
ENDORSED BY WPICMM09

RESOLUTION XX/08

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

Keywords: sharks, retention ban, full utilisation, naturally attached fins, thresher sharks, oceanic whitetip sharks, whale sharks, blue sharks, bycatch mitigation

The Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC),

RECOGNISING [Resolution 12/01](#) *On the implementation of the precautionary approach* calls on IOTC Contracting Parties and Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties (CPCs) to apply the precautionary approach in accordance with Article 5 of the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement;

CONCERNED by the continued failure of IOTC CPCs to submit complete, accurate and timely catch records for sharks in accordance with existing IOTC Resolutions;

ACKNOWLEDGING 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 and aware that identifying sharks by species is rarely possible when fins have been removed from the carcass;

RECALLING that the IOTC Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch agreed in its 2023 report that the precautionary approach would be one way to move forward to mitigate mortality on shark species because the stock assessment of shark species is hindered by data limitations;

RECALLING that United Nations General Assembly Resolution on Sustainable Fisheries, adopted annually by consensus, since 2007 (A/RES/62/177, 63/112, 64/72, 65/38, 66/68, 67/79, 68/71, 69/109, 70/75, 71/123, 72/72, 73/125, 74/18, 75/89, 76/71 and 77/118) calls upon States to take immediate and concerted action to improve the implementation of and compliance with existing regional fisheries management organisation (RFMO) or arrangement (RFMA) measures that regulate shark fisheries and incidental catch of sharks, in particular those measures which prohibit or restrict fisheries conducted solely for the purpose of harvesting shark fins, and, where necessary, to consider taking other measures, as appropriate, such as requiring that all sharks be landed with fins naturally attached;

FURTHER RECALLING that the FAO International Plan of Action for Sharks calls on States to encourage full use of dead sharks, to facilitate improved species-specific catch and landings data and monitoring of shark catches and the identification and reporting of species-specific biological and trade data;

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

EMPHASISING the recent recommendations of IOTC and WCPFC Scientific Committees that the use of fin-to-carcass weight ratios is not a verifiable means of ensuring the eradication of shark finning and that it has proven ineffective in terms of implementation, enforcement and monitoring;

FURTHER EMPHASISING that the IOTC Scientific Committee recommended in its 2023 report that the

Commission consider extending measures to prevent finning of sharks such as fins naturally attached including partially attached and tethered for all fisheries or similar, alternative measures (for example, fins artificially attached), providing they had been assessed and endorsed by the IOTC Scientific Committee and Compliance Committee as being equally or more likely to meet the conservation benefit (of a fins naturally attached measure) and are logistically feasible from a compliance monitoring perspective;

OBSERVING the adoption of NEAFC Recommendation 10:2015 *on Conservation of Sharks Caught in Association with Fisheries Managed by the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission*, Article 12 of the NAFO Conservation and Enforcement Measures, and GFCM Recommendation 42/2018/2 *on fisheries management measures for the conservation of sharks and rays in the GFCM area of application*, which establish the fins attached policy as the exclusive option for ensuring the shark finning ban in the NEAFC, NAFO and GFCM fisheries;

COGNISANT of the economic and cultural importance of sharks in the IOTC area of competence, the biological importance of sharks in the marine ecosystem as key predatory species, and the significant vulnerability of many shark species to overfishing due to their biology and to the significant overlap of their spatial distribution with fishing activities;

NOTING the advice of the IOTC Scientific Committee in 2021 that maintaining current catches of blue sharks is likely to result in decreasing biomass and the stock becoming overfished and subject to overfishing in the near future;

RECALLING that blue sharks account for more than 60% of global shark catches and that the Resolution 18/02 *On management measure for the Conservation of blue sharks caught in association with IOTC fisheries* required the Commission to consider, in 2021 the adoption of Conservation and Management Measures for blue sharks, such as catch limits for each CPC taking into account the most recent reported catch information or bycatch mitigation such as a ban on wire trace/shark line for blue shark as appropriate;

FURTHER RECALLING that Resolution 18/02 *On management measure for the Conservation of blue sharks caught in association with IOTC fisheries* has tasked the Scientific Committee to provide advice, if possible, on options for candidate limit, threshold and target reference points for the conservation and management of this species in the IOTC area of competence;

NOTING that the Commission, at its annual Session in 2024, requested the IOTC Scientific Committee to initiate management strategy evaluation (MSE) simulations for blue shark with the aim of developing a Management Procedure for this species;

FURTHER NOTING the advice of the IOTC Scientific Committee in 2021 that the Commission should take a cautious approach to the conservation of shortfin mako sharks and silky sharks by implementing management actions that reduce fishing mortality;

RECALLING the advice of the IOTC Scientific Committee in 2023 that mitigation measures should be taken to reduce at-vessel and post release mortality of oceanic whitetip shark and silky shark, including consideration of potential gear modifications in longline fleets targeting tuna and swordfish, noting that a recent study (Bigelow et al. 2021) concluded in WCPFC that banning both shark lines and wire leaders has the potential to reduce fishing mortality by 40.5% for oceanic whitetip shark and by 30.8% for silky shark;

