

WCC-2012-Rec-144-EN

Conservation and management of threatened sharks

ACKNOWLEDGING the increasing concern by the international community that many shark species are threatened and are continuing to decline because of unregulated fishing and bycatch;

EXPRESSING CONCERN that 30 percent of assessed shark and ray species around the world are classified as threatened or Near Threatened with extinction by the *IUCN Red List of Threatened Species* and ALARMED that approximately two-thirds of the shark species commonly caught in high seas fisheries are classified as Vulnerable;

ACKNOWLEDGING the Red List Assessment of sharks from the IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC) Shark Specialist Group conducted since the 4th IUCN World Conservation Congress;

AWARE that the loss of sharks can cause dramatic shifts in the marine environment, including a cascade of indirect effects resulting from changes in the abundance of other organisms;

RECALLING that Recommendation 4.113 *Conserving migratory and oceanic sharks* adopted by the 4th IUCN World Conservation Congress (Barcelona, 2008) urged all shark range States, fishing States, and other entities: to develop shark plans in accordance with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Technical Guidelines for the Implementation of the International Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks (IPOA-Sharks)¹; to review these plans regularly; and to evaluate the effectiveness of their shark plans and regulations, particularly by improving catch, discard and landings data collection, strictly regulating the catch of sharks, and protecting threatened species; but NOTING with concern that nine of the Top 26 “shark catchers”² are currently without an adopted National Plan of Action (NPOA) for sharks;

WELCOMING FAO’s report on the extent of the implementation of the 1999 FAO IPOA-Sharks³ and the challenges being faced by members of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) in implementing the instrument, as requested by COFI members at the 29th Session in February 2011;

RECALLING that Recommendation 4.111 *Conservation of Leatherback Turtles Dermochelys coriacea and hammerhead sharks Sphyrna spp. in the Eastern Tropical Pacific Marine Corridor* adopted by the 4th IUCN World Conservation Congress (Barcelona, 2008) called on relevant coastal States and fishing entities to adopt and immediately implement policies to provide broad protection to threatened species and to gather information on the bycatch of sharks and facilitate public access to such information;

FURTHER RECALLING that paragraph 14 from the United Nations General Assembly Sustainable Fisheries Resolution⁴ 2011 (Resolution A/66/L.22) calls upon States, including through Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMO) or arrangements, to

¹ The term ‘sharks’ is used here to include all species of sharks, skates, rays and chimaeras.

² The term “shark catchers” refers to countries, territories, and other political entities that catch more than 1% of the global shark catch according to the FAO.

³ To be presented at the 30th meeting of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) from 5–9 July 2012.

⁴ *Sustainable fisheries, including through the 1995 Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, and related instruments.*

urgently adopt measures to fully implement the International Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks for directed and non-directed shark fisheries, based on the best available scientific information, through, *inter alia*, limits on catch or fishing effort, by requiring that vessels flying their flag collect and regularly report data on shark catches, including species-specific data, discards and landings, undertaking, including through international cooperation, comprehensive stock assessments of sharks, reducing shark by-catch and by-catch mortality;

COMMENDING efforts by several RFMOs to prohibit retaining onboard, transshipping, landing, storing, selling or offering for sale certain shark species taken in their respective convention areas;

APPLAUDING the proclamations by the Republic of Palau, the Republic of Maldives, the Republic of Honduras, the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, Tokelau, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands to establish their waters as 'shark sanctuaries' through protections including the prohibition of commercial fishing of sharks throughout their exclusive economic zones; and

NOTING that there are many sources of data and advice, including the scientific summaries presented in the *IUCN Red List of Threatened Species*, that can be used by national and regional management bodies when determining how to manage shark stocks;

The World Conservation Congress, at its session in Jeju, Republic of Korea, 6–15 September 2012:

1. URGES all shark range States, fishing States, other entities and relevant RFMOs to:
 - a. prohibit retaining onboard, trans-shipping, landing, storing, selling or offering for sale, any part or whole carcass of sharks assessed as Critically Endangered or Endangered in the *IUCN Red List of Threatened Species* if consistent with domestic legislation; and
 - b. adopt precautionary science-based management measures for sharks, which take into consideration all available sources of scientific data, advice and assessments including the *IUCN Red List of Threatened Species*, with strong monitoring and enforcement controls to prevent illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, and ensure that overfishing of sharks does not occur and that overfished shark populations are rebuilt;
2. ENCOURAGES relevant coastal States to take science-based measures to conserve and sustainably manage sharks, which could include limits on catch or fishing effort, technical measures, including by-catch reduction measures, closed areas or sanctuaries, closed seasons, and monitoring, control and surveillance;
3. CALLS on all shark range States, fishing States, and other entities to take appropriate action to improve the implementation of the UN FAO IPOA-Sharks, taking into account recent reviews by FAO, and, if they are not already doing so, to develop, implement and regularly review their NPOA-Sharks, and do so as a matter of priority if their vessels conduct directed fisheries for sharks or if their vessels routinely catch sharks in non-directed fisheries or as by-catch;
4. RECOMMENDS that Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) consider inclusion of shark species on CITES Appendices, taking into account the status of the species in the *IUCN Red List of Threatened Species*, and other relevant information, if subject to international trade; and

5. CALLS on the Director General to promote and strive to achieve the actions described in paragraphs 1–4, above.

The State Member Iceland provided the following statement for the record in relation to alternative formulations (referred to as 'Option 1' and 'Option 2') of operative paragraph 1 (the Members' Assembly voted to approve Option 1 for inclusion in the adopted text of the Motion) during the 11th Sitting of the Members' Assembly:

"Many States have legislation and banned fishing operations to discharge or throw away their catch or by by-catch species like, for example, sharks. Iceland is one of these countries. The second option recognises the difference in legislation between countries in this regard and acknowledges countries that have management measures in place while also including the option to ban retaining on board shark species when management plans are not in place. Option one does not recognise the possibility of management plans without the ban to retain sharks on board and encourages discharge of sharks. Iceland will have to vote against Option 1 and prefers Option 2 and if Option 1 is preferred by the Assembly we request that the statement be included in the report from the meeting."

Expressing its support for an alternative formulation (referred to as 'Option 2') of operative paragraph 1, which was not approved during voting on this Motion, State Member Japan provided the following statement for the record during the 11th Sitting of the Members' Assembly:

"Japan has been supporting prohibition of retaining several shark species onboard at Regional Fisheries Management Organizations or RFMOs and even submitted a similar proposal to RFMOs for oceanic whitetip shark. However, Japan cannot support any text which prejudices the position of State Members at RFMOs. Whether prohibition of retention on board is the best option for a certain species should be decided by each RFMO, taking into account various factors, which differ among RFMOs. We are concerned that giving too much emphasis on a specific measure will not necessarily contribute to conservation of sharks. Therefore, we support Option 2."