



ON CONSERVATION OF SHARK CAUGHT IN ASSOCIATION WITH FISHERIES MANAGED BY IOTC

SUBMITTED BY: EUROPEAN UNION, 05 APRIL 2013

Explanatory Memorandum

In response to the Commission's request for more information on the technical aspects of IOTC Resolution 05/05 *Concerning the conservation of sharks caught in association with fisheries managed by IOTC*, and after several years of discussions and assessment on these aspects, the Scientific Committee clearly recommends that all sharks must be landed with fins attached to their respective carcass.

This management measure appears to be in response to concerns about the threats to shark populations from fishing and the practice of shark finning, in fact:

- The current percentage fins:body weight ratio requirement has no clear scientific basis as a conservation measure for sharks in the Indian Ocean, rather it appears to be aimed at slowing down the rate of fishing or to deter fishing on sharks by not allowing fins only to be landed and requiring vessels to return to port more often to unload fins and body parts;
- Maintaining the use of the fin:body weight ratios will preclude the collection of essential information on species level interactions with fishing fleets, crucial for accurate stock assessments for sharks;
- Current scientific evidence clearly indicates that percentage fins:body weight varies widely among species, fin types used in calculations, the type of carcass weight used (whole or dressed), and the method of processing used to remove the fins (fin cutting technique);
- The use of the ratio measure is unlikely to address any sustainability issues that might exist for particular species;
- The only way to guarantee that sharks are not finned (and full utilisation of sharks is encouraged) is to require that the trunks be landed with the fins attached.
- Considering these IOTC Scientific Committee's agreed conclusions, the European Union is proposing a new Resolution which aims at tackling the threats to shark populations from fishing and the practice of shark finning.

RESOLUTION 13/XX

ON CONSERVATION OF SHARK CAUGHT IN ASSOCIATION WITH FISHERIES MANAGED BY IOTC

The Indian Ocean Tuna Commission,

RECALLING that since 2007 the United Nations General Assembly calls upon States to consider the adoption of measures that require all sharks to be landed with each fin naturally attached;

RECALLING that the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) International Plan of Action for Sharks calls on States to cooperate through Regional Fisheries Organisations to ensure the sustainability of shark stocks;

ALSO RECALLING that the FAO International Plan of Action for Sharks calls on States to facilitate improved species-specific catch and landings data and monitoring of shark catches;

CONSIDERING that many sharks are part of the pelagic ecosystems in the IOTC area, and that tunas and tuna-like species are captured in fisheries targeting sharks;

CONSIDERING that despite regional agreements on the prohibition of shark finning, sharks' fins continue to be removed on board and the rest of the shark carcass discarded into the sea;

CONSIDERING the IOTC Scientific Committee recommendations;

CONSCIOUS that the use of fin-to-carcass-weight ratios is not an adequate means of ensuring that sharks are not finned;

RECOGNISING the need to improve the collection of species-specific data on catch, discards and trade as a basis for improving the conservation and management of shark stocks;

AWARE that identifying sharks by species is rarely possible when the fins have been removed from the carcasses;

ADOPTS, in accordance with paragraph 1 of Article IX of the IOTC Agreement that:

1. CPCs shall prohibit the removal of shark fins on board vessels, the retention on board, transshipment and landing of shark fins which are not naturally attached to the shark carcass, before the first landing.
2. Without prejudice to paragraph 1, in order to facilitate on-board storage, shark fins may be partially sliced through and folded against the carcass, but shall not be removed from the carcass before the first landing.
3. CPCs shall prohibit the transportation, transshipping and landing of any fins harvested in contravention of this Resolution.
4. CPCs shall prohibit the purchase, offer for sale and sale of shark fins which have been removed on board, retained on board, transhipped or landed in contravention of this Resolution.
5. In fisheries that are not directed at sharks, CPCs shall encourage the release of live sharks, especially juveniles and pregnant sharks, to the extent possible, that are caught incidentally and are not used for food and/or subsistence.
6. CPCs shall, where possible, conduct research on sharks, notably to identify ways to make fishing gears more selective and to identify shark nursery areas.

7. The Commission shall consider appropriate assistance to developing CPCs for the collection of data on their shark catches.
8. CPCs shall obtain and maintain the best possible data for IOTC fisheries impacting upon sharks, including improved species identification.
9. This Resolution supersedes Resolution 05/05 *Concerning the conservation of sharks caught in association with fisheries managed by the IOTC*.