FURTHER RECALLING that the Working Party on Ecosystems on Bycatch (WPEB) noted in 2024 on the basis of its review of global research that a prohibition on the use of wire leaders and shark lines by longline and other fisheries operating in the IOTC would likely result in a reduction in both the observed catch and the fishing mortality of shark species, and that the WPEB recommended that additional mitigation measures such as, but not limited to, the non-use of wire leaders and shark lines should be implemented;

MINDFUL of the recommendation of the IOTC Scientific Committee in 2024 to consider the research from the 2024 WPEB report should the Commission wish to consider additional mitigation measures to strengthen the conservation of vulnerable sharks, noting that the WPEB literature review highlighted that a prohibition on the

use of wire leaders and shark lines by longline and other fisheries operating in the IOTC would likely result in a reduction in both the observed catch and the fishing mortality of shark species;

DEEPLY CONCERNED that the majority of the species of the order of *Rhinopristiformes* are categorised as ‘threatened’ (meaning either vulnerable, endangered or critically endangered) by the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, while the fins of these species are highly valued in the global shark fin trade, therefore requiring protection of the order of *Rhinopristiformes* from overexploitation for the fin trade in the same ways as the orders of *Selachimorpha*;

RECALLING the WPEB had **REVIEWED** the minimum standards set out in Annex III of Resolution 25/08 and **ADOPTED** the revisions made by members of the group which can be found in Annex XVII of the WPEB report. The SC **RECOMMENDED** that the Commission consider these standards for adoption in 2026.

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

Definitions

1. For the purpose of this Resolution:

- a) “CPCs” means Contracting Parties or Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties to the IOTC Agreement.
- b) “IOTC Species” means all species of fish listed in Annex B of the IOTC Agreement.
- c) “Sharks” means all species belonging to the 8 orders of *Selachimorpha* (*Carcharhiniformes*, *Lamniformes*, *Orectolobiformes*, *Heterodontiformes*, *Squaliformes*, *Squatiformes*, *Hexanchiformes*, and *Pristiophoriformes*) and all species of the order of *Rhinopristiformes*.
- d) “Blue sharks” means the species *Prionace glauca*.
- e) “Hammerhead sharks” means all species of the family of *Sphyrnidae*.
- f) “Oceanic whitetip sharks” means the species *Carcharhinus longimanus*.
- g) “Mako sharks” means the species *Isurus oxyrinchus* and *Isurus paucus*.
- h) “Silky sharks” means the species *Carcharhinus falciformis*.
- i) “Thresher sharks” means all species of the family *Alopiidae*.
- j) “Whale sharks” means the species *Rhincodon typus*.
- k) “Full utilisation” means the retention by the vessel of all parts of the shark except head, guts and skin, to the point of first landing.
- l) “Shark finning” means removing and retaining all or some of a shark’s fins and discarding its carcass at sea.

Application

2. This Resolution shall apply to all fishing vessels targeting and/or authorised to fish for IOTC Species in the IOTC area of competence and supply vessels¹ flying the flag of a CPC. This Resolution shall not apply to non-commercial vessels and conducting research on the efficacy of the management measures contained in this Resolution.

Shark Species whose Retention is Prohibited

¹ The term supply vessels shall include support vessels.

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3. Subject to paragraph 4, CPCs shall ensure that their flag vessels do not retain on board, transship, land and store any part or whole carcass of the following sharks:
 - a) oceanic whitetip sharks;
 - b) thresher sharks; and
 - c) whale sharks.
 4. Without prejudice to paragraph 3, scientific observers shall be allowed to collect biological samples (vertebrae, tissues, reproductive tracts, stomachs, skin samples, spiral valves, jaws, whole and skeletonised specimens for taxonomic works and museum collections) from sharks listed in paragraph 3, provided that they are dead at haulback and that samples are part of a research project approved by the IOTC Scientific Committee. Approval shall be granted pending the submission to the IOTC Scientific Committee of a detailed document outlining the purpose of the work, number and type of samples intended to be collected and the spatio-temporal distribution of the sampling work must be included in the proposal for the research project. The IOTC Scientific Committee shall review the research proposal and decide on whether or not to grant approval. Annual progress of the work and a final report on completion of the research project shall be presented to the IOTC Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch and the IOTC Scientific Committee.

