

INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION

104th MEETING

Lisbon, Portugal

**31 August–4 September
2026**

PROPOSAL IATTC-104 C-2

SUBMITTED BY ECUADOR

**CONSERVATION MEASURES FOR THE PROTECTION
AND SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF SHARKS**

The Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), gathered in Panama City, Panama, on the occasion of its 102nd Meeting:

Recalling that the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) International Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks calls on States, within the framework of their respective competencies and consistent with international law, to cooperate through regional fisheries organizations with a view to ensuring the sustainability of shark stocks, as well as to adopt a National Plan of Action for the conservation and management of sharks;

Recognizing further that some shark species are highly migratory, and that harmonized conservation and management, where appropriate, may help to ensure sustainable management at the regional level.

Noting that sharks are part of pelagic ecosystems and are caught by vessels fishing for tunas and tuna-like species in the Convention Area;

Recalling that under the Antigua Convention, “fish stocks covered by this Convention” means “stocks of tunas and tuna-like species and other species of fish taken by vessels fishing for tunas and tuna-like species in the Convention Area”, and that, pursuant to Article VII, paragraph 1(c), the Commission shall “adopt measures to ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of the fish stocks covered by this Convention”;

Considering that Article VII, paragraph 1(f), of the Antigua Convention establishes that the Commission shall “adopt, as necessary, conservation and management measures and recommendations for species belonging to the same ecosystem and that are affected by fishing for, or dependent on or associated with, the fish stocks covered by this Convention, with a view to maintaining or restoring populations of such species above levels at which their reproduction may become seriously threatened”;

Recognizing the need to collect data on catches, effort, discards, and utilization, as well as information on biological parameters of the species managed by the IATTC, particularly sharks;

Noting that, in its Consolidated Resolution on Bycatch (C-04-05), the IATTC requires purse-seine vessels to release unharmed, to the extent practicable, non-target species, including sharks, and urges governments with vessels fishing for species covered by the Antigua Convention to provide any required bycatch information as soon as possible;

1 Amends and replaces Resolution C-24-05, which amended and replaced Resolution C-23-07, which consolidated and replaced Resolutions C-05-03, C-16-04 and C-16-05

Further noting the 2016 conservation recommendations of the IATTC scientific staff regarding the release of sharks caught by purse-seine vessels and the prohibition of shark lines by longline vessels targeting tuna and swordfish;

Aware that specific measures, to be observed by vessels using all fishing gears, are necessary for the conservation of sharks in the Convention Area;

Desiring to consolidate IATTC Resolutions C-05-03, C-16-04 and C-16-05, and to strengthen shark conservation and management measures in the eastern Pacific Ocean;

Further considering the recommendations of the first meeting of the Working Group on Ecosystem and Bycatch (EBWG), endorsed by the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) at its 14th meeting, concerning the need to address best handling and release guidelines, explore new bycatch release devices, and collect additional post-release survival data for non-target shark species affected by fisheries under the purview of the IATTC, as well as the SAC recommendation to adopt a conservation and management measure requiring shark fins to remain naturally attached to the body until the first point of landing;

Considering also the need to improve the identification of shark species caught by fishing vessels targeting species under the purview of the IATTC, with a view to their management and the full utilization of catches;

Considering that the scientific staff presented to SAC-17 the Shark Research Plan provided for in paragraph 16 of Resolution C-25-08, and that the Committee recommended that it be considered for approval and implementation; recognizing the need for a participatory review of its methodology, timeline, budget and cooperation mechanisms; and highlighting the importance of optimizing costs, protecting data confidentiality, and improving information on the silky shark and other priority species through a regional workshop;

Recalling that the EBWG recommends the adoption of a fisheries conservation and management measure requiring sharks to retain their fins attached to the body until the first point of landing;

Addressing the need to consolidate and continue updating the management regime for sharks associated with fisheries conducted under the Antigua Convention;

Agrees as follows:

DEFINITIONS

1. For the purposes of this Resolution:

Shark finning means the practice of removing any fin from a shark's body and discarding the body prior to landing.

Fin means any shark fin (including the tail) or a portion thereof.

