

November 21st, 2022

JOINT CLOSING STATEMENT FOR PANEL 4 ICCAT 23rd SPECIAL SESSION

After last year's landmark achievement for shortfin mako in the North Atlantic we hoped to see a similar success this year for the South Atlantic to start the sustainable management of this species across all of the Atlantic. This is specifically important as

- Shortfin mako, is listed on CITES App. II and is a highly migratory species spanning the complete Atlantic. Therefore, the survival at both sides of the equator relies on harmonised and effective management measures.
- Many ICCAT fisheries also fish in both parts of the Atlantic and harmonised measures facilitate compliance and enforcement.

We applaud that two of the formerly biggest catch nations for this species, Brazil and the European Union, have stepped up in support of a retention ban for 2023 and 2024 as proposed in PA4_804/2022, submitted by the EU and the UK.

We are disappointed to see that this proposal could despite long negotiation not be adopted by ICCAT, especially as it was acceptable to many CPCs. A retention ban helps assessing actual ratios between dead discards and live releases and total mortality per CPC to inform the next stock assessment.

However, we appreciate the efforts made by all parties in working together to find a balance between respecting the requests of some parties to see their efforts of past catch reductions being acknowledged and the urgent need for effective conservation measures being implemented.

We explicitly thank the UK and the EU, who have worked extremely hard ahead of and throughout this meeting to achieve a viable agreement and the management measures tabled in PA4_804B/2022.

We very much welcome this agreement, which caps historic landings to almost 50% and allocates maximum allowable retentions to each catch nation for 2023 and 2024, while maintaining essential elements of the original proposal such as

- improving reporting requirements for dead discards and live releases
- foreseeing science-based retention limits for the future
- having agreed rebuilding objectives for the stock if overfished

Nevertheless, we are concerned to see that the proposed retention allowances may incentivise some parties to increase landings in the next two years above their 2021 catches and that the Total Mortality Limit of 2001 t as advised by SCRS since 2017 will be exceeded.

We are also concerned that the adopted retention allowance at this time is not limited to the retention of animals dead at haul back but also allows the retention of live animals even in the absence of observers/EMS until 2025. Specifically in view of the widespread non-reporting of discards in the past and the resulting underestimation of total mortality this permission further increases total mortality and also contradicts a precautionary approach.

Finally, we urge ALL parties to voluntarily refrain from retaining at least animals live at haul back and to work on effective measures to avoid short fin mako catch in the first place.

A substantial reduction of bycatch mortality is essential to achieve, BOTH for the North and the South Atlantic, following the examples of USA and Canada, who have already increased the percentage of life releases to 60 – 70% of discards.