Full Utilisation of Other Sharks

5. CPCs shall take the measures necessary to require that all sharks retained on board their vessels are fully utilised. CPCs shall ensure that the practice of shark finning is prohibited.
6. In order to implement the obligation in paragraph 5 for sharks landed fresh, CPCs shall require their vessels to land sharks with fins naturally attached to the carcass.
7. Without prejudice to paragraphs 5 and 6, in order to facilitate on-board storage, shark fins may be partially sliced through and folded against the shark carcass as specified in the diagram in **Annex II**, but shall not be removed from the carcass until the first point of landing.
8. In order to implement the obligation in paragraph 5 for sharks landed frozen in 2026, 2027 and 2028, CPCs shall ensure their fleets land or transship sharks with fins naturally attached to the carcass or to use one and only one of the alternative measures listed below:
 - a) Each individual shark carcass is bound to the corresponding fins using rope or wire; or
 - b) Identical and uniquely numbered tags are attached to each shark carcass and its corresponding fins in a manner that inspectors can easily identify the matching of the carcass and fins at any time. Both the carcasses and fins shall be stored on board in the same hold.
9. If a CPC decides to authorise its vessels to use the alternatives in paragraph 8, it shall:
 - a) notify the Secretariat by 1 September 2025;
 - b) implement enhanced monitoring efforts on any vessels authorised to implement the alternatives;
 - c) ensure that individual shark carcasses and their corresponding fins can be easily identified by inspectors on board the vessel at any time; and
 - d) ensure that these alternatives shall be applied before sharks are stored in fish holds as soon as possible.
10. The Secretariat shall circulate the information received from CPCs under paragraph 9 (a) to all CPCs immediately after the deadline.
11. Each year in their compliance questionnaire, the CPC shall report the information on the implementation

of the alternatives in paragraph 8:

- a. any enforcement difficulties encountered from observer, electronic monitoring, aerial, boarding, and landing inspection reports;
 - b. how monitoring of authorised vessels has been enhanced;
 - c. how many vessels used the alternative measures in the previous year;
 - d. how compliance is enforced at sea and in port, including how possible incidents of disproportionate fin counts, high grading and species substitution have been addressed;
 - e. an explanation of why the fleet has adopted its fin-handling practice; and
 - f. any other information Compliance Committee might deem necessary.
12. The Compliance Committee shall annually review and discuss the information submitted in accordance with paragraph 11 and, as appropriate, advise the Commission on the effectiveness of the alternatives in paragraph 8 to prevent finning, in particular in comparison to prohibition to remove fins specified in paragraph 5. The Commission shall decide by no later than the 32nd Session on shark finning and alternative measures, and whether any further modifications are required.
13. If in any year a CPC who used the alternative measures does not provide the information to the Compliance Committee in accordance with paragraph 11, then that CPC will no longer be able to use the alternative measures set out in paragraph 8.

Bycatch Mitigation Measures

14. From 1 January 2026, CPCs shall ensure that their flag long-line vessels do not use branch lines running directly off the longline floats or drop lines, known as shark lines. See **Annex I** for a schematic diagram of a shark line.
15. In order for any CPCs to continue to use wire trace north of 20S at least one CPCs will undertake scientific fishing trials to assess the effects of leader materials on the mortality of vulnerable shark species (including oceanic whitetip shark, silky shark, shortfin mako and thresher sharks) and blue sharks. Such trials must be conducted, concluded, presented to the IOTC Scientific Committee by SC30 subject to the possible extension in paragraph 8.
16. The trials objective will be to determine if, for the CPCs fleet, the use of wire leaders has a higher catch and mortality for the vulnerable and target shark species (both in total and by species) than does use of nylon monofilament leaders.
17. The trials will be conducted using an appropriate experimental design and analysed using appropriate statistical methods, the criteria and principles of which will be developed and agreed by the IOTC Scientific Committee at the annual Session in 2025.
18. The results of CPCs fishing trials must be presented in a detailed research paper (describing fully the methods and results and conclusions) to the IOTC Scientific Committee at its annual Session in 2027 for review and development of advice from the IOTC Scientific Committee to the Commission on the outcomes of the trial. A CPC may, with reasonable justification, request the Commission for an extension of 1 year to present the results of the fishing trials.
19. The IOTC Scientific Committee will also review available data and information by no later than SC29 pertaining to the spatial and temporal trends in:
- a) The relative distribution of vulnerable shark species and blue shark;

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- b) The distribution of total longline fishing effort and by CPCs, by year over the past 10 years;
- c) The distribution and level of the use of wire leaders and monofilament leaders (and other leader types, if applicable) by CPC. For this point, all CPCs shall facilitate the provision of such information (best available) pertaining to their fleet to the IOTC Secretariat by 30 July 2026, to allow a summary of such spatial information to be provided to the SC.
20. In providing advice to the Commission on the outcomes of the fishing trials and their implications for the effectiveness of a prohibition on wire trace on vulnerable shark species in the IOTC area of competence, the SC30 subject to the possible extension in paragraph 18 will also provide advice based on the information in paragraph 19 above, regarding spatial options for the application of a prohibition on wire trace that take account of the distribution of each vulnerable and target shark species.
21. If no CPC has presented research in compliance with the above conditions to the SC in the timeline provided, then from January 1, 2028, unless subject to possible extension in paragraph 18, all CPC shall ensure that their flagged vessels are prohibited from using or carrying² on board wire trace as leaders or branchlines in the IOTC area of competence North of 20 degrees South.
22. CPCs shall ensure that their flag vessels:
- a) promptly release, to the extent practicable, sharks listed in paragraph 3 if recognised before bringing them on board the vessel or when brought alongside to ensure safe identification;
 - b) release, in fisheries in which sharks are unwanted species, sharks (especially juveniles and pregnant sharks) alive that are caught incidentally and are not used on board for food and/or subsistence.
23. CPCs shall ensure that their flag recreational and sport fishing vessels:
- a) release alive all caught sharks listed in paragraph 3; and
 - b) are equipped, if they are carrying out fishing with high probability of catching sharks listed in paragraph 3, with instruments suitable to release the animals alive.
24. With the aim to reduce post-release mortality, CPCs shall ensure that their flag vessels, when a shark is released, release the shark as soon as practically possible, taking into consideration the safety of the crew and observer, in accordance with the Minimum Standards for Safe Handling And Live Release Procedures set out in **Annex III**. The IOTC Scientific Committee shall review these Minimum Standards by 31 December 2025 and provide recommendations to the Commission on further improvements of the Minimum Standards for consideration and adoption at its annual Session in 2026.
25. CPCs shall ensure that fishers are aware of and use available identification guides such as the IOTC Shark and Ray Identification in Indian Ocean Fisheries.³

