Panel 4 Statement from the Shark Trust
International Commission for Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) 2026 Annual Meeting

The Shark Trust, in concert with our coalition partners, appreciates this opportunity to participate in the 2026 ICCAT annual meeting in beautiful Vilamoura. We continue to focus on rebuilding populations of the most inherently vulnerable species under ICCAT's purview: sharks and rays. This year, we urge Parties to enhance the outlook for these slow growing species through:

- Precautionary restrictions on catch (particularly for shortfin mako and blue sharks), and
- Concrete actions to increase compliance with existing requirements to report essential fishery information, protect species of concern, and prevent finning.

Mako Recovery
The new assessment of exceptionally vulnerable North Atlantic shortfin makos was plagued by uncertainties that intensify the need for a precautionary approach and argue for staying on the current management course. Fishing mortality is still *more than four times* the current 250t threshold while discards continue to be seriously under-reported. The age validation study needed to resolve core scientific differences will be completed in 2027.

ICCAT should delay North Atlantic shortfin mako retention until growth parameters are validated.

Blue Shark Sustainability
ICCAT's management of blue sharks offers hope for sustainable international shark fishing and a model for other Regional Fishery Management Organizations (RFMOs). The Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) process for blue sharks is breaking important ground.

ICCAT should adopt blue shark management objectives and address incidental mortality of makos.

Shark Data Reporting
Rigorous monitoring and reliable reporting are fundamental to successful fisheries management and sorely needed for sharks. Uncertainty continues to hinder population assessment, management, and enforcement. The Standing Committee on Research and Statistics (SCRS) has long advised improved documentation of shark catch. Despite clear obligations under general data requirements and species-specific measures, most Parties are failing to consistently provide sufficiently detailed information on shark catch and regulations. Reporting of live and dead shark discards remains exceptionally poor and inconsistent. ICCAT has mandated retention bans for Parties not meeting shark reporting requirements.

ICCAT Parties should ensure proper shark data reporting and support penalties for non-compliance.

Finning
ICCAT's complicated fin-to-carcass weight ratio hinders enforcement of the shark finning ban and collection of species-specific catch information needed for population assessment and compliance monitoring. Requiring that sharks be landed with their fins naturally attached can greatly ease enforcement, prevent high grading, and facilitate collection of species-specific catch data. Exceptions that allow shark fins to be removed at sea negate these benefits.

ICCAT should require that sharks be landed with fins naturally attached, without exceptions.

Our shark policy positions reflect the science-based, precautionary approach that is warranted for such slow-growing animals. We look forward to a productive meeting.