

INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION

94TH MEETING

Bilbao, Spain

22-26 July 2019

RESOLUTION C-19-06

CONSERVATION OF WHALE SHARKS

The Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) , gathered in Bilbao, Spain, on the occasion of its 94th meeting:

Recognizing that fish stocks covered by the Commission include other species of fish taken by vessels fishing for tunas;

Recalling that Article VII, paragraph 1 (f), of the Antigua Convention establishes that the Commission “shall adopt, as necessary, conservation and management measures and recommendations for species belonging to the same ecosystem and that are affected by fishing for, or dependent on or associated with, the fish stocks covered by the Convention, with a view to maintaining or restoring populations of such species above levels at which their reproduction may become seriously threatened”;

Recalling Article IV, paragraph 3, of the Antigua Convention, which states that “where the status of target stocks or non-target or associated or dependent species is of concern, the members of the Commission shall subject such stocks and species to enhanced monitoring in order to review their status and the efficacy of conservation and management measures, revising those measures regularly in the light of new scientific information available”;

Recognizing that whale sharks are caught as bycatch by purse-seine vessels in the Convention Area;

Recognizing that measures should be implemented to allow whale shark populations to rebuild in the Convention Area;

Further noting that whale sharks are particularly vulnerable to exploitation, including from fishing, and noting the ecological and economic value these species can bring to the EPO; and

Concerned about the potential effects of purse-seine operations on the status of whale sharks when deliberately or accidentally set upon;

Agrees:

1. The Members and Cooperating Non-Members (CPCs) shall prohibit their flag vessels from setting a purse-seine net on a school of tunas associated with a live whale shark (*Rhincodon typus*), if the animal is sighted prior to the commencement of the set.
2. CPCs shall require that, in the event that a whale shark is not deliberately encircled in the purse-seine net, the captain of the vessel shall:
 - a. ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure its safe release; and
 - b. report the incident to the relevant authority of the flag CPC, including the number of individuals, details of how and why the encirclement happened, where it occurred, steps taken to ensure safe release, and an assessment of the life status of the animal(s) on release (including whether any were released alive but subsequently died).