

INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION

101st MEETING

Victoria, Canada

7-11 August 2023

PROPOSAL IATTC-101 C-5

SUBMITTED BY BELIZE, COSTA RICA, EL SALVADOR,
GUATEMALA, NICARAGUA AND PANAMA

PROPOSAL TO CONSOLIDATE RESOLUTIONS C-05-03, C 16-04,
C-16-05 y C-11-10 and C 11-10 ON THE CONSERVATION AND
MANAGEMENT OF SHARK SPECIES IN THE EASTERN PACIFIC
OCEAN

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

This proposal seeks to consolidate the various resolutions in force for the research, management and conservation of sharks, with the exception of the silky shark, which remains under Resolution C-21-06, since that resolution establishes a specific management regime for this species that takes precedence over the general regime established by this resolution. The purpose of this proposal is to facilitate the integration and follow-up of the provisions, to eliminate possible conflicting interpretations at the time of their application and to introduce safe handling and release guidelines for immediate application.

The proponents recognize and thank Canada for its efforts to work together to develop this proposal. However, time constraints prevented this coordinated effort, and therefore this proposal will contain important and substantial similarities to the Canadian proposal, which served as the basis for the preparation of this document. Therefore, the proponents are eager to work with Canada and other CPCs to develop a consensus document for adoption by the Commission.

The Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC):

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 in accordance 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 sharks are a highly migratory group of species and occur throughout the Pacific Ocean, including the areas covered by the North Pacific Fisheries Commission and the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission, and require consistent measures to ensure appropriate and effective sustainable management;

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

~~Further recalling~~ *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 the Convention, with a view to maintaining or restoring populations of such species above levels at which their reproduction may become seriously threatened”;

Emphasizing the need to obtain better data to develop and implement management measures in accordance with the variability of the fisheries, as well as to improve the understanding of fishing and nursery areas, catches and fishing effort that affect the fishing mortality of sharks by the fleets operating in the Convention Area;

Recognizing the need to collect data on catches, effort, discards, and ~~trade~~ *utilization*, as well as information on the biological parameters of ~~many~~ *the species managed by the IATTC, particularly*, ~~as part of sharks conservation and management~~;

Noting that the IATTC ~~has adopted~~ *requires*, in its Consolidated Resolution on Bycatch, ~~a requirement for fishermen on~~ *that* purse-seine vessels ~~to~~ release unharmed non-target species, to the extent practicable, including sharks, and that ~~governments with longline fleets also~~ *CPCs should* provide the required bycatch information as soon as possible;

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*;

~~Believing~~ *Aware* that specific measures to be respected by vessels of all fishing gears are necessary for the conservation of sharks in the ~~EPO~~ *Convention Area*;

Considering the variations that may exist in the ratio of fin to body weight due to several factors, including differences between shark species, the type and number of fins used in the calculations, the type of body weight used (whole or processed) and the processing method used to separate the fins from the body (finning technique), and between dry and fresh fins;

Further considering the need to improve the identification process 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;

Recalling that the Working Group on Ecosystem and Bycatch (EBWG) recommends the adoption of a conservation and management measure requiring sharks with their fins naturally attached to the body until the first point of landing;

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

Agrees as follows:

DEFINITIONS

1. For the purposes of this resolution, the following definitions are adopted:

- a) **Shark finning:** It is the practice of completely removing the fins from the shark's body and discarding the carcass before landing in port, also known as *desaleteo* in Spanish.
- b) **Full utilization:** Where the retention of sharks is permitted, it is the practice whereby the fishing vessel stores all parts of the shark, from which only the head and guts may be removed, until the first point of landing.
- c) **Naturally attached fins:** Post-capture handling system for sharks intentionally retained on board, which ensures that their fins have not been removed from the body and are kept fully or partially attached, in the latter case by connective tissue or cartilage, from the time of capture to the first port of landing.
- d) **Shark lines:** Individual lines or leaders that are attached to the float line or to the floats directly, used for the purpose of targeting sharks, that are constructed of steel, metal, wire trace, or other materials, as described in the diagram in Annex 1.