Full utilization means retention by a vessel of all parts of the shark, except the head and guts, as appropriate, until the first point of landing.

Naturally attached means that all fins of a shark are fully or partially connected to the shark's body by connective tissue or cartilage.

Buoy lines means individual lines or leaders attached directly to the float line or floats and constructed of steel, metal, wire trace or other materials.² A schematic diagram is provided in Annex 1.

Wire leaders means individual lines or leaders constructed of steel, metal or wire trace, adjacent to the hooks, and attached to the mainline or a branchline. A schematic diagram is provided in Annex 1.

APPLICATION

² These are also commonly known as “shark lines.”

2. This Resolution shall apply to all vessels operating pursuant to the IATTC Convention in the Convention Area.

NATIONAL PLAN OF ACTION

3. Members and Cooperating Non-Members (“CPCs”) should establish and implement a national plan of action for the conservation and management of sharks, in accordance with the FAO International Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks.

RETENTION AND UTILIZATION

4. CPCs shall take the necessary measures to require their fishers to fully utilize all retained catches of sharks, with the exception of species for which the IATTC has adopted a retention prohibition.
5. CPCs shall prohibit shark finning.
6. CPCs shall ensure that all sharks are landed with all fins naturally attached to the body. To facilitate on-board storage, shark fins may be partially cut and folded against the shark carcass, as appropriate, but shall remain naturally attached to the carcass until the first point of landing (see Annex 2).
7. Until the end of 2026, notwithstanding paragraph 6 and other provisions of this Resolution, CPCs may take alternative measures to ensure that individual shark carcasses and their corresponding fins can be readily identified on board the vessel at any time, using one of the following methods:
 - (i) store each individual shark carcass and its corresponding fins in the same bag, preferably a biodegradable bag;
 - (ii) bind each individual shark carcass to its corresponding fins using rope or wire; or
 - (iii) tag the fins and corresponding shark identically, uniquely and numerically so that an authorized inspector can readily identify the correspondence between the fins and the shark.
8. Fishing vessels are prohibited from retaining on board, transshipping, landing or trading fins harvested or removed on board in contravention of this Resolution.
9. Paragraphs 4 to 8 shall be reviewed, in consultation with the IATTC scientific staff, and amendments shall be adopted by the Commission in 2026, as necessary. If no agreement is reached in 2026 on paragraph 7, paragraph 7 shall be replaced with the following text: Notwithstanding paragraph 6 and other provisions of this Resolution, CPCs may take alternative measures to require their vessels to carry on board fins totaling no more than 5% of the weight of sharks on board, until the first point of landing. CPCs that do not currently require fins and carcasses to be landed together at the first point of landing shall take the necessary measures to ensure compliance with the 5% ratio through certification, observer monitoring, or other appropriate measures.

BYCATCH AND RELEASE

10. CPCs shall prohibit vessels targeting tuna and/or swordfish from using buoy lines.
11. CPCs shall require their vessels to promptly release unharmed all sharks (alive or dead) that are not retained, to the extent practicable, as soon as they are observed on the line, entangled in the net, or brailled onto the deck, taking due account of the safety of any person on board.

For purse-seine vessels:

- a. When observed entangled in the net, disentangle the sharks and release them into the water as soon as possible;
- b. Sharks brailed onto the deck shall be returned to the water as soon as possible, either by using a ramp from the deck connected to an opening in the side of the vessel or through escape hatches. If ramps or escape hatches are unavailable, sharks shall be lowered in a sling or cargo net using a crane or similar equipment, or as indicated in Annex 3 or any future revisions pursuant to paragraph 12.
- c. Prohibit the use of gaffs, hooks or similar instruments to handle sharks.
- d. Prohibit lifting sharks by the head, tail, gill slits or spiracles, or by using wire around or through the body. Prohibit piercing the shark's body (for example, to pass a cable through it for lifting).
- e. Prohibit bringing whale sharks (*Rhincodon typus*) on board the vessel and prohibit towing whale sharks out of a purse-seine net, for example by using tow ropes.

