



POSITION STATEMENT

PREVENTING SHARK FINNING

*92th Meeting of the
INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION
Mexico City, Mexico; July 24-28, 2017*

Our organizations appreciate the opportunity to participate in meetings of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) and to offer our perspective on the conservation of sharks and rays. We focus on these species because of the low reproductive capacity that leaves most of them particularly vulnerable to overexploitation. We remain deeply concerned about the status of Eastern Pacific shark and ray populations. While the lack of proposals to set IATTC shark and ray fishing limits this year is disappointing, we are encouraged that Parties will once again consider strengthening the IATTC ban on the wasteful practice of shark finning (slicing off a shark's fins and discarding the body at sea).

Specifically, we continue to strongly support a prohibition on at-sea shark fin removal as the best practice for enforcing the IATTC finning ban. As experts have reported for years, under such a policy:

- Enforcement burden is greatly reduced;
- Information on species and quantities of sharks landed is vastly improved; and
- “High-grading” (mixing bodies and fins from different animals) is impossible.

The technique of partially cutting and folding fins against the body can address industry concerns about safety and storage. EU and Costa Rican fishermen are using this method for frozen as well as fresh sharks. Because of its many practical advantages, the fins-naturally-attached method is mandated in the EU, Central America, the United States, and much of South America. Canada is now ending its reliance on fin-to-carcass ratios and phasing in fins-attached rules (by March 2018). The policy is also gaining acceptance in international arenas, as evidenced through adoption by the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) and the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO), and support from the vast majority of Parties to the International Commission for Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT).

We urge the IATTC to prohibit without exception removal of shark fins on-board vessels, as well as the retention, transshipment, and landing of fins that are not naturally attached to carcasses.

*Shark Advocates International, a project of The Ocean Foundation, works to safeguard sharks & rays through sound, science-based conservation policy.
Supporting work in more than 35 countries, Humane Society International is one of the only international organizations working to protect all animals.*

The Shark Trust is a UK charity working to advance the worldwide conservation of sharks through science, education, influence and action.

Project AWARE Foundation is a growing movement of scuba divers protecting the ocean planet – one dive at a time.

Defenders of Wildlife is dedicated to the protection of all native animals and plants in their natural communities.