2. NATIONAL PLAN OF ACTION FOR SHARKS:

~~Each Party and co-operating non-party, co-operating fishing entity or regional economic integration organization (collectively "CPCs") should~~ **shall** 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 **adopted by the FAO.**

3. SHARK FINNING BAN:

- a) **CPCs shall adopt the necessary measures in accordance with their laws to prohibit the practice of shark finning.** Fishing vessels are prohibited from retaining on board, transshipping, landing, offering for sale or in any way ~~or trading in any shark fins harvested~~ **removed** in contravention of this Resolution.
- b) CPCs shall adopt the necessary measures in accordance with their laws to ensure the full utilization of catches of these species, recording relevant catch and effort information.

4. BYCATCH, RETENTION AND RELEASE OF SHARKS:

- a) Intentional retention of sharks by purse-seine fleets is prohibited. In case of a catch, purse-seine vessels shall endeavor to release the sharks caught.
- b) Where the retention of any shark species is not permitted under current regulations, or in any case where sharks caught incidentally are not retained, CPCs shall require the release of live sharks, to the extent possible, or the discarding of dead sharks at sea, taking due consideration of the safety of the crew involved in the release process.
- c) ~~Members and Cooperating non-Members (CPCs)~~ shall prohibit **intentional** retaining onboard, transshipping, landing, storing, selling, or offering for sale any part or whole carcass of oceanic whitetip sharks (*Carcharhinus longimanus*) in the fisheries covered by the Antigua Convention. CPCs shall require vessels flying their flag to promptly release unharmed, to the extent practicable, whitetip sharks when brought alongside the vessel.
- d) Incidents of unintentional retention of sharks shall be recorded at the time of identification, indicating the reasons why the shark could not be released.

- e) Retained shark specimens that could not be released shall be handed over to the port authorities at the time of landing. If these catches are not declared and handed over to the port State, the port State shall take appropriate measures in accordance with its laws and shall notify the IATTC.
- f) CPCs shall require that, as a minimum, the safe handling and release guidelines described in Annex 2 are followed.
- g) CPCs shall prohibit longline vessels ~~flying their flag and~~ targeting tuna and/or swordfish (*Xiphias gladius*) ~~in the Convention Area from using “shark lines” (individual lines attached to the floatline or to the floats directly, and used to target sharks; Figure 1).~~
- h) CPCs shall prohibit for purse-seine vessels: The use of gaffs, hooks, or similar instruments is prohibited for the handling of sharks. No shark may be lifted by the head, tail, gill slits, or spiracles, or by using bind wire against or inserted through the body, and no holes may be punched through the bodies of sharks (e.g., to pass a cable through for lifting the shark).

5. RESEARCH

- a) In 2024, the scientific staff, in consultation with the SAC, shall design and implement a data collection program for sharks associated with fisheries managed by the Commission, including the monitoring of shark catches by artisanal fisheries in coastal developing countries and the establishment, maintenance and strengthening of standardized data management databases, taking into account appropriate assistance to those CPCs. The Director shall give priority to the provision of financial resources for this purpose.
- b) ~~In 2006, the IATTC~~The IATTC scientific staff, in cooperation with scientists of CPCs, shall evaluate the information available to determine the~~and, if possible, the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission, shall provide preliminary advice on the stock status of the stocks of key shark species and propose a research plan for a comprehensive assessment of these stocks~~ at least the following species: *Carcharhinus longimanus*, *Carcharhinus falciformis*, *Sphyrna lewiny*, y *Alopias pelagicus*.
- c) CPCs shall undertake, where possible, in cooperation with the IATTC scientific staff, ~~undertake research~~actions to:
 - a. identify ways to make fishing gears more selective, where appropriate, including research into alternative measures to prohibiting ~~wire leaders~~guide wires;
 - b. improve knowledge of key biological and ecological parameters, life-history and behavioural 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 maximise their post-release survival.

6. REPORTING AND DATA COLLECTION

- ~~a)~~ 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 data reporting and provision procedures, including available historical data. 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.

