



June 6 2024

Dear Minister Hervé Berville,

We write in anticipation of France co-hosting the 2025 United Nations Oceans Conference next June in Nice with a request to spotlight global shark conservation as a focal issue for implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 (Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources).

Sharks and closely related rays are among the ocean's most inherently vulnerable and seriously overexploited animals. Roughly one-third are classified as threatened with extinction on the IUCN Red List. Effective conservation of these essential, often highly migratory species requires immediate and sustained cooperation among many nations and stakeholders. Moreover, current commitments to conserve sharks and rays bridge the realms of fisheries management and wildlife protection and yet are largely going unfulfilled, as a result of insufficient priority. As such, we believe that a shark and ray focus fits well under the Conference's overarching theme of "Accelerating action and mobilizing all actors to conserve and sustainably use the ocean."

We note that many pressing shark and ray conservation commitments align well with the Conference organizers' intention to advance SDG 14 implementation by supporting urgent action, building on existing instruments, and identifying further means for progress. Examples include:

- Traceable, sustainable trade in more than 100 species of sharks and rays through the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species;
- Sustainable exploitation and bycatch minimization for commercially valuable, wide-ranging species — such as Mako and Blue Sharks — through Regional Fishery Management Organizations; and
- Strict, global protection of highly threatened species — such as Sawfishes, Angel Sharks, Oceanic Whitetip Sharks, and Manta Rays — through the Convention on Migratory Species and Regional Seas Agreements.

Specifically, we encourage you to use this special opportunity to challenge governments worldwide to adopt a UNOC decision dedicated to accelerated global adherence to the various international treaty obligations for conserving sharks and rays.

We have been impressed with how France has long championed and recently achieved protections for Endangered Whale Sharks in the Caribbean through the Cartagena Convention. We are confident that similar focus, determination, and leadership by your government can ensure that the 2025 UNOC yields game-changing benefits for sharks and rays in 2025 and greatly improves the outlook for these vulnerable species far into the future.

We thank you for your consideration and wish you the best of luck for UNOC planning.

Sincerely,

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Ali Hood, Shark Trust

Shannon Arnold, Ecology Action Centre

Ian Campbell, PADI AWARE Foundation

Katerina Topouzoglou, All For Blue

Eva Meyers, Angel Shark Project

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Asma Hamza, Association de la conservation de la biodiversité dans le golfe de Gabès

Maxence Leroy, Association Pour l'Etude et la Conservation des Sélaciens (APECS)

Anabel Colmenero, Catsharks

Antonio Sabuco Blaya, Condrik

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cc: Olivier Poivre d'Arvor, Ambassador for the Poles and Oceans

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