INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION

103rd MEETING

Panama City, Panama
1-5 September 2025

RESOLUTION C-25-08

CONSERVATION MEASURES FOR THE PROTECTION AND SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF SHARKS

The Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), gathered in Panama City, Panama, at the occasion of its 103rd 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 under Article VIII, 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 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 that purse-seine vessels release unharmed non-target species, to the extent practicable, including sharks, and urges governments with vessels targeting 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 had admitted and replaced resolution C-23-07 which had consolidated and replaced Resolutions C-05-03, C-16-04 and C- 16-05

Further noting the IATTC staff's 2016 conservation recommendations for the release of sharks caught by purse-seine vessels and for prohibiting the use of shark lines by longline vessels targeting tuna and swordfish;

Aware that specific measures to be respected by vessels of 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, 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 Permanent Working Group on Ecosystem and Bycatch (EBWG), which were endorsed by the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) at its 14th meeting, regarding the need to address best handling and release guidelines and to explore new bycatch release devices and collect more post-release survival data for non-target shark species impacted by fisheries under the purview of the IATTC, as well as the recommendation from the SAC the adoption of a conservation and management measure requiring sharks with fins naturally attached to the body until the point of the first landing;

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

Recalling that the EBWG recommends that a fishery conservation and management measure be adopted that requires sharks to keep 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 developed under the Antigua Convention;

Agrees as follows:

DEFINITIONS

1. For the purpose of this Resolution:

Shark finning means the practice of removing any fin from a shark's body and discarding its 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 head and guts, as appropriate until the first point of landing.

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

Buoy lines means individual lines or leaders that are attached to the float line or to the floats directly, and that are constructed of steel, metal, wire trace, or other materials[2]. Schematic diagram available at Annex 1.

Wire leaders means individual lines or leaders that are constructed of steel, metal, or wire trace, adjacent to the hooks and that are attached to the main line or a branch line. Schematic diagram available at Annex 1.

[2] These are also commonly known as "shark lines."

APPLICATION

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 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 that their fishers fully utilize all retained catches of sharks, with the exception of those species for which a retention ban has been adopted by the IATTC.

5. CPCs shall prohibit shark finning.

6. CPCs shall ensure that all sharks are landed with all fins naturally attached to the body. In order to facilitate on-board storage, shark fins may be partially sliced through 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. Fishing vessels are prohibited from retaining on board, transshipping, landing or trading of any fins harvested or that have been removed on board in contravention of this Resolution.

BYCATCH AND RELEASE

8. CPCs shall prohibit vessels targeting tuna and/or swordfish from using buoy lines.

9. 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 seen on the line, entangled in the net, or brailed on the deck, taking due consideration the safety of any person on board, using the following procedures.

For purse seine vessels:

a. when seen entangled in the net, disentangle the sharks and release them into the ocean as soon as possible.

b. sharks brailed on deck must be returned to the water as soon as possible, either utilizing a ramp from the deck connecting to an opening on the side of the vessel, or through escape hatches. If ramps or escape hatches are not available, the sharks must be lowered with a sling or cargo net, using a crane or similar equipment, or as indicated in Annex 3 or any future revisions, as identified pursuant to paragraph 12.

c. prohibit the use of gaffs, hooks, or similar instruments for the handling of sharks.

d. prohibit the lifting of sharks by the head, tail, gill slits, or spiracles, or by using bind wire against or inserted through the body. Prohibit the punching of holes through the bodies of sharks (e.g., to pass a cable through for lifting the shark).

e. prohibit the lifting of whale sharks (*Rhincodon typus*) onboard the vessel and prohibit the towing of whale sharks out of a purse-seine net, e.g., using towing ropes.

For longline vessels:

f. leave the shark in the water, where possible.

g. use a line cutter to cut the branchline as close to the hook as possible, and so that less than 1

meter remains on the animal, to the extent practicable.