For longline vessels:

- f. Leave the shark in the water whenever possible.
 - g. Use a line cutter to cut the branchline as close to the hook as possible, leaving less than 1 meter of line on the animal, to the extent practicable.
12. The IATTC scientific staff, in collaboration with the IATTC SAC and EBWG, shall develop, taking into account practicability for fishing vessels, and recommend to the Commission a comprehensive set of best handling guidelines for the safe release of sharks for inclusion in this measure in 2025. In the meantime, CPCs may elect to use the safe handling and release guidelines described in Annex 3 and, as appropriate, the tools identified in Annex 3.1 of this Resolution.

RESEARCH

13. Among shark species, priority for research shall be given to the list of species in Annex 4. The IATTC scientific staff, in collaboration with the EBWG and CPCs, shall continue to review and recommend changes to Annex 4 to the Commission, as appropriate.
14. The IATTC scientific staff, in collaboration with researchers associated with CPCs, the EBWG and the SAC, shall continue to develop and strengthen—through a specific pilot study—the use of specific tools, such as Velcro straps and harnesses, to lift sharks by the caudal peduncle and shall present the results to the EBWG and SAC for consideration as a potential best practice for the safe handling and release of sharks. Exceptionally, for this controlled pilot study managed by the staff, lifting sharks by the tail shall be permitted. Whale sharks shall be excluded from the pilot study.
15. The IATTC scientific staff, in consultation with the SAC and EBWG, shall continue developing and strengthening a data-collection program for sharks associated with fisheries managed by the Commission, making use, where possible, of existing research and data-collection mechanisms and programs, with the objective of implementing and maintaining a standardized program that includes monitoring shark catches in small-scale coastal fisheries, as identified in document SAC-15-10, by 2026, taking into account the capacity requirements of those CPCs.
16. In 2026, the IATTC scientific staff, in collaboration with the SAC and EBWG, shall develop and recommend to the Commission a Shark Research Plan prioritizing research activities for *Carcharhinus longimanus* and *C. falciformis*, *Sphyrna lewini*, *S. zygaena*, *S. mokarran*,

Alopias pelagicus, A. superciliosus, Prionace glauca and, as appropriate, the other species listed in Annex 4. This Shark Research Plan shall include timelines and financial considerations for stock assessments, ecological risk assessments and recommended management strategy evaluations. The Plan shall also identify opportunities for collaboration with the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) for Pacific-wide stocks.

17. The Commission approves the Shark Research Plan presented by the IATTC scientific staff in document SAC-17-09 and endorsed by the Scientific Advisory Committee at its 17th meeting, as a framework to guide data collection, stock assessment, impact assessment and mitigation, and scientific research activities for the shark species prioritized in paragraph 16 and Annex 4 of this Resolution. The Plan shall be implemented progressively, subject to the availability of resources and to the agreements adopted by the Commission concerning its methodologies, priorities, timeline, budget and cooperation mechanisms.

18. The IATTC scientific staff, in coordination with the Working Group on Ecosystem and Bycatch, shall organize, with funding from the IATTC and other non-governmental organizations wishing to provide support, no later than the first quarter of 2027, a regional workshop with the participation of scientific and technical representatives of CPCs, the fishing industry, universities, research centers and other relevant organizations. The workshop shall:

- a. review and agree on the methodology, sampling design, timeline, technical requirements and proposed budget for implementation of the component of the Plan related to the silky shark stock assessment, including application of the close-kin mark-recapture (CKMR) method;
- b. identify opportunities to optimize costs, make use of existing national and regional programs, and define the contributions and responsibilities of the IATTC, CPCs and cooperating organizations;
- c. establish cooperation mechanisms to improve, harmonize and facilitate the collection, validation, exchange and timely submission of information on the other shark species prioritized by the IATTC, taking into account CPC capacities and requirements for confidentiality, protection and exclusively authorized use of the information; and
- d. present the workshop results, agreements and recommendations to the Scientific Advisory Committee and the Commission at their 2027 meetings for consideration and adoption, as appropriate.

17. Beginning in 2027 and annually thereafter, the scientific staff, in collaboration with the SAC and EBWG, shall provide an update on the Shark Research Plan to the SAC and recommendations to the Commission, as necessary.