~~b)~~a)

e) ~~b)~~ CPCs shall require their fishers to collect ~~and submit~~ catch data for all associated silky and hammerhead sharks, and shall submit the data to the IATTC in accordance with IATTC data reporting requirements. ~~CPCs shall also record, through observer programs or other means, for purse seine vessels of all capacity classes, the number and status (dead/alive) of silky sharks and hammerhead sharks caught and released, and report it to the IATTC.~~

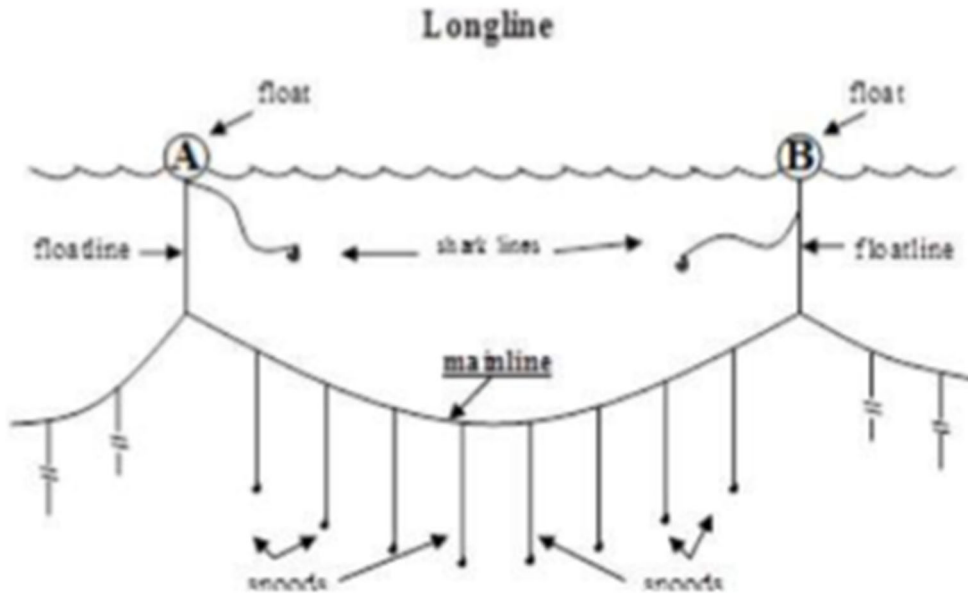
~~e)~~ c) For species for which retention is prohibited, CPCs shall also record and report to the IATTC, through observer programs or other means (e.g., logbooks), whenever possible, the species identification, number and status (dead/alive) of released sharks. This requirement shall apply even when unidentified unintentional retention is detected at the time of the catch.

7. REPEAL AND ENTRY INTO FORCE

- a) This resolution shall enter into force on 1 January 2024.
- b) This resolution repeals and replaces resolutions C-05-03, C-16-04, C-16-05 and C-11-10.

Annex 1.

Schematic diagram of a shark line.



Annex 2.

Safe handling and release guidelines

Minimum standards for safe shark handling practices are given below, together with those specified in paragraphs preceding this resolution. Specific recommendations are also offered for both longline and purse-seine fisheries.

1. These minimum standards are appropriate for the release of live sharks, whether under non-retention policies or voluntarily. These basic guidelines do not replace any stricter safety standards that may have been established by the national authorities of each CPC.
2. Safety first: These minimum standards should be considered in light of safety and viability for crew members. Crew safety must always come first. At a minimum, crew members should wear suitable gloves and avoid working around the mouths of sharks.
3. Training: The Secretariat should develop materials to support crew training in implementing this safe handling protocol. These materials should be made available to CPCs in both official languages of the IATTC.
4. Be prepared: Tools should be prepared in advance (for example, canvas or net slings, stretchers for carrying or lifting, large mesh net or grid to cover hatches/hoppers in purse-seine fisheries, long-handled cutters and dehookers in longline fisheries, etc., listed at the end of this document).

General recommendations for all fisheries:

5. The primary aim of release processes is to ensure the highest level of survival of sharks for which retention is not permitted. Whenever possible, prompt and effective action will be taken to return the shark to the sea, provided there is no risk to crew safety.
6. When entanglement occurs (in a net, fishing line, etc.), if safe to do so, carefully cut the net or fishing line to release the animal and return it to the sea as soon as possible without further entanglement.
7. When making a release, to the extent possible, identify the species and condition (live/dead) to record the interaction.
8. If, for any reason, one or more shark individuals for which capture or retention is prohibited or not authorized are unintentionally or unavoidably retained and it has not been possible to identify them previously or remove them from the wells, make a note of this incident in the records of interaction with non-target species, stating when the individual or individuals were identified, and surrender them to the port authority. Keep in mind that any attempt to trade these species constitutes a serious violation.

