

Recommendation n°12

Measures for the Protection and Conservation of the Shortfin Mako Sharks (*Isurus oxyrinchus*)

Sharks have often been the unintended target of overfishing, not always as a target species, but mainly as bycatch, with some species being listed as "endangered" by Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and that results in various harmful consequences for the marine environment¹.

The shortfin mako shark (*Isurus oxyrinchus*) is a pelagic shark widely distributed globally that has experienced a dramatic increase in unintended catches in the 1990s, particularly in the Atlantic Ocean. Due to the lack of actual management measures to protect this declining species, the shortfin mako was listed in 2019 on CITES Appendix II in order to regulate its trade. During the 26th meeting of the ICCAT, the European Union (EU) helped block the proposal by several countries to ban the retention of shortfin mako sharks in the North Atlantic, a measure that was in line with the most recent opinion of Scientific Committee of the ICCAT (SCRS) and proposed by several leading scientists².

In late 2020, Portugal and Spain declared that they would not issue documents for the landing and trade of shortfin mako sharks in 2021, reinforcing the need to protect this species and discouraging its catch. This measure came into force in January 2021.

Hence, the Outermost Advisory Council (CCRUP) **recommends to the European Commission that the EU should take a stance towards protecting marine resources and biodiversity and supporting a policy of not retaining shortfin mako sharks in the North Atlantic, as it has done in the past for other vulnerable shark species.** Additionally, in order to reduce bycatch mortality of shortfin mako sharks, we encourage the EU to introduce proposals to reduce bycatch of this species in longline fishing, such as the use of circle hooks (which allow for greater survival of live individuals released post-catch), seasonal closures in areas of high importance for shortfin mako shark populations, avoidance of hotspots and banning metal snares. Furthermore, the CCRUP considers that it would be extremely positive, not only for shortfin mako sharks

¹ <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/347/6219/1255641>

² <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/371/6527/355.1>
https://www.iccat.int/Documents/SCRS/DetRep/SMA_SA_ENG.pdf

but for all species caught by surface longline fishing, that measures to improve monitoring and data collection, such as increased coverage of on-board observers and the possibility of installing Remote Electronic Monitoring tools, be proposed and supported by the European Commission.

Best regards,

The President of the Executive Committee of the CC RUP,

(David Pavón González)

Praia da Vitória, 15th of June of 2021