18. The IATTC SAC, with support from the scientific staff and the EBWG, shall review the information reported annually by CPCs and, as necessary, provide recommendations to the Commission on ways to strengthen shark conservation and management in IATTC fisheries, including consideration of the use of wire leaders by vessels fishing for tunas and tuna-like species.

19. By 2027, CPCs shall undertake, where possible, in cooperation with the IATTC scientific staff and the EBWG, actions to:

- a. identify ways to increase the selectivity of fishing gears, as appropriate, including research on alternatives to wire leaders;
- b. improve knowledge of key biological/ecological parameters, life-history traits and behavior, and migration patterns of key shark species;
- c. identify key shark mating, pupping and nursery areas; and
- d. improve handling practices for live sharks to maximize post-release survival.

REPORTING AND DATA COLLECTION

20. The Commission shall consider appropriate assistance to developing CPCs for the identification of

shark species/groups and the collection of data on their shark catches.

21. Each CPC shall annually report catch data, effort by gear type, and shark landings by species, where possible, in accordance with IATTC data-reporting procedures, including available historical data from fisheries under the purview of the Commission.
22. CPCs are encouraged to provide aggregated trade information, as available.
23. CPCs shall also provide to the IATTC, through observer programs, electronic monitoring programs or other means, the species identification, number and condition (alive or dead) of all sharks caught, in accordance with applicable monitoring requirements, including those caught incidentally and/or released by purse-seine vessels of all capacity classes and longline vessels.
24. The IATTC Secretariat shall develop a template for CPCs to report on implementation of this Resolution, for adoption by the Commission in 2026.
25. In 2026, CPCs shall use the annual compliance questionnaire to report on their compliance with this Resolution.
26. In 2027, CPCs shall use the reporting template provided by the staff to report annually on their implementation of this Resolution. Reports for the previous year shall be submitted to the IATTC Secretariat by June 30 of each year.

REPEAL AND ENTRY INTO FORCE

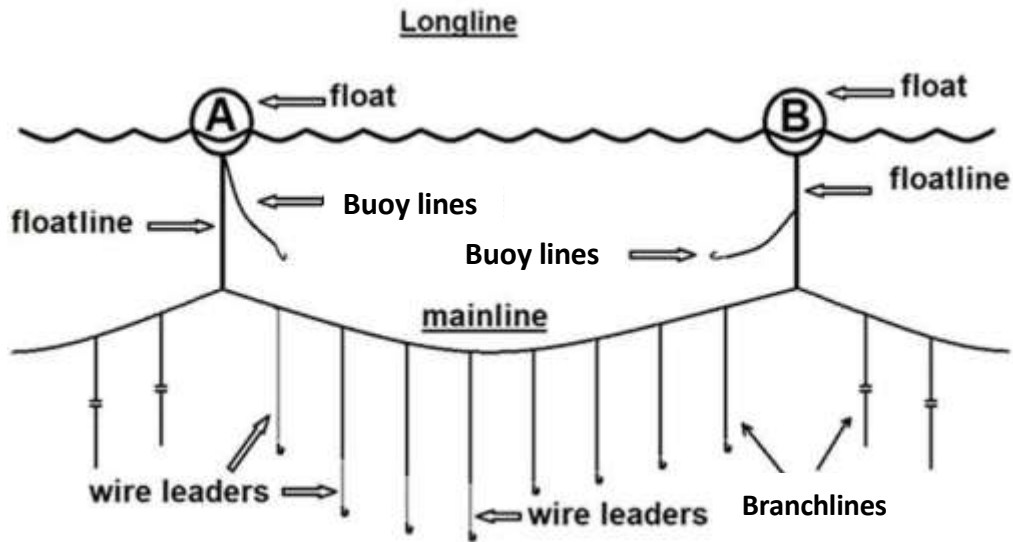
27. **This Resolution shall replace Resolution C-25-08 upon its entry into force on January 1, 2027.**

Annex 1

Schematic diagram of shark lines and wire leaders

Buoy lines: individual lines or leaders attached directly to the float line or floats, constructed of steel, metal, wire trace or other materials, and deployed in the water column at depths shallower than the mainline.³

Wire leaders: individual lines or leaders constructed of steel, metal or wire trace and attached to the mainline or a branchline.