Specific Requirements for Blue Sharks

26. Based on the review and the results of the stock assessment to be conducted in 2025, updated reported catch information by each CPC and taking into account the IOTC Scientific Committee's advice, the Commission shall consider at its 2026 Session specific conservation and management measures for blue sharks, including a total allowable catch, catch limits for each CPC to be decided taking into account among other things, the most recent reported catch information.

² CPCs that fish South of 20 degrees South with wire trace must ensure at all times that their vessels stow wire trace when they are North of 20 degrees South.

³ <https://iotc.org/science/species-identification-cards>.

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27. The IOTC Scientific Committee shall continue the development of a management strategy evaluation framework for Indian Ocean blue shark, and present to the Commission potential harvest control rules, and associated candidate limit, target and threshold reference points.

Specific Requirements for Whale Sharks

28. CPCs shall ensure that their flag vessels do not intentionally set a purse seine net around a whale shark if it is sighted prior to the commencement of the set.
29. CPCs shall ensure that, if a whale shark is unintentionally encircled in a purse seine net, the master of the vessel takes all reasonable steps to ensure its safe release, while taking into consideration the safety of the crew. These steps shall follow the best practice guidelines for the safe release and handling of encircled whale sharks to be developed by the IOTC Scientific Committee by 31 December 2025 and subsequently submitted to the Commission for consideration and endorsement at its annual Session in 2026.
30. CPCs shall ensure that, if a flag purse seine vessel unintentionally encircles a whale shark in a purse seine net or fishing vessels using other gear types have an interaction with a whale shark in association with their fishing activity, the master of the vessel reports the incident to the relevant authority of the flag State, with the following information:
- a) the number of individuals;
 - b) a short description of the interaction, including details of how and why the interaction occurred;
 - c) the location of the interaction;
 - d) the steps taken to ensure safe release; and
 - e) an assessment of the life status of the animal on release, including whether the whale shark was released alive but subsequently died.

Reporting Requirements

31. CPCs shall ensure that all interactions with sharks related to paragraphs 3, 15, 22 and 28 are duly recorded through logbooks and, when an observer is on board, through observer reports in accordance with Resolutions 15/01 *On the recording of catch and effort data by fishing vessels in the IOTC area of competence* and 24/04 [superseded by Resolution 25/06] *On a Regional Observer Scheme*. CPCs shall submit this information to the IOTC Executive Secretary according to the timelines specified in Resolution 15/02 *Mandatory Statistical Reporting Requirements for IOTC Contracting Parties and Cooperating Non-contracting Parties (CPCs)* (or any superseding Resolution). CPCs shall additionally report any instances in which whale sharks have been encircled by the purse seine nets of their flagged vessels in their annual Implementation Report.
32. CPCs shall report annual data for catches of all sharks in accordance with IOTC data reporting requirements and procedures in [Resolution 15/02](#) *Mandatory statistical requirements for IOTC Members and Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties (CPC's)* (or any superseding Resolution), including estimates and status of discards (dead or alive) and size frequencies. CPCs shall additionally report all available historical data that has not yet been reported.
33. The Commission, on advice from the IOTC Scientific Committee, shall develop and consider for adoption at its annual Session in 2026 mechanisms to encourage CPCs to comply with their reporting requirements on sharks, notably on the most vulnerable shark species as identified by the IOTC Scientific Committee.
34. The Commission shall consider appropriate assistance to developing CPCs for the identification of sharks and the collection of data on their shark catches and assist in reporting of those.

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35. CPCs shall include in their national Annual Reports to the IOTC Scientific Committee information on the actions they have taken domestically to monitor catches.

National Action Plans

36. CPCs should implement the FAO International Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks (IPOA Sharks).⁴
37. CPCs should include their National Plans of Action under the IPOA Sharks in their annual Implementation Report.

