

## **ICCAT 2021 Panel 4**

*Statement from Ecology Action Centre  
Regarding Shortfin Mako Sharks*

Ecology Action Centre appreciates this opportunity to comment on ICCAT Panel 4 deliberations regarding North Atlantic shortfin makos.

We are pleased that Parties are at last coalescing around an immediate prohibition on retention for this depleted stock, as long advised by the SCRS. In addition to being critical to achieving the substantial mortality reduction goals, this straightforward measure is readily enforceable and key to removing incentives to encounter and kill this valuable, threatened species.

**We ask that the final text establishing this measure be explicit so as to facilitate proper implementation and provide clear standards for compliance monitoring.**

At the same time, it is difficult to believe that – after the overwhelming support for a decisive ban – Parties are seriously considering avenues for relaxing it within just a few short years.

On the contrary, the advised non-retention policy should be set in place for many years given:

- The exceptional vulnerability of the species, as underscored by the SCRS this week
- The serious population depletion that is predicted to continue for 14 more years
- The rebuilding timeframe that realistically spans another five decades.

The lengthy recovery period offers plenty of time to carefully consider if and under what conditions retention might resume. We echo concerns over the complexity of the proposed formulas and the challenge of agreeing them at this busy virtual meeting. We agree that this particularly consequential process should be addressed intersessionally rather than needlessly rushed over the coming days.

**We stress, however, that relaxing protections a decade before rebuilding is expected to begin would be egregious even for a resilient species.**

We take this opportunity to reiterate our strong support for basing the rebuilding plan on at least a 70% probability of success, as is clearly warranted for slow growing makos.

In summary, this exceptionally depleted, inherently vulnerable shark population represents the ultimate case for taking a precautionary approach. We urge Parties to make decisions accordingly and focus on rebuilding the stock rather than reviving exploitation.