Press Release

**Sharkproject demands an end to the trading of shark fins in Europe! With an European Citizens' Initiative politics are called to action. From 01.02.2020 onwards we ask all EU Citizens to cast their vote for the protection of sharks.**

Since 2013, the “Fins Naturally Attached” regulation in the European Union prohibits without exception the storage, transshipment and landing of all shark fins in EU waters and on all EU vessels. The fins must remain naturally attached to the carcass until the vessel is unloaded in an EU port. After landing the shark fins can be separated from the animal and exported to Asia.

Despite this measure, Europe remains a leader in the trade of shark fins. For example, Spain: In 2016 alone, Spain officially landed 29,000 tons of blue shark, equivalent to about 1 million individuals. Despite increasing threats to this species, the total catch of blue shark in the Atlantic has almost doubled compared to the beginning of the millennium. This catch is only worthwhile for the fins. On average, almost 3,500 tons of fins were exported from EU each year, with a total value of around 52 million Euro. Because it is very difficult to effectively control fishing vessels at sea even in European waters, nobody can say with certainty how many more shark fins are still retained illegally on board of fishing vessels, transshipped or even landed in Europe.

Moreover, fins are difficult to identify when traded and determining the true origin of dried or frozen fins is almost impossible. Often fins from protected shark species are part of the shipments. In many cases, the species from which a fin has been derived can only be confirmed by costly and time-consuming DNA analysis testing. Restricting the trading of sharks to the complete animal will substantially aid identification of protected shark species in trade, and thereby substantially improve the effectiveness of existing conservation measures and trade restrictions.

That is what we are calling for: The trade of shark fins in Europe must stop immediately. The cruel business of finning and killing of marine life for its fins will only stop when fins can no longer be traded in or via the EU. **That is why the 'Fins Naturally Attached' regulation in the European Union must be extended to the export, import and transit of sharks and rays**.

With the European Citizens' Initiative "Stop Finning - Stop the Trade" we call on the EU Commission to issue clear regulations for the trade of fins. This Citizens' Initiative is supported by many other organizations, including Sea Shepherd, Bloom, German Foundation for the Conservation of the Sea (Deutsche Stiftung Meeresschutz), and many others. One million signatures from EU citizens are needed to get politicians to act: From February 1st onwards, every EU citizen will be able to vote for an end to the shark finning trade in Europe and this excessively cruel and wasteful exploitation of our marine resources.

Further information is available at: www.stop-finning.eu

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Contact:

Nils Kluger

E-Mail: n.kluger@sharkproject.org

Sharkproject International e.V.