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**The Pew Charitable Trusts'
Statement to Panel 4 of the 25th Regular Meeting of ICCAT
15 November 2017**

The shortfin mako shark remains one of the most vulnerable shark stocks caught in the ICCAT Convention Area, based on results of the 2012 ecological risk assessment. This species is characterized by low productivity and high susceptibility to overfishing, even at low levels of fishing mortality. Globally, the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species classifies it as Vulnerable.

The Commission has adopted measures for shortfin mako in the past, but they have done little to reduce the mortality. According to the 2017 stock assessment, the northern stock is overfished with overfishing occurring. Although the results from the assessment of southern stock are highly uncertain, the possibility of overfishing occurring and the stock being overfished cannot be discounted.

While we appreciate that Japan, the United States, and the European Union have put forward proposals to reduce the mortality of both the northern and southern stocks of shortfin mako, these proposals, particularly for the northern stock, are not precautionary. According to the SCRS, the most effective immediate measure to stop overfishing immediately and achieve rebuilding of the northern stock by 2040 with more than a 50% probability is a complete prohibition of retention. By allowing the retention of shortfin mako sharks up to 500t, these proposals would result in an unacceptable low level of probability for successful stock recovery by 2040. For the southern stock, given the uncertainty of the assessment, the vulnerability of the species, and the results of the northern stock assessment, precautionary action is needed to ensure the stock doesn't collapse as well. It had been further noted that even if fishing pressure is reduced, the spawning stock size will continue to decline for many years because so many juveniles are being fished before reaching maturity.

The Commission has taken decisions to prohibit retention of vulnerable shark species in the Convention Area in the past, some with less available science and with a lower chance of post-release survival. As a result, we urge the Commission to take precautionary action and immediately prohibit retention of both stocks of shortfin mako.

In addition, Pew welcomes the fact that a fins naturally attached proposal have been submitted, co-sponsored by a large number of Contracting Parties. We are hopeful that this proposal can be successfully adopted at this year's meeting.