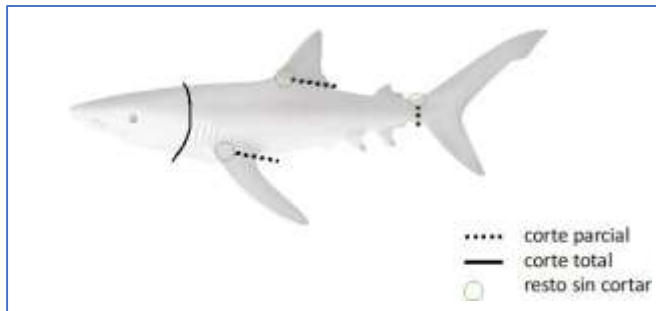
³ These are also commonly known as “shark lines.”

Annex 2

Diagram of allowable partial cuts

Naturally attached means that all fins of the shark must be fully and/or partially connected to the shark's body by connective tissue or cartilage while at sea. To facilitate on-board storage, shark fins may be partially cut and folded against the shark carcass, but shall not be removed from the carcass until the first point of landing. The following schematic is provided as guidance for fishers.

1. Only the head and guts, as appropriate, may be removed at sea.
2. A partial cut at the base of the dorsal fin and at the base of the pectoral fins is permitted.
3. A partial cut at the base of the caudal peduncle, allowing the caudal fin to be folded over the posterior area of the shark's trunk, is permitted.
4. A full cut along the abdominal section is permitted for blue shark (*P. glauca*) during gutting, provided that the fins remain naturally attached.



Annex 3

Best handling and release practices (BHRPs) for sharks

Bearing in mind that the primary aim of release processes is to ensure the highest possible survival of sharks and that, whenever possible, prompt and effective action shall be taken to return the shark to the sea, while prioritizing that the life and safety of the crew are not compromised and that crew members shall endeavor to avoid hazards during shark handling and release operations.

To maximize the effectiveness and usefulness of adopted BHRPs, CPCs should ensure that crews are periodically trained and instructed in these practices by qualified personnel. Illustrations of best handling and release practices should be available on vessels.

All fisheries

SHOULD:

- Release the shark in the water, if possible.
- Encourage the immediate release of sharks.

SHOULD NOT:

- Attach sharks to the vessel and drag them while vessel operations are underway.
- Hit or kick the shark.
- Leave sharks on deck, exposed to sun or air, except to the extent necessary to carry out these practices.
- Insert hands into the gill slits.

Purse-seine fishery:

SHOULD NOT:

- Roll sharks through the power block.

For sharks entangled in the net:

SHOULD:

- Release the shark from the net, always preventing it from reaching the power block.
- Place the animal in a stretcher/cradle or on a ramp and release it on the side of the vessel opposite the net.

When brailing sharks on board:

SHOULD:

- According to vessel conditions, and whenever possible, use bycatch reduction devices (BRDs; for example, hoppers or ramps) to ensure that sharks are separated on the main deck and do not pass down through the loading hatch.

- Release the shark as soon as possible. The recommended practice is to remove the shark from the brailer, hopper or ramp by grasping it by the caudal peduncle, without suspending it, and placing it on deck. This should be done manually whenever possible.
- Immediately place sharks in a stretcher/cradle or on a ramp, where possible, and release them on the side of the vessel opposite the net.
- Consider using bycatch/waste ramps on the lower decks of vessels to facilitate the rapid and safe release of sharks not observed on the main/working deck.
- **SHOULD NOT:** Intentionally leave the shark on deck.

For whale sharks

SHOULD:

- Leave whale sharks in the water for release.
- Release whale sharks before brailing.
- If the whale shark is alongside the vessel with its head pointing toward the stern, the shark should be released by opening or cutting the net in front of its mouth.
- If the whale shark's head points toward the bow, the crew responsible for hauling the net may maneuver the winch and capstan to bring the shark close to the hull, then position the animal on the net and roll it out of the bunt.