10. The IATTC Scientific Staff, in collaboration with the IATTC SAC and EBWG, shall continue to develop, taking into account the practicability for fishing vessels, and recommend to the Commission a comprehensive set of best handling and release practices 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

11. Among shark species, the list of species in Annex 4 shall be given priority for research. The IATTC Scientific Staff in collaboration with EBWG and CPCs, shall continue to review and recommend changes to Annex 4 to the Commission, as appropriate.

12. The scientific staff, in collaboration with CPC scientists, EBWG and SAC, shall continue evaluating – through a specific pilot experience – the use of specific tools, such as velcro straps and harnesses to lift sharks by their caudal peduncle and present the results to the EBWG and SAC for consideration as a potential best practice for safe handling and release methods for sharks. Exceptionally, for this controlled pilot experience managed by the staff, the lifting of sharks by the tail will be permitted

13. The IATTC Scientific Staff, in consultation with the SAC and EBWG shall continue to develop and strengthen a data collection program for sharks associated with fisheries managed by the Commission, making use of existing research and data collection mechanisms and programs with a goal to implement and maintain a standardized program that includes the monitoring of shark catches in small scale, coastal fisheries, as identified in SAC-15- 10, by 2026, taking into consideration the capacity requirements of those CPCs.

14. In 2026, the IATTC, Scientific Staff in collaboration with the IATTC SAC and EBWG shall develop and recommend to the Commission a Shark Research Plan that will prioritize research activities for *Carcharhinus longimanus and C. falciformis, Sphyrna lewini, S. zygaena, Alopias pelagicus, Alopias supercilicious, Prionace glauca, and S. mokarran,*and as appropriate, the other species listed in Annex 4. This Shark Research Plan will include timelines and financial considerations for stock assessments, ecological risk assessments, and recommended management strategy evaluations. This plan will also identify opportunities for collaboration with the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) for Pacific-wide stocks.

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

16. The IATTC SAC with support from Scientific Staff and the EBWG shall review the information reported by CPCs annually and will, as necessary, provide recommendations to the Commission on ways to strengthen the conservation and management of sharks within IATTC fisheries, including consideration of the use of wire leaders, by vessels fishing tuna and tuna like species.

17. By 2027, CPCs will undertake, where possible, in cooperation with the IATTC scientific staff, actions to:

    a. identify ways to make fishing gears more selective, where appropriate, including research into alternative measures to wire leaders;

    b. improve knowledge of key biological and ecological parameters, life-history and behavioral traits, 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 their post-release survival.

REPORTING AND DATA COLLECTION

18. 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.

19. Each CPC shall annually report data for catches, effort by gear type landing and trade of sharks, by species where possible, in accordance with IATTC reporting procedures, including available historical data, of the fisheries under the purview of the Commission.

20. CPCs are encouraged to provide aggregated information on trade, as available.

21. CPCs shall also provide to the IATTC, through observer programs, electronic monitoring programs or other means, the species identification, the number and status (dead/alive) 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.

22. The IATTC Secretariat will develop a template for CPCs to report on the implementation of this Resolution for adoption by the Commission in 2024.

23. In 2025, CPCs shall use the annual compliance questionnaire to report on their compliance with this Resolution.

24. In 2026, CPCs shall use the reporting template provided by the Staff to annually report on its 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