Scientific Work and Recommendations

38. The IOTC Scientific Committee shall, through the IOTC Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch, continue its work on identifying and monitoring the status of sharks until such time as comprehensive assessments are possible for all relevant sharks, including those listed in paragraph 3, silky sharks, hammerhead sharks and mako sharks. The IOTC Scientific Committee shall establish terms of reference for a long term-project on sharks in the IOTC area of competence to be considered by the Commission at its annual Session in 2026, with the aim to ensure the collection of data required for performing reliable stock assessments for key shark species, including those listed in paragraph 3, silky sharks, hammerhead sharks and mako sharks. The project will include:
- a) the identification of data gaps for key shark species in IOTC;
 - b) the collection of relevant data, including through direct contacts with CPC national administrations, research institutes and stakeholders;
 - c) any other activity that could contribute to improving the collection of data required for performing stock assessments of key shark species in IOTC;
 - d) the development and further improvement of shark identification guides for relevant shark species to provide a better overview on the compliance status of CPCs and thereby assist CPCs to comply with their reporting obligations. The IOTC Executive Secretary shall make these shark identification guides available on the IOTC website and distribute them among CPCs in regular intervals.

CPCs are encouraged to contribute financially to the implementation of the project.

39. The IOTC Scientific Committee shall advise the Commission on the population status of relevant sharks, on their vulnerability to overfishing, and on whether precautionary management of these species, through the application of specific measures such as the measure in paragraph 3, is recommended.
40. CPCs with reported catches and landings of sharks shall endeavour to undertake research to:
- a) identify ways to make fishing gears more selective and reduce the mortality of incidentally caught sharks, in particular those listed in paragraph 3;
 - b) improve knowledge on key biological/ecological parameters, life-history, behavioural traits, migration patterns, and post-release survival of key shark species, including those listed in paragraph 3 and silky sharks, hammerhead sharks and mako sharks;
 - c) facilitate capacity building of CPCs in shark species identification to improve data reporting at species level;

⁴ <https://www.fao.org/ipoa-sharks/tools/en/>.

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- d) identify key shark mating, pupping and nursery areas, including those listed in paragraph 3 and silky sharks, hammerhead sharks and mako sharks; and
 - e) improve handling practices for live sharks to maximise post-release survival.

CPCs shall make the results of any such research available to the IOTC Scientific Committee and the IOTC Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch.

41. The IOTC Scientific Committee shall review annually the information reported by CPCs pursuant to this Resolution and the results of the research project pursuant to paragraph 38, on a gear-by-gear-basis. On this basis, the IOTC Scientific Committee shall, as appropriate and on an annual basis, provide recommendations to the Commission on ways to strengthen the conservation and management of sharks within IOTC, including:

- a) prohibition of utilisation of additional vulnerable shark species under paragraph 3 of this Resolution as appropriate;
- b) measures to improve the conservation of sharks whose utilisation is prohibited under paragraph 3, including mitigation measures to reduce the mortality of sharks, improving selectivity of fishing gears, spatial/temporal closures or minimum conservation sizes;
- c) measures to improve the conservation and management of sharks whose utilisation is not prohibited,
- d) options for candidate limit, threshold and target reference points for the conservation and management of all sharks caught in association with IOTC fisheries, prioritising sharks caught for commercial purposes;
- e) total allowable catches for sharks caught in association with IOTC fisheries, prioritising sharks caught for commercial purposes;
- f) spatial/temporal closures or minimum conservation sizes;
- g) bycatch mitigation measures, including improvements of fishing gear selectivity and reduction of post release mortality via technical devices such as double conveyor belts for the release of incidentally caught shark in purse seine fisheries to increase the probability of survival for released sharks;
- h) options to reduce post-release mortality sharks to be included in Resolution 15/01 *On the Recording of Catch and Effort Data by Fishing Vessels in the IOTC Area of Competence* (or any superseding Resolution) as species whose catch must be recorded.

42. In providing its recommendations pursuant to paragraph 26, the IOTC Scientific Committee shall take into account, *inter alia*, the following:

- a) full stock assessments on sharks, stock assessments and, in the absence of more robust scientific information, Ecological Risk Assessments (ERAs) by fishing gears, using the best available scientific data/information;
- b) trend of fishing effort by fishing gear on each shark species;
- c) effectiveness of conservation and management measures for those fishing gears posing a high risk of incidental catches or other harmful impacts on sharks;
- d) priority in sharks with high risk;
- e) review of the practical implementation of the retention ban in paragraph 3;

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- f) feasibility of the implementation of the retention ban in paragraph 3, including identification of shark species;
 - g) impact and bias of conservation and management measures of sharks on fishing operations and shark data/information collected and reported by CPCs; and
 - h) Resolution 12/01 *On the Implementation of the Precautionary Approach*.

43. The IOTC Scientific Committee shall, at its annual Session in 2025, review existing data and information relating to the life history and conservation status of whale sharks, and confirm whether they meet the definition of being a taxon of the greatest biological vulnerability and conservation concern for which there are very few data. Should this be the case, the IOTC Scientific Committee shall advise the Commission on the appropriateness of applying precautionary management measures in IOTC fisheries, including a retention ban. The IOTC Scientific Committee may also identify options for future research and data collection, as well as advise on other mitigation measures for relevant IOTC fisheries.

