



POSITION STATEMENT
SHARK & RAY CONSERVATION MEASURES
21st Session of the
INDIAN OCEAN TUNA COMMISSION
Yogyakarta, Indonesia, May 22-26, 2017

Our organizations appreciate delegates' consideration of our views on proposals currently before the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) with respect to shark and ray fishing. We focus our conservation efforts on these species because of the low reproductive capacity that leaves most of them exceptionally vulnerable to overexploitation.

SEYCHELLES & MALDIVES PROPOSAL ON MOBULID RAYS

Manta and devil rays (family Mobulidae) are the least fecund fish taken in tuna fisheries, with females giving birth to as few as one pup every two to three years. A particularly cautious approach is warranted with respect to both handling of individuals and management of fishing mortality. With all mobulid rays now listed on Appendix I and II of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), Parties' intentions and obligations to safeguard these particularly vulnerable species are mounting. Specifically, CMS Parties are required to strictly protect mobulid rays while CITES Parties are obligated to restrict international mobulid trade to that which can be demonstrated to be the result of sustainable and legal fishing.

We thank the Seychelles and Maldives for proposing complementary IOTC measures aimed at ensuring safe, live release of manta and devil rays taken in high seas Indian Ocean fisheries. Specifically, we urge adoption of the proposal to prohibit in retention, landing, sale, storage, and transshipment of these species, as well as harmful practices (gaffing, lifting by gill slits or spiracles, punching holes in wings) in IOTC fisheries. We also strongly support proposed mandates for careful, immediate release of all mobulids according to safe handling guidelines, and prompt reporting to the IOTC on the number and status of individuals discarded and released. We take this opportunity to encourage all Parties -- in recognition of other international commitments as well as these species' exceptionally low productivity -- to ensure that similar safeguards are applied to domestic fisheries, and that strict mobulid export restrictions are in place.

EU PROPOSAL ON SHARK FINNING

We applaud the EU for continued leadership toward prohibiting at-sea shark fin removal, the best practice for enforcing bans on shark finning (slicing off a shark's fins and discarding the body at sea). Such "fins-attached" policies can ease enforcement, improve species-specific catch data, and prevent high-grading. Concerns about safety and storage can be addressed by partially cutting and folding fins. Because of its many practical advantages, the fins-attached method is being mandated in a growing number of countries, and is gaining acceptance in international arenas; the policy has been adopted by the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission and the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization, and is supported by 80% of International Commission for Conservation of Atlantic Tunas Parties at the 2016 annual meeting.

We urge IOTC Parties to adopt a prohibition on the removal of shark fins on-board vessels, as well as the retention, transshipment, and landing of shark fins that are not naturally attached to carcasses, *without exceptions*.

Shark Advocates International, a project of The Ocean Foundation, works to safeguard sharks & rays through sound, science-based conservation policy.

Supporting work in more than 35 countries, Humane Society International is one of the only international organizations working to protect all animals.

The Shark Trust is a UK charity working to advance the worldwide conservation of sharks through science, education, influence and action.

Project AWARE Foundation is a growing movement of scuba divers protecting the ocean planet – one dive at a time.