

## Opening Statement to Plenary - ICCAT 2020

The Covid-19 health crisis has now transformed into a wider economic crisis, to which the fisheries sector worldwide has not been immune to. Some parts of the sector, particularly fresh seafood sales, have proven especially vulnerable.

While this must be acknowledged, it is also important to recognize that the climate and biodiversity crises have not been put on hold because of the pandemic and continue to need urgent attention and action. Thus, committed leadership to ensure resilient marine ecosystems is now more urgent than ever, because only then will the Ocean be able to perform its crucial role in sustaining life on Earth, but also allow sustainable economies and coastal communities to thrive.

As Sciaena believes that one of the best, most direct tools to ensure resilient marine ecosystems is sustainable, science-based management of fisheries, it is clear to us that RFMOs in general and ICCAT in particular have never been more important.

Therefore, although we understand the decision of cancelling this year's ICCAT annual meeting, we urge the Commission and the CPCs to discuss and adopt measures on stocks for which it is imperative to act with no further delay. As stated in our statement to Panel 4, the desperate situation that Shortfin makos are facing in the Atlantic calls for decisive and urgent action. ICCAT and its CPCs have the responsibility to adopt a new recommendation, which must have the full ban of retention at its heart, accompanied by other management measures.

We also encourage the Commission to take the necessary steps to prepare for 2021, including the scheduling of intersessional meetings, so that essential discussions take place and important decisions aren't delayed, but also that work that takes place on a longer time-frame is continued, such as the development and adoption of Harvest Strategies.

Finally, we would like to mention two specific issues that the Covid-19 crisis has reemphasised. The first one is the need to increase the coverage of remote electronic monitoring in the vessels registered in ICCAT. The second one is the need to make ICCAT all the more transparent and inclusive, namely for the Observer organisations but to society in general.

The Ocean and the fish that inhabit it are under the stewardship of humankind, and it is therefore essential that they are protected and managed to the benefit of all humankind. We urge ICCAT to fully embrace this vision, and full transparency is a key step that must be taken in order to materialize that vision.

