

International Commission for Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) 2024 Annual Meeting

Opening Statement from the Shark Trust

The Shark Trust, in concert with our coalition partners, appreciates this opportunity to participate in the 2024 ICCAT annual meeting on the historic and fascinating island of Cyprus.

We continue to focus on rebuilding populations of the most inherently vulnerable species under ICCAT's purview: sharks and rays. We request priority attention to current requirements and proposed management measures that are essential for these species' recovery.

Specifically, at this meeting, we urge Parties to actively support adoption of ICCAT measures to:

- protect endangered **whale sharks** (*Rhincodon typus*) and **manta and devil rays** (*Mobula spp.*) by prohibiting retention and promoting safe release (in line with proposal PA4-804 and SCRS advice);
- enforce the finning ban and improve species-specific shark catch data by requiring that sharks be landed with **fins naturally attached**, *without exceptions* (in line with proposal PA4 806); and
- improve compliance with North Atlantic **shortfin mako** mandates to minimize incidental mortality, including through a focused intersessional in 2025 (in line with proposal PA4 811).

In addition, ensuring the effectiveness of other existing ICCAT shark conservation measures remains critical. We urge Parties to work — independently and within ICCAT — towards:

- increasing **observer coverage** (human and/or electronic) for longline vessels to 20% and commit to additional incremental increases to reach 100% coverage on all industrial vessels to ensure robust compliance monitoring and reliable estimation of catch composition and discards;
- continuing to improve the **reporting** of shark landings, discards, and national regulation details in ICCAT Shark Check Sheets; and
- establishing of a clear procedure for the SCRS and Compliance Committee to evaluate Parties' requests for **exemptions** to shark data requirements and/or shark fishing restrictions (as per Rec. 18-06).

Mindful of our vital role in contributing to sound policy, supporting good governance, and promoting accountability, we look forward to a productive meeting.