species, although ICCAT fisheries interact with many more shark species.

In ICCAT fisheries sharks are both, (secondary) target species and bycatch!

-  Commercially fished pelagic sharks, such as blue shark and shortfin mako, have been overexploited as MSE tested Management Procedures have not been developed for any shark species yet, although widely recognized as a requirement for sustainable fisheries management.
-  This has resulted in shortfin mako being critically overfished in the North and most probably on a similar trajectory in the South, while overfishing continues in both parts of the Atlantic. Total mortality remains highly uncertain as non-compliance with discard reporting continues, and major catch nations fail to improve live release ratios.
-  For blue sharks this has resulted in the Northern stock being as much overfished as not and overfishing continuing in the South. However, adopted retention allowances still exceed scientific advice.
-  Existing shark bycatch mitigation measures fail to avoid, minimize, or compensate the incidental catch of threatened pelagic elasmobranchs and only call for additional research and non-binding best handling release practices. Effective mortality reduction should require:
 -  avoiding their catch in the first instance via time and/or spatial closures or gear changes and
 -  significantly reducing on board and post release mortality by gear modifications and technical measures.

Therefore, the Commission should:

For Blue Sharks:

1. include both stocks into the MSE workplan starting MSE immediately after the feasibility study the SCRS has been tasked to perform in 2025
2. review and readjust the adopted TACs for both stocks to levels that provide at least a 60% probability for the stocks to return/remain in the green quadrant of the Kobe plot throughout the next ten years, taking also climate change impacts into account.
3. require mandatory reporting of discards as a prerequisite for any future retention and strengthen discard reporting by all CPCs.

For Shortfin Mako - North Atlantic Stock:



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1. adopt intermediate measures to reduce shortfin mako mortality in 2025 such as, but not limited to a ban of wire traces (wire leaders) in longline fisheries and shark lines in all fisheries.
2. host an intersessional Panel 4 meeting early in 2025 as suggested by the United Kingdom to discuss and agree on additional long-term measures for the reduction of shortfin mortality to not more than 250 tonnes.
3. adopt in 2025 a comprehensive package of measures, including a schedule for implementation and monitoring of their effectiveness.



For Shortfin Mako - South Atlantic Stock:

1. include the Southern stock into the discussions for measures to reduce shortfin mako mortality where appropriate, especially regarding gear modifications. Banning the use of shark lines and wire traces also benefits this stock and improves enforcement as vessels often fish in both parts of the Atlantic.
2. strengthen compliance with reporting requirements of Rec 2022/11, monthly for retentions and annually for discards and exclude CPCs from future retention if uncompliant.
3. enforce that repayment schedules are fully enforced in case of exceeded quota, prohibiting any retention of shortfin mako for 2025 and reducing its retention allowance for 2026 until all excess retentions have been repaid.
4. ensure all CPCs fully comply with Rec 2022/11 Para 8 requiring “that from 1 January 2025, any retention permissible shall be allowed only when the fish is dead on haulback, and the vessel has an observer or a functioning electronic monitoring system (EMS) on board to verify the condition of the sharks.”



For Retention Bans and Exemptions:

1. harmonize existing exemptions from retention bans for local consumption by developing coastal states by ensuring that those are strengthened and not weakened for all species, condition to fulfillment of task I and task II reporting requirements and restricted to subsistence fisheries with effective measures in place to prevent any part of these sharks from entering the international trade.
2. extend the retention ban for bigeye thresher sharks to all species of the family *Alopiidae*
3. review the list of sharks ICCAT fisheries interact with and identify which other threatened shark species might be in need of a retention ban along the same requirements tasking SCRS to propose such candidate species to the Commission for adoption in 2025.



For Whale Sharks and Mobulid Rays:

Ensure the retention bans come into effect as planned in 2025.



For Fins Naturally Attached (FNA):

Adopt a Fins Naturally Attached policy without exceptions, prohibiting the removal of fins at sea and requiring all sharks to be landed with all fins naturally attached to the carcass of the animal if sharks can be retained.

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