

## Draft National Plan of Action for Sharks - P

Sultanate of Oman

Under the FAO IPOA-Sharks and for the purposes of implementing IOTC Resolution 25/08, paragraphs 36 and 37

### National Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks (NPOA-Sharks) of Oman

Implementation period: 2026–2030

Competent authority: Ministry of Fisheries

#### 1. Legal basis and purpose

This National Plan of Action for Sharks is adopted by Oman, in its capacity as a **Contracting Party (“CPC”) of the IOTC**, for the purpose of implementing the **FAO International Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks (IPOA-Sharks)** and complying with **IOTC Resolution 25/08**, in particular **paragraphs 36 and 37**.

The overall objective of this Plan is to ensure the **long-term conservation, management and sustainable use** of sharks, rays, skates and chimaeras caught by vessels of Oman or within waters under its jurisdiction, where such catches are associated with fisheries falling within the material and geographical scope of the IOTC.

This National Plan should be read in line with the regulations applicable in Oman on the field, and the provisions which may conflict with Laws or Regulations shall be deemed as not written.

#### 2. Guiding principles

The competent authorities shall implement this Plan in accordance with the following principles:

- precautionary approach;
- best available scientific evidence;
- long-term sustainability;
- traceability and transparency;
- coordination among fisheries administration, scientific authority, inspection services and stakeholders;
- consistency with IOTC measures and the FAO IPOA-Sharks.

#### 3. Scope of application

This Plan shall apply to:

- **national-flagged vessels** authorized to fish for IOTC species in the IOTC Area of Competence;
- **industrial, semi-industrial, artisanal and coastal fisheries**, to the extent that they catch sharks either in directed fisheries or as bycatch;

- the catching, retention, landing, transshipment, release, handling and reporting of **Chondrichthyan species**.

For the purposes of this Plan, “sharks” shall include **sharks, skates, rays and chimaeras**.

#### 4. Summary national assessment

Oman recognizes that:

1. its vessels may conduct directed or incidental catches of sharks in fisheries under the competence of the IOTC;
2. the information currently available on catches, discards, post-release survival, size composition, fishing grounds and seasons presents partial coverage coverage;
3. certain shark species are particularly vulnerable due to their slow growth, late maturity and low fecundity;
4. there is a need to strengthen data collection, fisheries regulation, monitoring, control and mitigation measures.

#### 5. Objectives

##### 5.1 General objective

The objective of this Shark-Plan is to ensure the long-term conservation, management and sustainable use of sharks, skates, rays and chimaeras caught in association with fisheries under the jurisdiction of Oman or conducted by vessels flying its flag, consistent with the FAO IPOA-Sharks and applicable IOTC conservation and management measures.

##### 5.2 Specific objectives

- a. To improve the **collection and quality of data** on catches, fishing effort, discards, releases and trade.
- b. To ensure that national legislation incorporates and operationalizes the **IOTC measures applicable to sharks**.
- c. To reduce **avoidable mortality** of sharks caught incidentally.
- d. To ensure compliance with applicable measures on **full utilization, fins naturally attached**, and other relevant obligations.
- e. To strengthen **monitoring, control and surveillance**.
- f. To enhance training for fishers, crew members, observers and inspectors.
- g. To report annually to the IOTC on the NPOA and its implementation through the **annual Implementation Report**.

#### 6. Strategies for achieving the objectives

##### 6.1 Strategy to ascertain control over access of fishing vessels to shark stocks

Oman shall strengthen control over access to shark stocks through the licensing and authorization of fishing vessels, the specification of permitted fishing areas and gears, and the inclusion of shark-related conditions in fishing licences and authorizations, as appropriate. No vessel shall be permitted to engage in directed shark fishing, retain shark catches beyond authorized conditions, or operate in contravention of shark conservation and management measures.

The competent authority shall maintain updated records of vessels authorized to operate in fisheries where shark interactions occur and shall ensure that access arrangements are consistent with national law, regional obligations and the conservation status of affected species.

## **6.2 Strategy to decrease fishing effort where shark catch is unsustainable**

Where available scientific information, risk assessments, catch trends, or other credible indicators suggest that catches of a shark species are unsustainable, Oman shall adopt appropriate measures to reduce fishing mortality and, where necessary, fishing effort. Such measures may include restrictions on retention, landing or sale; temporal or spatial closures; gear modifications; limits on fishing operations; or other management responses proportionate to the conservation need.

Pending the availability of complete scientific information, Oman shall apply the precautionary approach and may adopt interim measures where there are reasonable grounds for concern regarding the sustainability of shark catches.

## **6.3 Strategy to improve the utilization of sharks caught**

Oman shall promote the full and responsible utilization of sharks that are lawfully retained, consistent with national law and applicable international measures. The practice of shark finning shall be prohibited, and sharks retained on board or landed shall be managed in a manner that minimizes waste and supports traceability and compliance.

The competent authority shall also encourage improved landing, handling, storage and processing practices so as to maximize lawful utilization, reduce waste, improve product traceability and facilitate accurate reporting of shark-derived products.