Safe handling practices specific to longline fisheries:

9. Except for shark species for which capture and retention are permitted:

- a) To the extent possible, all sharks to be released must remain in the water at all times, unless they need to be raised to identify the species. If sharks are brought on deck, attempts must be made to release them in as little time as possible.

- b) Bring the shark as close to the vessel as possible, without putting too much tension on the branchline to prevent a released hook or breakage in the branchline from causing hooks, weights, and other items to flyback at great speed toward the vessel and crew.
- c) Secure the far side of the longline to the vessel to prevent any gear remaining in the water from pulling on the longline and animal.
- d) Use a line cutter to cut the line as close as possible to the hook.
- e) If hooked, and the hook is visible in the body or mouth, use a dehooking device or long-handled bolt cutter to remove the hook barb and then remove the hook.
- f) If it is not possible to remove the hook or the hook is not visible, cut the trace line (or snood, leader) as close as possible to the hook (ideally leaving as little line and/or leader as possible with no weights attached to the animal).

10. Safe handling practices specific to purse-seine fisheries:

- a) If sharks are encountered in purse-seine fishing, endeavor to release them in the shortest possible time. Recommended practice is to remove the shark from the brailer, hopper or chute by taking it by the caudal peduncle to place it on deck. This should be done manually whenever possible.
- b) It is prohibited to lift the shark by its head, tail, gill slits or spiracles.
- c) It is prohibited to use bind wire against or inserted through the body, and no holes may be punched through the bodies of sharks (e.g., to pass a cable through for lifting the shark).
- d) If in a purse-seine net: Scan the net as far ahead as possible to spot sharks in time and react promptly. Avoid lifting them up in the net toward the power block. Reduce vessel speed to slacken tension on the net and allow the entangled animal out of the net. If necessary, use clippers to cut the net.
- e) If in the brailer or on deck: Use a large mesh cargo net, canvas sling or similar device. If vessel layout allows, these sharks may also be released by emptying the brailer directly into a hopper and release ramp held up at an angle that connects to an opening on the top deck railing, with no need for them to be lifted or handled by the crew.

11. DO NOT (all fisheries):

- a) To the extent possible, do not lift sharks from the water using the branchline, especially if hooked, unless it is necessary to lift sharks to identify species.
- b) When releasing a shark, do not lift it using thin wires or cables.
- c) Do not strike a shark against any surface to remove it from the line.
- d) Do not attempt to dislodge a hook that is deeply ingested and not visible.
- e) Do not attempt to remove a hook by pulling sharply on the branchline.
- f) Do not cut the tail or any other body part.
- g) Do not cut or punch holes in the shark.
- h) Do not hit or kick a shark.

- i) Do not insert hands into the gill slits.
- j) Do not expose the shark to the sun for extended periods.
- k) Do not wrap your hands or arms on the line when bringing a shark or ray to the vessel (this may result in serious injury).

13. Recommended useful tools for safe handling and release:

- a) Gloves (shark skin is rough; this ensures safe handling of the shark and protects crew members' hands from bites).
- b) Towel or cloth (a towel or cloth soaked in seawater can be placed over the shark's eyes to calm it down).
- c) Dehooking devices (for example, pigtail dehooker, bolt cutter or pliers).
- d) Shark harness or stretcher (if necessary).
- e) Tail rope (to secure a hooked shark if it needs to be removed from the water).
- f) Saltwater hose (if anticipated that it may take more than 5 minutes to release a shark, place a hose in the shark's mouth so that moderate amounts of seawater flow in. Make sure the deck pump has been running several minutes before placing it in the shark's mouth).
- g) Measuring device (for example, mark a pole, leader and float, or a measuring tape).
- h) Data sheet for recording all catches.
- i) Tagging equipment (if applicable).