

Closing statement to the Plenary from SHARKPROJECT International:

The roll over of Rec 19-06 into 2021 results in overfishing of mako sharks to continue

SHARKPROJECT's mission is the global conservation of sharks and the protection of marine biodiversity by sustainable management of fisheries.

We are therefore extremely disappointed to see that the negotiations at ICCAT 2020 to end overfishing of endangered shortfin mako sharks and to start stock rebuilding of the stock in the North Atlantic have failed once again, despite the dire state of this stock.

No agreement on suitable measures was achieved and therefore the existing Rec 19-06 will now be rolled over into 2021. This allows overfishing to continue for at least another year and further decreases the probability for stock rebuilding within the next 50 years, a dire enough perspective already.

While we appreciate the efforts of the Chair of Panel 4 to moderate between the parties, we also note that his efforts failed because two delegations continued to categorically reject the clear scientific advice from ICCAT's scientists for an immediate retention ban in the North and a TAC of 2001t (max) in the South.

Canada proposed to follow this scientific advice in [PA4-806](#) and Senegal, the UK, Chinese Taipei, and Gabon co-sponsored the proposal. Norway and 17 statements to the Plenary and Panel 4 (including our joint statements signed by more than 40 NGOs and retail organisations: [PLE-113](#), [PA4-813](#), and [PA4-828](#)) also voiced their support for PA4-806. However, the EU and the USA very disappointingly continued to negate the need for a retention ban and instead proposed TACs of 500t ([PA4-804](#)) and 700t ([PA4-805](#)) respectively for the North Atlantic, neither of which will end overfishing or allow a stock rebuilding by 2070.

The roll over of Rec 19-06 will also prevent ICCAT from fulfilling its obligation for the sustainable management of sharks in the Atlantic, to which it has committed itself in 2019.

**We appreciate, that a meeting has already been scheduled for July 2021 to continue the discussions, but clearly note that**

- the meeting will not prevent overfishing to continue in 2021
- the meeting should be planned as a virtual meeting in case f2f meetings are still not possible and the Panel should already investigate efficient online meeting options, which can host bilateral live interactions between all participants in break out rooms, in parallel to the plenum discussion.
- the meeting will provide the desired outcome only if all delegations and especially the delegations of the EU and the USA will actively engage with each other, with Canada, the Co-sponsors, and the observers between now and the meeting in July, as has also been suggested by the Chair of Panel 4; if we finally want to see effective conservation measures, it will be essential that all parties work together, acknowledge the available science and agree on a joint path forward already prior to the meeting.

**Therefore, the objectives for the meeting should be agreed ahead of by all parties to:**

- Immediately end overfishing in the North Atlantic
- Remove all incentives for vessels to potentially benefit from an increased bycatch of dead sharks and increased mortality
- Agree on additional measures and incentives to reduce mortality by avoidance strategies, temporal closures, potential gear modifications and other suitable measures as supported by scientists in preparation of the upcoming meeting
- Agree to continue scientific research and programmes to further reduce mortality
- Implement a science based, precautionary TAC for the South Atlantic, to immediately stop overfishing of shortfin mako sharks and thereby prevent a similar situation as in the North

We applaud Canada, Senegal, the UK, Chinese Taipei and Gabon for having taken leadership for the conservation of sharks and Norway for having voiced public support.

Furthermore we highly welcome Canada's bold commitment for a retention ban for mako sharks on its own fleet, despite ICCAT's failure to do so. We also hope that the Co-sponsors and other CPCs will follow the example of Canada and ban the retention of mako sharks in their vessels and EEZs. While we are aware that this on its own will not reduce mortality sufficiently as the EU alone is responsible for 60% of all mako shark catch, such national retention bans will set a clear signal and hopefully motivate other nations to follow this example, too.

**Only a retention ban without exemptions will eventually achieve the required reduction in mortality and the basis for additional measures.**

We urge all delegations to work together to ensure that the meeting in July 2021 will be successful.

A repetition of the same discussions as in 2019 and 2020, when some delegations completely ignored the scientific advice, will once again fail to provide the desired outcomes; it will then fail again to end overfishing of shortfin mako sharks in the North Atlantic and risk of a similar situation will soon also develop in the South Atlantic.

Please, let us therefore all work together for sustainable fishing in the Atlantic ocean - for this and future generations - and let's not allow that short term commercial interests will jeopardize the future of short fin mako sharks – the fastest sharks in the ocean, the top predators, and an endangered but vital species for healthy marine ecosystems in the Atlantic.