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**The Pew Charitable Trusts'
Statement to Panel 4 of the 20th Special Meeting of ICCAT
15 November 2016**

This year CPCs in Panel 4 should work to implement stronger protections for vulnerable and threatened shark species and ensure that all catch of sharks within the Convention Area is sustainable. Sharks are an integral part of nearly all marine ecosystems, and a number of the shark stocks continue to be at risk of overfishing, with inadequate management measures in place.

Pew applauds the Commission's action last year to ensure the release of live porbeagle sharks (*Lamna nasus*), with the adoption of Recommendation 15-06. This year, we are hopeful the Commission can build on this momentum, by prioritizing the adoption of science-based catch limits of blue shark and shortfin mako, in line with advice from the SCRS and the second independent performance review, which recommended applying the precautionary principle when confronted with scientific uncertainty.

Blue shark (*Prionace glauca*) remains a widely caught species across the Convention Area. While the 2015 stock assessment suffered from high levels of uncertainty because of poor data, and concluded that the South Atlantic population may have been overfished and that overfishing may have occurred in recent years, no consensus could be reached on management advice for the Northern population. Pew therefore supports the introduction of precautionary catch limits that would safeguard these populations from overfishing. We thank the European Union for tabling the draft proposals, and look forward to working with other CPCs in securing progress on this important issue during this meeting.

Shortfin mako (*Isurus oxyrinchus*) is one of the most vulnerable shark stocks caught in the Convention Area, based on results of the 2012 ecological risk assessment. This species is characterized by low productivity and high susceptibility to catch. The SCRS has recommended to not increase fishing mortality of these sharks above recent levels until a more reliable estimate of stock status is available. Until these assessments are conducted, implementing precautionary catch limits can safeguard the Northern and Southern stocks.