STATEMENT TO PANEL 4 BY SHARKPROJECT INTERNATIONAL

25th Special Meeting of the Commission, Vilamoura, 16 to 23 November 2026

North Atlantic shortfin mako

Sharkproject asks Panel 4 to keep Rec. 21-09 in force unchanged until the ICCAT-funded age validation study is complete and the SCRS has advised on its results. Once the Recommendation is opened, every paragraph becomes negotiable. For 2027 the Commission should validate the allowance of 0 t calculated by the SCRS.

The stock is still assessed as overfished and the SCRS has not recommended a tonnage. Its Kobe II strategy matrix uses a single growth scenario and the assessment report states that its results “should be interpreted with caution”. The age validation study tests this growth assumption and “is expected to be completed in 2027”.

A limit above recent mortality would delay rebuilding. At the 2025 mortality of 779 t the matrix gives 66 to 68% for the green quadrant by 2040, while a limit of 1,400 t reaches 60% only in 2050, although Rec. 11-13 requires rebuilding “in as short a period as possible”. Our reruns of the Secretariat’s projection files show that rebuilding by 2070 needs mortality below about 1,010 t unless recruitment recovers from its 2024 level.

Retention should remain limited to sharks that are dead on haulback on vessels with an observer or electronic monitoring, as paragraph 7 of Rec. 21-09 provides. A minimum size cannot replace these conditions. At 210 cm fork length only about 5% of females are mature on the assessment’s maturity curve and in 2026 the SCRS again “does not have a conclusion on whether size restrictions for this species are effective tools”.

If Rec. 21-09 is amended nevertheless, it should adopt the South Atlantic objective of at least 70% no later than 2050 (Rec. 25-08) and leave paragraphs 4(a) and 7 and Annex 1 unchanged.

Bycatch mortality

Most remaining mortality occurs on the line and the mitigation provisions of Rec. 21-09 (paragraphs 19, 21 and 25) have produced no measure since 2021. In 2025, but no longer in 2026, the SCRS “recommended moving from areas of high concentration as a potential mitigation measure” and a later study (Báez et al. 2026, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rsma.2026.105219) finds immature shortfin mako aggregated near the Cabo Verde region. We ask the Commission to convene in 2027 the intersessional meeting on mitigation that paragraph 25 scheduled for 2023 and to ask the SCRS for advice on spatial and seasonal measures, leader material and handling. These steps need no amendment.

Fins naturally attached

We urge Panel 4 to adopt PA4-807, which requires all sharks to be landed with fins naturally attached. It should apply without alternatives that allow fins to be removed at sea.