

Mako Intervention, ICCAT 2019

Thank you, Chair. I speak on behalf of Defenders of Wildlife, The Ocean Foundation, Shark Advocates International, Ecology Action Centre, Shark Trust, WWF, Pew, Humane Society International, and Oceana.

Our organizations remain deeply concerned about the dire status of shortfin mako sharks, particularly in the North Atlantic. Parties' responses to SCRS advice have been inadequate for more than a decade, leading to the serious and urgent situation we face today.

The SCRS has demonstrated that the North Atlantic population is in a seriously bad state, continues to decline, and is headed for collapse. This is alarming yet not surprising, given the biological characteristics of the animal.

This week, the SCRS underscored their recommendation for a prohibition on North Atlantic shortfin mako retention, without exceptions, to begin a rebuilding period that will realistically span at least fifty years. The SCRS warns that South Atlantic makos are on a similar path and advises limiting catches to improve chances for a sustainable fishery.

We thank Senegal for its leadership in proposing these most vital elements of the scientific advice, and are encouraged by the growing list of cosponsors, including the Gambia, Canada, Gabon, Panama, Liberia, Guatemala, and Angola.

In contrast, we are deeply concerned that the US and EU proposals fall far short of scientific advice. We stress that removing all incentive to catch makos is key to minimizing mortality. Exceptions that allow the killing of large makos run counter to rebuilding goals. Allowances to land dead makos create incentives for irresponsible fishing practices. Retention bans shift the incentive to avoidance.

We reject the notion that a ban is not workable. In fact, prohibition is by far the most common measure that ICCAT has taken for sharks, based on much less information than is available for makos. The 77% survival statistic is highlighted by SCRS to demonstrate that a retention ban can be effective for this species. Makos will unfortunately be discarded dead under any scenario. Concern over this fact is insufficient to justify rejection of the clear advice for a ban.

In short, it's simply too late for half measures. Gear fixes alone will not do the job. There are no more spare makos to use as rewards.

We urge ICCAT to *completely* ban North Atlantic mako retention, limit South Atlantic catches, and commit to minimizing discard mortality.

It is truly make or break time for makos. The situation is dire. The advice is clear. The remedy is simple. Please act now.