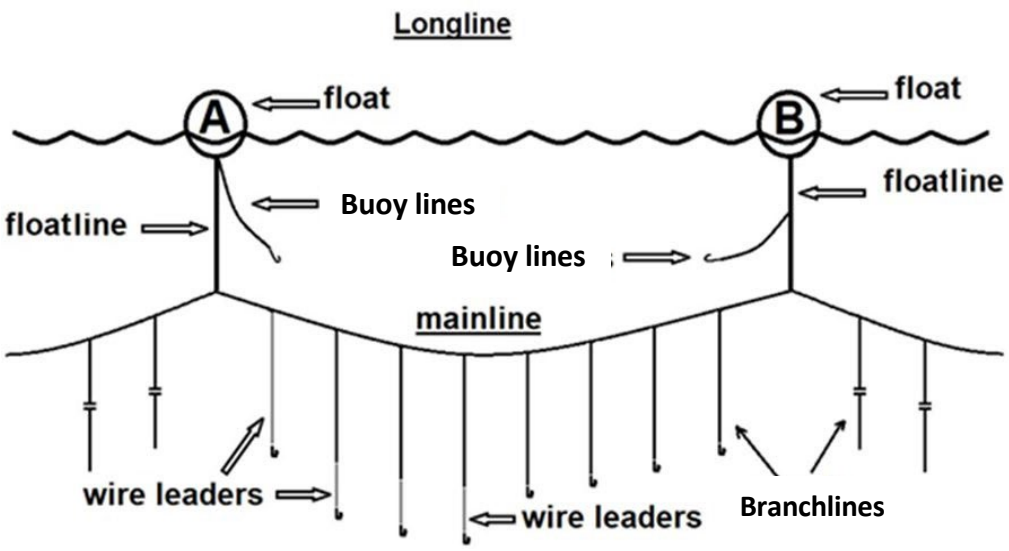
25. This Resolution shall replace Resolution C-24-05 upon its entry into force on July 1, 2026.

Annex 1

Schematic diagram of shark lines and wire leaders

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

Wire leaders: individual lines or leaders that are constructed of steel, metal, or wire trace, and that are attached to the main line or a branch line.



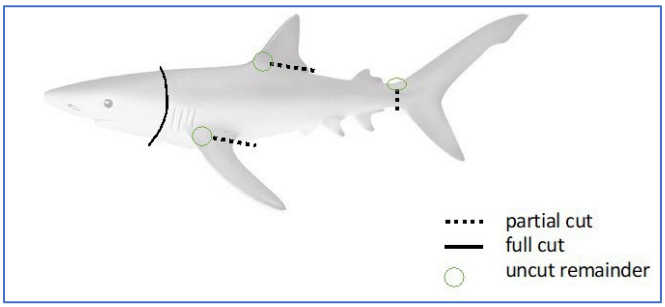
[3] These are also commonly known as "shark lines."

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 body of the shark by connective tissue or cartilage, while at sea. 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. Below is a schematic to guide fishers.

1. Only head and guts, as appropriate, may be removed at sea.
2. A partial cut at the level of the base of the dorsal fin and the base of the pectoral fins is permitted.
3. A partial cut at the level of the caudal peduncle of the base, 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 in the case of the Blue Shark (*P. glauca)* in the process of gutting, provided the fins remain naturally attached.



Annex 3

Best safe handling and release practices (BHRPs) for sharks

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

To maximize the efficacy and utility of adopted BHRPs, CPCs should ensure crew are educated and trained by qualified staff on these practices regularly. Illustrated best handling and release practices should be available on the vessels.

All fisheries SHOULD

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

SHOULD NOT

- Attach sharks to vessel and drag while vessel operations are underway
- Hit or kick the shark
- Leave sharks laying on the deck, exposed to sun or air, except to the extent necessary to carry out these practices
- Insert hands into 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 ascending to the power block.
- Maneuver the animal into a stretcher/cradle or ramp and release it on the opposite side of the vessel.

When brailing sharks on board:

SHOULD

- According to the vessel's conditions, to the extent possible, use bycatch reduction devices (BRDs; e.g., hoppers or ramps) to ensure sharks are sorted on the main deck and do not go down the loading hatch.
- Release the shark as soon as possible. The recommended practice is to remove the shark from the brailer, hopper or ramps by grabbing it, without suspending it, by the caudal peduncle to place it on deck. This should be done manually whenever possible.
- Maneuver sharks into a stretcher/cradle or ramp immediately when possible and release it on the opposite side of the vessel from the net.
- Consider the use of a bycatch/waste ramp on the lower decks to facilitate fast and safe release of sharks that were not sighted on the main/working deck.