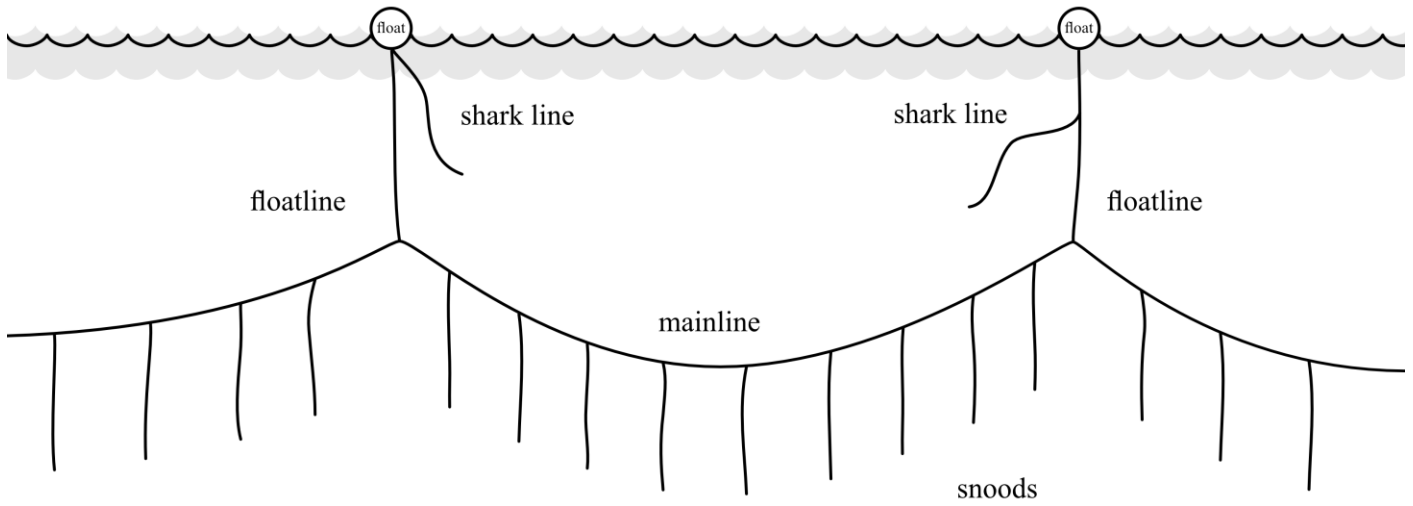
Final Provisions

44. This Resolution shall enter into force on 1 January 2026.
45. Notwithstanding paragraph 44, paragraph 3(c) of this Resolution shall enter into force on 1 July 2026, and only if the IOTC Scientific Committee explicitly and unambiguously recommends, in accordance with paragraph 43 of this Resolution, a retention ban for whale sharks.
46. This Resolution supersedes the following Resolutions:
- a) Resolution 18/02 *On Management Measures for the Conservation of Blue Shark Caught in Association with IOTC Fisheries*;
 - b) Resolution 17/05 *Concerning the Conservation of Sharks Caught in Association with Fisheries Managed by the IOTC*;
 - c) Resolution 13/05 *On the Conservation of Whale Sharks (Rhincodon typus)*;
 - d) Resolution 13/06 *On a Scientific and Management Framework on the Conservation of Shark Species Caught in Association with IOTC Managed Fisheries*; and
 - e) Resolution 12/09 *On the Conservation of Thresher Sharks (Family Alopiidae) Caught in Association with Fisheries in the IOTC Area of Competence*, and
 - f) Resolution 25/08 *On The Conservation Of Sharks Caught In Association With Fisheries Managed By IOTC*

ANNEX I

SCHEMATIC DIAGRAM OF A SHARK LINE

LOGLINE

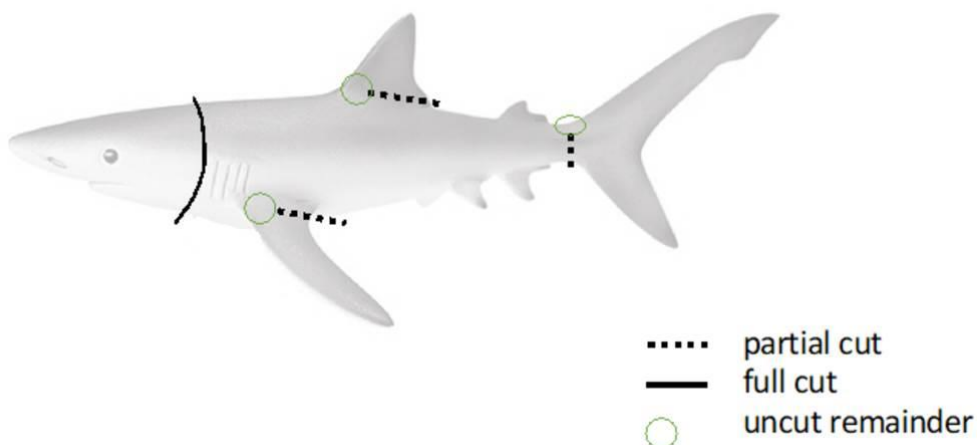


ANNEX II

FINS NATURALLY ATTACHED

Naturally attached means that all fins of the shark must be fully and/or partially connected to the body of the shark by connective tissue or cartilage, while at sea. In order to facilitate on-board storage, shark fins may be partially sliced through and folded against the shark carcass, but shall not be removed from the carcass until the first point of landing. Below is a schematic to guide fishers.