## **6.4 Strategy to improve data collection and monitoring of shark fisheries**

Oman shall establish or strengthen systems for the collection, validation, storage and analysis of shark-related data across all relevant fisheries. These systems shall seek, to the greatest extent possible, to record catches, effort, discards, live releases, species composition, size data, fishing area, gear interactions and, where relevant, trade and utilization information.

Monitoring tools may include logbooks, landing declarations, observer programmes, electronic monitoring systems, port sampling, biological sampling, trade documentation and

inspection records. Particular priority shall be given to improving species-level identification and reporting so as to support risk assessment, compliance monitoring and management decision-making.

### **6.5 Strategy to train all concerned in the identification of shark species**

Oman shall develop and implement training programmes for all relevant actors involved in shark fisheries and shark management, including fishers, vessel masters, crew members, observers, inspectors, port samplers, data managers and enforcement officers. Such training shall prioritize the identification of shark species, the recognition of prohibited or protected species, safe handling and release techniques, and reporting obligations under national and regional rules.

Training materials shall, where possible, include identification guides, illustrated manuals, electronic tools and practical exercises tailored to the fisheries and species most relevant to Oman.

### **6.6 Strategy to facilitate and encourage research on little-known shark species**

Oman shall facilitate and encourage research on shark species for which biological, ecological, fisheries or trade information is limited or uncertain. Priority shall be given to species that are frequently caught but poorly identified, species suspected to be vulnerable, and species for which management action may be hindered by insufficient knowledge.

Such research may include taxonomic studies, biological sampling, stock structure analysis, movement and distribution studies, post-release survival research, gear interaction studies and socioeconomic assessments. The competent authority shall seek cooperation with national research institutions, regional fisheries bodies, universities and international partners to strengthen the scientific basis for management.

### **6.7 Strategy to obtain utilization and trade data on shark species**

Oman shall improve the collection and analysis of data relating to the utilization, processing, domestic marketing, export, import and trade of shark species and shark-derived products, in accordance with national law and international obligations. Efforts shall be made to improve species-level traceability wherever feasible, particularly for products entering trade channels.

Relevant authorities responsible for fisheries, customs, trade control and statistics shall cooperate to enhance the quality, consistency and interoperability of shark utilization and trade data. Such information shall support compliance, stock conservation, policy design and reporting obligations.

## **7. Implementation**

### **7.1 Monitoring**

Monitoring under this Shark-Plan shall be continuous, risk-based and proportionate to the scale and nature of shark interactions in the fisheries concerned. It shall include, as appropriate, at-sea monitoring, port-based controls, observer coverage, electronic monitoring, catch documentation, trade verification and periodic review of compliance indicators.

## **7.2 Data collection and analysis**

Data collection and analysis shall be conducted according to standardized methodologies approved by the competent authority. The information collected under this Plan shall be used to assess trends in shark catches, evaluate the effectiveness of management measures, identify emerging risks and support national and regional reporting obligations.

## **7.3 Research**

Research activities undertaken under this Plan shall support evidence-based decision-making and shall be periodically reviewed to ensure that they address the most significant knowledge gaps affecting shark conservation and management in Oman.

## **7.4 Building of human capacity**

Oman shall allocate appropriate efforts and, subject to available resources, develop the institutional and human capacity necessary for effective shark conservation and management. This shall include technical training, operational guidance, scientific support, enforcement capability and inter-agency coordination.

## **7.5 Implementation of management measures**

The measures adopted under this Shark-Plan shall be implemented through national legislation, administrative decisions, licence conditions, compliance procedures, inspection protocols and reporting obligations, as appropriate. Their implementation shall be reviewed periodically, and adjustments shall be made where required on the basis of scientific evidence, compliance findings and evolving international obligations.

**A national shark working group shall be established and shall meet at least once a year to review progress and prepare reporting to the IOTC.**

## **9. Timeline**

### **Year 1**

- formal adoption of the NPOA-Sharks;
- national risk assessment;
- regulatory review;
- design of reporting formats and initial training.

### **Year 2**

- full deployment of the data collection system;

- strengthening of inspection and traceability;
- first national progress report.

### **Year 3 and subsequent years**

- review of effectiveness;
- regulatory and operational adjustments;
- update of the NPOA, where appropriate.

### **10. Indicators**

Implementation of the Plan shall be measured, at a minimum, through:

- percentage of the fleet covered by the reporting system;
- percentage of shark catches identified to species level;
- number of inspections including a shark-related component;
- number of crew members and inspectors trained;
- level of compliance with the fins naturally attached requirement;
- existence and quality of annual reporting to the IOTC;
- progress in implementation of the timeline actions.

### **11. Reporting to the IOTC**

In accordance with paragraph 37 of Resolution 25/08, Oman shall include this NPOA-Sharks in its **annual Implementation Report** and shall report annually on:

- confirmation that it implements the IPOA-Sharks;
- the year of adoption of the NPOA;
- the implementation period;
- submission/upload of the NPOA document;
- progress in implementation, including measures adopted, results achieved, difficulties encountered and actions planned.

### **12. Review and update**

This Plan shall be reviewed every 4 years, or earlier where:

- new IOTC measures are adopted;
- there is a significant change in fleet structure or shark interactions;
- scientific evidence indicates that revision is necessary.