SHOULD NOT:

- Land a whale shark on deck, regardless of size.
- Begin brailing if doing so endangers the whale shark's survival.
- Pull or drag whale sharks out of the net by the tail or caudal peduncle.

Longline fishery (also applicable to fisheries of other surface fleets other than purse seine)

SHOULD:

For sharks caught by vessels with high freeboard (>2 m):

- Slow the vessel to bring sharks alongside for identification and removal of gear.
- Avoid removing hooks from sharks. If hook removal is attempted, use long-handled de-hookers on vessels with high freeboard.
- To the extent practicable, ensure that weights are removed when cutting the line.
- Avoid bringing sharks on board for gear removal, where possible. If sharks are brought on board for gear removal:
 - use a dip net or lasso to help bring them on board.
 - use a stretcher or cradle for handling and restraint, to improve crew safety and reduce injury to the animal.

- handle sharks by manually restraining the pectoral fins and caudal peduncle (this may require two crew members, depending on the size of the animal).

For all longline vessels (also applicable to surface-fleet fisheries): SHOULD NOT:

- Drag sharks behind the vessel until the hook tears free from the jaw.
- Lift sharks on board without using a dip net and/or a second attachment point to support the animal's weight, noting that bringing sharks on board is not recommended.
- Attempt to remove a hook from a live shark if the hook is not visible.
- Insert gaffs, hooks or similar instruments into the bodies of live sharks.
- Cut into a shark's jaw to remove the hook.
- Bring sharks onto the deck, where this can be avoided.

Annex 3.1

Recommended tools for best handling and release practices

FOR PURSE-SEINE FISHERIES

- Bycatch sorting/release devices for the working/main deck (e.g., hopper with a door, ramp)
- Stretcher/cradle

FOR LONGLINE FISHERIES

- Dip net
- Short de-hooker (for sharks brought on board)
- Line cutter
- Short-handled de-hooker (vessels with low freeboard [<2 m])
- Long-handled line cutter (equal to or longer than the vessel's freeboard)
- Long-handled de-hooker (equal to or longer than the vessel's freeboard)

Annex 4

List of priority species for research and management

Family	Scientific name	Common name	Common name
Alopiidae	<i>Alopias pelagicus</i>	Pelagic thresher	Pelagic thresher
Alopiidae	<i>Alopias superciliosus</i>	Bigeye thresher	Bigeye thresher
Alopiidae	<i>Alopias vulpinus</i>	Common thresher	Common thresher
Carcharhinidae	<i>Carcharhinus brachyurus</i>	Copper shark	Copper shark
Carcharhinidae	<i>Carcharhinus falciformis</i>	Silky shark	Silky shark
Carcharhinidae	<i>Carcharhinus galapagensis</i>	Galapagos shark	Galapagos shark
Carcharhinidae	<i>Carcharhinus longimanus</i>	Oceanic whitetip shark	Oceanic whitetip shark
Galeocerdonidae	<i>Galeocerdo cuvier</i>	Tiger shark	Tiger shark
Lamnidae	<i>Isurus oxyrinchus</i>	Shortfin mako shark	Shortfin mako shark
Lamnidae	<i>Isurus paucus</i>	Longfin mako shark	Longfin mako shark
Lamnidae	<i>Lamna ditropis</i>	Salmon shark	Salmon shark
Lamnidae	<i>Lamna nasus</i>	Porbeagle shark	Porbeagle shark
Carcharhinidae	<i>Prionace glauca</i>	Blue shark	Blue shark
Pseudocarchariidae	<i>Pseudocarcharias kamoharai</i>	Crocodile shark	Crocodile shark
Rhincodontidae	<i>Rhincodon typus</i>	Whale shark	Whale shark
Sphyrnidae	<i>Sphyrna lewini</i>	Scalloped hammerhead shark	Scalloped hammerhead shark
Sphyrnidae	<i>Sphyrna mokarran</i>	Great hammerhead	Great hammerhead shark
Sphyrnidae	<i>Sphyrna zygaena</i>	Smooth hammerhead shark	Smooth hammerhead shark