1. Only head and guts, as appropriate, may be removed at sea.
2. A partial cut at the level of the base of the dorsal fin and the base of the pectoral fins is permitted.
3. A partial cut at the level of the caudal peduncle of the base, allowing the caudal fin to be folded over the posterior area of the shark's trunk is permitted.
4. A full cut along the abdominal section is permitted in the case of the Blue Shark in the process of gutting, provided the fins remain naturally attached.



ANNEX III

MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR SAFE HANDLING AND LIVE RELEASE PROCEDURES

[Link to the standards](#)

The primary aim of the following Minimum Standards for Safe Handling and Live Release Procedures is to ensure the highest level of survival of sharks and that, whenever possible, prompt, and effective action will be taken to return the shark to the sea and prioritising that the life and safety of the crew is not compromised and that crew members shall endeavour to avoid hazards in the safe handling and release operations for sharks. The following minimum standards are appropriate for all live sharks when released whether under no-retention policies, or when released voluntarily. These basic guidelines do not replace any stricter safety rules that may have been established by the National Authorities of individual CPCs.

To maximise the efficacy and utility of adopted BHRPs, CPCs should ensure crew are educated and trained on these practices regularly and enough crew members are available to focus on releasing bycaught sharks by applying the adopted BHRP. Illustrated best handling and release practices should be available on the vessels.

Safety first: *These minimum standards should be considered in light of safety and practicability for crew. Crew safety should always come first. At a minimum, crew should wear suitable gloves and avoid working around the mouths of sharks. Also minimising manual handling and using appropriate technical release devices instead is preferable to ensure safety of the crew and the animals at the same time.*

Be prepared: *Tools should be prepared in advance that are always onboard and ready to be used prior to setting or hauling in fishing gear (listed at the end of this document).*

General recommendations for all fisheries

- When entangled (in netting, fishing line, etc.), if safe to do so, carefully cut the net/line free from the animal and release to the sea as quickly as possible with no entanglements attached.
- If, for whatever reason, a shark must be brought on the deck then minimise the time it takes to return it to the water to increase survival and reduce risks to the crew.

Longline fisheries specific safe-handling practices

- If operationally safe to do so, stop the vessel or substantially reduce its speed.
- Bring the shark as close to the vessel as possible without putting too much tension on the branch line to avoid that a released hook or branch line break could shoot hook, weights and other parts toward the vessels and crew at high speed.
- Secure the far side of the longline mainline to the boat to avoid any remaining gear in the water pulling on the line and the animal. Avoid bringing the shark onboard for gear removal whenever possible; bringing sharks onboard should not be attempted for vessels with a high freeboard >1m (i.e. too high for crew members to reach the water).
- If hooked, and the hook is visible in the body or mouth, use a dehooking device or long-handled bolt cutter to remove the hook barb, and then remove the hook as much as possible.
- If attempting to remove hooks, use pliers or dehookers or long-handled de-hookers for vessels with high freeboards (i.e. > 1 meter).
- If it is not possible to remove the hook or the hook cannot be seen, cut the line of the trace (or snood, leader) as close to the hook or mouth as possible leaving no more than 1 meter of gear attached to the animal and with no weights attached to the animal).

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- If sharks must be brought on board for gear removal (on vessels with a freeboard height of less than 1 m), if possible:
 - Use a net, lasso or second point of attachment to help lift them onboard
 - Manoeuvre shark using manual restraint of the pectoral fins and the caudal peduncle (this may require two crew members depending on the size of the animals)
 - Use a stretcher or cradle for handling and restraint for the safety of the crew and to reduce injury to the animal.
 - Return the animals to the sea as quickly as possible.

Do not:

- Use drag or lazy lines or drag sharks behind the vessel until the hook rips free of the jaw or until the animal is easier to handle.
- Electrocute or stun sharks.
- Lift sharks onboard without a net or second point of attachment to support the weight of the animal, noting it is not recommended to lift sharks onboard the vessel.
- Attempt to remove a hook from a live shark if the hook is not visible.
- Cut into or damage the jaw to remove hooks.
- Lift or manoeuvre sharks by the gill slits, or spiracles.
- Insert gaffs, hooks, or similar instruments into the bodies of live sharks.
- Lift and drop sharks from the vessel height to rip the hook from the shark's jaw.

