Pro Wildlife Position Statement

25th Special Meeting of the Commission of ICCAT

16–23 November 2026

Sharks: no time to lose

Sharks are facing a global crisis. Fishing-related mortality may now exceed 100 million sharks a year, including up to 29 million individuals of threatened species.[1] Atlantic shark populations caught in ICCAT fisheries, as targeted catch, as bycatch, or both, are part of this picture.

Although reducing the total mortality of shortfin mako should be a key focus and although the Commission has asked for advice on how to reduce shark mortality, CPCs are not submitting the information needed. As a result, the Scientific Committee once again cannot recommend effective mitigation measures.[2] Also, the blue shark MSE still lacks the management objectives only the Commission can set. And after 17 years without agreement, two opposing proposals on Fins Naturally Attached (FNA) are on the table again – it is time to end the debate and adopt FNA without exceptions.

Key messages for the 25th ICCAT Special Meeting

- **Maintain the retention ban for North Atlantic shortfin mako.** Total mortality is still more than three times the Commission's own limit,[3] and the new stock assessment rests on unvalidated and biologically highly questionable assumptions. Any weakening, as proposed in PA4_814, must not be supported.
- **Make South Atlantic shortfin mako retention conditional on compliance.** Rec. 25-08 already ties retention to complete reporting. The Commission must enforce this rule, deny retention to CPCs that fail to report and require full payback of any overages.
- **Stop delaying blue shark management.** Blue sharks are commercially valuable, yet still lack a management procedure. The Commission should adopt the management objectives (PA4_812) at this meeting so that the MSE can be completed without further delay.
- **Adopt Fins Naturally Attached without exceptions.** After 17 years without agreement, two opposing proposals are on the table again. ICCAT should adopt PA4_807 and do not support alternatives such as a tagging system for fins.
- **Extend retention bans to all thresher and hammerhead sharks.** All three thresher species and the scalloped and great hammerheads were listed on CMS Appendix I in 2026.[4] ICCAT should extend the bigeye thresher ban (Rec. 09-07) to all thresher species and remove the bonnethead exemption from the hammerhead ban (Rec. 10-08).
- **Keep the FAD closure as it is.** Removing it, as proposed in PA1_509, runs counter to SCRS advice.[5] FAD sets are a major source of bycatch of silky and oceanic whitetip sharks – species ICCAT itself prohibits from being retained. Removing the closure would increase pressure on juvenile tunas and sharks alike. The closure must be maintained and, in line with our position last year, restored to its previous length.

Contact Information

Dr. Mona Schweizer · Head of Marine Conservation · Pro Wildlife e.V.

✉ mona.schweizer@prowildlife.de ☏ +49 159 06314164

www.prowildlife.de

[1] Worm, B. et al. (2024). Global shark fishing mortality still rising despite widespread regulatory change. Science. doi:10.1126/science.adf8984

[2] ICCAT SCRS Report 2026, Responses to the Commission, items 19.27–19.29 (compiled in PLE-104).

[3] ICCAT SCRS Report 2026, item 19.31: North Atlantic shortfin mako retention allowance.

[4] CMS (2026). Appendices I and II of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, as amended by the Conference of the Parties in 2026. Effective 27 June 2026. https://www.cms.int/sites/default/files/basic_page_documents/revised-appendices_cop15_e.pdf

[5] ICCAT SCRS Report 2026 (PLE-104), Executive Summary 12.1 YFT – Atlantic yellowfin tuna, Management recommendation.