



**CONCERNING THE CONSERVATION OF SHARKS CAUGHT IN ASSOCIATION WITH FISHERIES MANAGED BY THE
IOTC**

SUBMITTED BY: MALDIVES, 22 APRIL 2016

Explanatory Memorandum

Sharks are a non-target, associated and dependent species that affected by a number of fisheries that are under the mandate of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC). They are important apex predators that are vital for the marine ecosystem. However, they are often neglected by a number of CPCs. Indications are that a number of shark species in the Indian Ocean are caught at unsustainable levels.

To address the issue of decline in number of sharks in Maldivian waters, the government of Maldives has taken the exceptional decision to ban all forms of shark fishing in Maldivian waters. An active shark fishery was closed and the fishermen were compensated through a gear buy-back programme. All shark species are now protected by law in Maldives.

Due to the unique situation of Maldives collecting size data (length-frequency) data for sharks is problematic at best. As they are protected and not consumed locally there is no commercial value in sharks for the fishermen at present. Therefore, sharks are immediately released by the fishing vessels to minimize the handling time which is also known to improve survival rates. All sharks that are hauled in live on longline are immediately released by cutting the lines.

As a result collecting size data at species level difficult. Experience also suggests that this data has not been very accurate in the context of Maldives in the few instances where fishermen have made an effort to record the information.

This proposal seeks to address this unique issue for the Maldives and to also encourage other CPCs to take drastic actions to address the issue of declining shark stocks in the Indian Ocean.



RESOLUTION 16/XX
**CONCERNING THE CONSERVATION OF SHARKS CAUGHT IN ASSOCIATION WITH FISHERIES
MANAGED BY THE IOTC**

Keywords: Sharks; size data

The Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC),

RECALLING that the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) International Plan of Action of Sharks calls on States, within the framework of their respective competencies and consistent with international law, to cooperate through regional fisheries organisations with a view to ensuring the sustainability of shark stocks as well as to adopt a National Plan of Action for the conservation and management of sharks (defined as elasmobranchs);

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

RECOGNISING the need to collect data on catch, effort, discards and trade, as well as information on the biological parameters of many species, in order to conserve and manage sharks;

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

1. Contracting Parties, Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties (CPCs) shall annually report data for catches of sharks, in accordance with IOTC data reporting procedures, including available historical data.
2. CPCs that have implemented total bans on catching and removal of sharks shall be exempt from reporting size data (length data by species) to the IOTC as required by this resolution, but are encouraged to provide data for the IOTC Scientific Committee consideration. . The IOTC Scientific Committee will analyse the situation concerning the availability of data and will advise the Commission to undertake support measures to developing CPCs to overcome this situation.
- ~~2.3.~~ In 2006 the IOTC Scientific Committee (in collaboration with the IOTC Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch) provide preliminary advice on the stock status of key shark species and propose a research plan and timeline for a comprehensive assessment of these stocks.
- ~~3.4.~~ CPCs shall take the necessary measures to require that their fishermen fully utilise their entire catches of sharks. Full utilisation is defined as retention by the fishing vessel of all parts of the shark excepting head, guts and skins, to the point of first landing.
- ~~4.5.~~ CPCs shall require their vessels to not have onboard fins that total more than 5 % of the weight of sharks onboard, up to the first point of landing. CPCs that currently do not require fins and carcasses to be offloaded together at the point of first landing shall take the necessary measures to ensure compliance with the 5 % ratio through certification, monitoring by an observer, or other appropriate measures.
- ~~5.6.~~ The ratio of fin-to-body weight of sharks described in paragraph 4 shall be reviewed by the IOTC Scientific Committee and reported back to the Commission in 2006 for revision, if necessary.
- ~~6.7.~~ Fishing vessels are prohibited from retaining on board, transshipping or landing any fins harvested in contravention of this Resolution.
- ~~7.8.~~ 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.



- ~~8.9.~~ CPCs shall, where possible, undertake research to identify ways to make fishing gears more selective (such as the implications of avoiding the use of wire traces).
- ~~9.10.~~ CPCs shall, where possible, conduct research to identify shark nursery areas.
- ~~10.11.~~ The Commission shall consider appropriate assistance to developing CPCs for the collection of data on their shark catches.
- ~~11.12.~~ This Resolution applies only to sharks caught in association with fisheries managed by the IOTC.
- ~~12.13.~~ This provision to apply without prejudice to many artisanal fisheries which traditionally do not discard carcasses.