[Purse seine fisheries specific safe-handling practices](#)

For whale sharks

- Whale sharks should remain in the water when being released.
- The release of whale sharks should be prioritized prior to brailing or when the shark surfaces.
- If a whale shark is encountered the net roll must be immediately stopped to release the whale shark
- If the head of the animal points to the stern of the boat, a crewmember should be available to open the net and/or cut a few meters of net in front of the shark's mouth to release it.
- If the head of the animal points towards the bow of the boat, the crew in charge of the net hauling operation could manoeuvre the winch and the capstan to bring the whale shark close to the hull, then stand the animal on the net to roll it outside the sack corkline. If the individual does not swim out of the net by itself, a rope can be placed under the animal and attached to the float line to help rolling the animal out of the net
- Small whale sharks of less than 2 m, 'brailing' may be used to release the animal from the net without bringing it on board

Do not

- Bring the animal on board of the vessel regardless of size.
- Start the brailing process for the catch while the shark is still in the purse seine net
- Attempt brailing sharks of more than 2 m for release
- Pull or tow a whale shark by the tail or caudal peduncle or by a loop hooked around its gills
- Leave towing ropes attached to the trunk of the animal

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- Gaff whale sharks or bore holes into a fin

For all sharks

Releasing sharks from a purse seine net

- Scan the net as far ahead as possible to spot the sharks early to react quickly.⁷ Avoid lifting them up in the net towards the power block. Allow the entangled animal to be removed from the net. If necessary, use clippers to cut the net.
- The net area containing the entangled shark, should be rolled over the turntable and then the main boom should be moved to starboard or to port (depending on the vessel's orientation) and the net should be rolled back (or 'dropped') so that the shark is lowered to the deck and not thrashing in the air on a rolling vessel.
- Once the net has been dropped and the entangled shark is lowered to the deck the crew should safely cut the net away from the animal.
- Sharks should be manoeuvred by hand following best practices guidelines or into a stretcher/cradle or ramp immediately and take them to the opposite side of the vessel from the net for immediate release.
- If a portable or fixed ramp is available for release this should be wetted and the sharks can be released via this device directly to the sea.⁸

Releasing sharks if in the brailer or on deck:

- Vessels should, whenever possible separate bycatch on the working/main deck before passing the loading hatch.⁹
- When safety conditions are met, sharks may be handled manually, following established best practice guidelines.¹⁰
- Use a purpose-built large-mesh cargo net or canvas sling or similar device. If the vessel layout allows, these sharks could also be released by emptying the brail directly on a hopper and release ramp held up at an angle that connects to an opening on the top deck railing, without need to be lifted or handled by the crew.
- Manoeuvre sharks into a stretcher/cradle or ramp immediately and release it on the opposite side of the vessel from the net.
- The crew member should release the shark from the deck whenever possible, avoiding its entry into the lower deck, where the release process becomes longer and potentially more dangerous and complex in the absence of lower deck gutters.
- In cases when the passage of sharks through the loading hatch can't be avoided, sharks should be released as quickly as possible (e.g. via a bycatch waste chute, or via using stretchers).

Do not

- Roll sharks through the power block.
- Use gaffs or hooks to manoeuvre sharks.
- Leave sharks abandoned on deck.
- Hang sharks by the tail.
- Drag sharks across the deck by the tail.
- Allow visible sharks to pass through the loading hatch

[Gillnet fisheries specific safe-handling practices](#)

Existing recommendations for best handling and release of sharks that must not be retained and are unwanted is limited but should at least attempt to:

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- Prioritize release of live non-retained sharks.
 - Leave sharks in the water for gear removal.
 - Carefully cut the net away from the animal, allowing it to swim away from the gear.
 - Ensure the weight of the net below the entangled animal is supported during gear removal.

DO NOT (all fisheries)

- To the greatest extent practicable, lift sharks from the water using the branch line, especially if hooked unless it is necessary to lift sharks for species identification.
- Lift sharks using thin wires or cables, or by the tail alone.
- Strike a shark against any surface to remove the animal from the line.
- Attempt to dislodge a hook that is deeply ingested and not visible.
- Try to remove a hook by pulling sharply on the branch line.
- Cut the tail or any other body part.
- Cut or punch holes through the shark.
- Gaff or kick a shark, or insert hands into the gill slits.
- Expose the shark to the sun for extended periods.
- Wrap your fingers, hands or arms in the line when bringing a shark or ray to the boat (may result in serious injury).

Useful tools for safe handling and release

- Gloves (shark skin is rough; ensures safe handling of shark and protects crew's hands from bites)
- Towel or cloth (a towel or cloth soaked in seawater can be placed on the eyes of the shark; used to calm sharks down)
- Shark harness, stretcher or cradle
- Saltwater hose (If anticipated that it may require more than 5 minutes to release a shark, then place a hose into its mouth so seawater is moderately flowing into it. Make sure deck pump has been running several minutes before placing it in a shark's mouth)

Purse seine

- Portable release ramp that can be attached to a release door and wetted with an attached hose
- Hopper with ramps
- Bycatch sorting devices for work deck/main deck (e.g. hopper with a door, ramp).
- Bycatch/waste chute on lower/well deck
- Stretcher

Longlines

- Net
- Pliers
- Short handled de-hooker
- Long-handled de-hooker (equal or greater in length than the vessel's freeboard)

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- Line cutter- capable of cutting through all lines used in the gear
 - Long-handled line cutter (equal or greater in length than the vessel's freeboard)
 - Wire/bolt cutter capable of cutting all hooks used on the vessel

Gillnets

- Net cutter – capable of cutting through the net/gear