

PRESS RELEASE

Shark Conservation Advances at International Atlantic Tuna Conference

Fishing nations agree to protect basking and white sharks, cut mako quotas, and improve compliance process

Seville, Spain. November 24, 2025. After a record number of proposals focused on sharks, this year's meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) ended with new protections for basking and white sharks, reduced catch limits for South Atlantic shortfin makos, and procedural advances for enforcing shark measures. For the seventeenth year, efforts to strengthen ICCAT's shark finning ban were thwarted.

"New retention bans for basking and white sharks will close gaps in the protection of these globally threatened species by bolstering national bans and helping countries to fulfill obligations under environmental treaties," said Ali Hood, Director of Conservation for the Shark Trust. "We're hopeful that the new commitment to ensure fishermen promptly and carefully release these sharks will spark development of safe handling protocols for maximizing survival. We thank the UK for carefully shepherding these safeguards to final adoption this week."

ICCAT scientists are updating population assessments for shortfin mako sharks and report that fishing mortality remains excessive. Advice for rebuilding the South Atlantic population led fishing countries to agree a 50% reduction in the region's total allowable catch (accounting for landings and mortality from discarding), down to 1000 metric tons annually.

"Shortfin makos are among the Atlantic's most valuable yet vulnerable shark species and, as such, safeguards for this species should be particularly precautionary," said Sonja Fordham, President of Shark Advocates International. "While we welcome the significant reduction in South Atlantic catch limits, we continue to urge fishing nations to improve their reporting of mako catches, work urgently on strategies to minimize incidental mako bycatch, and expand international mako conservation measures to other oceans."

ICCAT's Compliance Committee scrutinized the adherence to shark conservation measures demonstrated by member countries, finding many are still lagging behind while others have made substantial improvements. Mexico received particular commendation for new shark regulations that implement several longstanding ICCAT obligations.

"We're encouraged to see years of work to strengthen countries' compliance with ICCAT's shark measures finally bearing fruit," said Shannon Arnold, Associate Director, Ecology Action Centre. "We were also pleased to help with the adoption of a new, transparent process developed collaboratively among stakeholders, scientists, and governments to close persistent loopholes. Despite this progress, too many countries are still not meeting their obligations for sharks and ICCAT is not acting decisively enough to address significant non-compliance. This is a particular concern for the effectiveness of ICCAT protections for highly threatened hammerhead and silky sharks."

The EU and US once again led a multilateral effort to strengthen ICCAT's finning ban by requiring that sharks be landed with their fins naturally attached, a policy that is widely regarded as best practice for enforcement and also helpful for shark catch data collection. Over the years, the vast majority of ICCAT Parties have supported such a change, but Japan and China repeatedly block consensus.

Media contact: Patricia Roy; email: patricia@communicationsinc.co.uk; telephone: +34 696 905 907.

Notes to Editors: Shark Advocates International is a project of The Ocean Foundation dedicated to securing science-based policies for sharks and rays. The Shark Trust is a UK charity working to safeguard the future of sharks through positive change. Ecology Action Centre promotes sustainable, ocean-based livelihoods, and marine conservation in Canada and internationally. These groups, in concert with PADI AWARE and with support from the Shark Conservation Fund, formed the [Shark League](#) of the Atlantic and Mediterranean to advance responsible regional shark and ray conservation policies.

Responsible for conservation of tunas and tuna-like species in the Atlantic Ocean and adjacent seas, ICCAT has 54 Contracting Parties. The final decisions on this year's proposals can be found on the ICCAT website.

The Shark League position statement for the 2025 ICCAT annual meeting, a press release about Mexico's recent shark protections, an ICCAT-CITES gap analysis, *Bridging the Gaps that Hinder Shark Conservation*, and supporting materials are available at www.sharkleague.org.