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SUBMITTED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION

RESOLUTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF SHARKS CAUGHT IN ASSOCIATION WITH FISHERIES IN THE IATTC CONVENTION AREA

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

The Antigua Convention requires IATTC to adopt conservation measures for species associated with the main targeted stocks.

The European Union is proposing a new Resolution which aims at tackling the threats to shark populations from the practice of shark finning.

Rationale:

This management measure aims to respond to concerns about the threats to shark populations from the practice of shark finning, in fact:

- The current percentage fins: body weight ratio requirement has no clear scientific basis as a conservation measure for sharks, rather it appears to be aimed at slowing down the rate of fishing or to deter fishing on sharks by not allowing fins only to be landed and requiring vessels to return to port more often to unload fins and body parts;
- Maintaining the use of the fin: body weight ratios will preclude the collection of essential information on species level interactions with fishing fleets, crucial for accurate stock assessments for sharks;
- Current scientific evidence clearly indicates that percentage fins:body weight varies widely among species, fin types used in calculations, the type of carcass weight used (whole or dressed), and the method of processing used to remove the fins (fin cutting technique);
- The use of the ratio measure is unlikely to address any sustainability issues that might exist for particular species;
- The only way to guarantee that sharks are not finned (and full utilisation of sharks is encouraged) is to require that the trunks be landed with the fins attached.

RESOLUTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF SHARKS CAUGHT IN ASSOCIATION WITH FISHERIES IN THE IATTC CONVENTION AREA

The Inter American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC),

CONSIDERING that many sharks are part of the pelagic ecosystems in the IATTC area, and that tunas and tuna-like species are captured in fisheries targeting sharks;

RECOGNISING the need to improve the collection of species specific data on catch, discards and trade as a basis for improving the conservation and management of shark stocks and aware that identifying sharks by species is rarely possible if fins have been removed from the carcass;

RECALLING that United Nations General Assembly Resolution on Sustainable Fisheries, adopted annually by consensus, since 2007 (62/177, 63/112, 64/72, 65/38, 66/68, 67/79, 68/71 and A/RES/69/109) calls upon States to take immediate and concerted action to improve the implementation of and compliance with existing regional fisheries management organization or arrangement measures that regulate shark fisheries and incidental catch of sharks, in particular those measures which prohibit or restrict fisheries conducted solely for the purpose of harvesting shark fins, and, where necessary, to consider taking other measures, as appropriate, such as requiring that all sharks be landed with each fin naturally attached;

FURTHER RECALLING that the FAO International Plan of Action for Sharks calls on States to encourage full use of dead sharks, to facilitate improved species-specific catch and landings data and monitoring of shark catches and the identification and reporting of species-specific biological and trade data;

AWARE that despite regional agreements on the prohibition of shark finning, sharks' fins continue to be removed on board and the rest of the shark carcass discarded into the sea;

EMPHASISING the recent recommendations of IOTC and WCPFC Scientific Committees that the use of fin-to-carcass weight ratios is not a verifiable means of ensuring the eradication of shark finning and that it has proven ineffective in terms of implementation, enforcement and monitoring;

WELCOMING the recent adoption of Recommendation 2015:10 on Conservation of Sharks Caught in Association with Fisheries Managed by the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC), which establishes the fins attached policy as exclusive option for ensuring the shark finning ban in the NEAFC Convention area;

Agrees as follows:

1. Members and Cooperating non-Members (CPCs) should establish and implement a national plan of action for conservation and management of shark stocks, in accordance with the *FAO International Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks*.
2. CPCs shall prohibit the removal of shark fins on board vessels. CPCs shall prohibit the landing, retention on-board, transshipment and carrying of shark fins which are not naturally attached to the shark carcass until the first point of landing.
3. Without prejudice to paragraph 2, in order to facilitate on-board storage, shark fins may be partially sliced through and folded against the shark carcass, but shall not be removed from the carcass until the first point of landing.
4. CPCs shall prohibit the purchase, offer for sale and sale of shark fins which have been removed on-board, retained on-board, transhipped or landed, in contravention to this Resolution.
5. CPCs shall take the necessary measures to require that their fishermen fully utilise their entire

catches of sharks [with the exception of those species for whom a retention ban has been adopted by the IATTC]. Full utilization is defined as retention by the fishing vessel of all parts of the shark excepting head, guts and skins, to the point of first landing.

6. In fisheries in which sharks are unwanted species, CPCs shall, to the extent possible, encourage the release of live sharks, especially juveniles and pregnant sharks that are caught incidentally and are not used for food and/or subsistence. CPCs shall require that fishers are aware of and use identification guides and handling practices.
7. CPCs shall report data for catches of sharks, in accordance with IATTC data reporting requirements and procedures, including all available historical data, estimates & life status of discards (dead or alive) and size frequencies. CPCs shall send to the IATTC Secretariat, by May 1, at the latest, a comprehensive annual report of the implementation of this Resolution during the previous year.
8. CPCs shall, where possible, undertake research to:
 - a. identify ways to make fishing gears more selective, where appropriate, including research into the effectiveness of prohibiting wire leaders;
 - b. improve knowledge on key biological/ecological parameters, life-history and behavioural traits, migration patterns of key shark species;
 - c. identify key shark mating, pupping and nursery areas; and
 - d. improve handling practices for live sharks to maximise post-release survival.
9. The Scientific Committee shall annually review the information reported by CPCs and will, as necessary, provide recommendations to the Commission on ways to strengthen the conservation and management of sharks within IOTC fisheries.
10. The Commission shall develop and consider for adoption at its regular annual session 2016 mechanisms to encourage CPCs to comply with their reporting requirement on sharks, notably on the most vulnerable shark species identified by the Scientific Committee.
11. 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.
12. Resolution C-05-03 is replaced by this measure.