For whale sharks SHOULD

- Leave whale sharks in the water for release.
- Release of whale sharks prior to brailing.
- If the whale shark is at the side of the vessel and its head is pointed towards the stern of the vessel, the shark should be released (by opening or cutting the net in front of the sharks mouth)
- If the head of the whale shark is pointed towards the bow of the boat, the crew in charge of the net hauling operation can maneuver the winch and the capstan to bring the whale shark close to the hull, then stand the animal on the net and roll it outside the bunt.

SHOULD NOT

- Land a whale shark on deck regardless of size
- Start a brailing process if it endangers the survival of the whale shark. Pull or drag whale sharks out of the net by the tail or caudal peduncle.

<u>Longline fishery (also applicable to fisheries of other surface fleets other than purse seine)</u> SHOULD

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

- Slow the vessel to bring the sharks alongside for identification and removal of gear.
- Avoid removing hooks from sharks. If attempting to remove hooks use long-handled de-hookers for vessels with high freeboards.
- To the extent practicable and ensure that weights are removed, when cutting the line.
- Avoid bringing sharks on board for gear removal if possible. If sharks are brought on board for gear removal:
    - Use a dip net or lasso to help lift them onboard
    - Use a stretcher or cradle for handling and restraint for the safety of the crew and to reduce injury to the animal.
    - Maneuver shark using manual restraint of the pectoral fins and the caudal peduncle (this may require two crew members depending on the size of the animals

For all longline vessels (also applicable to surface fleet fisheries):

SHOULD NOT

- Drag sharks behind the vessel until the hook rips free of the jaw.
- Lift sharks onboard without the use of a dipnet and or second point of attachment to support the weight of the animal, noting it is not recommended to lift sharks onboard the vessel.
- 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 the jaw for removal of the hook.
- Lift sharks onto the deck if possible.

Annex 3.1

Recommended tools for best handling and release practices

FOR PURSE SEINE FISHERIES

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

FOR LONGLINE FISHERIES

- Dipnet
- Short de-hooker (for sharks brought on board)
- Line cutter
- Short handled de-hooker (vessels with low [<2m] free-board)
- Long-handled line cutter (equal or in greater in length than the vessel's freeboard)
- Long-handled de-hooker (equal or in greater in length than the vessel's freeboard)

Annex 4

List of priority species for research and management

Familia	Nombre científico	Common name	Nombre común
Alopiidae	Alopias pelagicus	Pelagic thresher	Zorro pelágico
Alopiidae	*Alopias superciliosus*	Bigeye thresher	Zorro ojón
Alopiidae	*Alopias vulpinus*	Common thresher	Tiburón zorro pinto
Carcharhinidae	*Carcharhinus brachyurus*	Copper shark	Tiburón cobrizo
Carcharhinidae	*Carcharhinus falciformis*	Silky shark	Tiburón sedoso
Carcharhinidae	*Carcharhinus galapagensis*	Galapagos shark	Tiburón de Galápagos
Carcharhinidae	*Carcharhinus longimanus*	Oceanic whitetip shark	Tiburón punta blanca oceánico
Galeocerdonidae	*Galeocerdo cuvier*	Tiger shark	Tintorera tigre
Lamnidae	*Isurus oxyrinchus*	Shortfin mako shark	Mako de aleta corta
Lamnidae	*Isurus paucus*	Longfin mako shark	Marrajo carite
Lamnidae	*Lamna ditropis*	Salmon shark	Marrajo salmón
Lamnidae	*Lamna nasus*	Porbeagle shark	Marrajo sardinero
Carcharhinidae	*Prionace glauca*	Blue shark	Tiburón azul
Pseudocarchariidae	*Pseudocarcharias kamoharai*	Crocodile shark	Tiburón cocodrilo
Rhincodontidae	*Rhincodon typus*	Whale shark	Tiburón ballena
Sphyrnidae	*Sphyrna lewini*	Scalloped hammerhead shark	Cornuda común
Sphyrnidae	*Sphyrna mokarran*	Great hammerhead	Cornuda gigante
Sphyrnidae	*Sphyrna zygaena*	Smooth hammerhead shark	Cornuda cruz