

#### STATEMENT BY THE UNITED KINGDOM TO PLENARY ON PANEL 4

The UK would like to thank the Panel 4 Chair and CPCs for their contributions to the discussions on the north Atlantic shortfin mako stock.

Whilst noting the challenging circumstances for conducting negotiations this year the UK considers it extremely regrettable that a consensus could not be reached in line with the clear scientific advice for this critical management measure for north Atlantic shortfin mako and that instead Rec. 19-06, which it is acknowledged will not allow the stock to recover until at least 2070, will remain in place for yet another year. It remains the UK's view that the most effective, simple and immediate measure to stop overfishing and achieve rebuilding (with over a 50% probability by 2040) is a complete prohibition of retention.

The UK welcomes the proposal for a Panel 4 intersessional meeting in July 2021. The UK is however of the view that discussions and decisions on this stock should not be delayed until then and considers it essential to establish a clear roadmap of discussions to take place in the lead up to a July meeting. The UK suggests that at least three meetings should take place before July, involving the proponents and co-sponsors of the three proposals and all other interested CPCs. Dates of these meetings should be determined once the ICCAT calendar for 2021 is finalised. The proposed meetings should focus on drafting a proposal that follows the scientific advice and allows the stock to rebuild with over a 50% probability by 2040. This proposal could then be discussed at the July intersessional meeting, with the aim of tabling it for adoption at the 2021 annual meeting. Action cannot be delayed beyond this.

The UK also notes the ongoing discussions surrounding gear types and the extent to which measures mandating use of certain gear types could, *in addition to a retention ban*, help to reduce shortfin mako mortality. To provide clarity on this issue, the UK wishes to formally submit a request to the SCRS to undertake an assessment based on available research of whether, and to what extent, the use of circle hooks would be beneficial in achieving what the UK understands are shared objectives on north Atlantic shortfin mako capture and mortality. Our request is submitted alongside this statement.

The UK looks forward to playing a constructive role in the crucial next discussions.

#### **UK request to SCRS on the use of circle hooks in relation to shortfin mako**

- 1) With the aim of advancing discussions on the northern Atlantic shortfin mako stock and acknowledging the different views among CPCs, the UK would like to request that the SCRS provides a clear assessment, based on available evidence, of:
  - a. the impact and scale of the effects of circle hooks on shortfin mako capture and mortality, and on the catch rates of target fish species, in comparison to other hook types; and
  - b. whether the use of circle hooks in all fisheries which interact with the shortfin mako stock would significantly alter the perception that a ban on retention is the only measure capable of recovering the stock.

The UK respectfully asks if it would be possible for a presentation of preliminary findings to be available ahead of the proposed Panel 4 intersessional meeting in July 2021, with formal reporting to follow for the 2021 annual meeting. Noting the likely dependence on the schedule of the SCRS Shark Species Group, the UK would be willing to provide scientific support as appropriate.

- 2) The UK would like to request that the SCRS provides a clear assessment, based on existing evidence, of the impact and scale of the effects of circle hooks, in comparison to other hook types, on the capture and mortality of other vulnerable bycatch species (e.g. other shark species, seabirds and sea turtles).

The UK recognises that this would be a longer-term piece of work and welcomes the SCRS' view on the appropriate timeline.