

INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION

101st MEETING

Victoria, Canada
7-11 August 2023

PROPOSAL IATTC-101 C-6

SUBMITTED BY CANADA, BELIZE, GUATEMALA, EL SALVADOR, NICARAGUA, COSTA RICA, PANAMA, COLOMBIA, EUROPEAN UNION AND THE UNITED STATES

PROPOSAL TO CONSOLIDATE RESOLUTIONS C-05-03, C-16-04, AND C-16-05 ON THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF SHARK SPECIES IN THE EASTERN PACIFIC OCEAN

CONSERVATION MEASURES FOR THE PROTECTION AND SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF SHARKS

The Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC or the Commission):

Recalling that the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) International Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks calls on States, within the framework of their respective competencies and consistent with international law, to cooperate through regional fisheries organizations with a view to ensuring the sustainability of shark stocks as well as to adopt a National Plan of Action for the conservation and management of sharks;

Recognizing further that some shark species are highly migratory, and that harmonized conservation and management, where appropriate, may help to ensure sustainable management at the regional level.

Noting that sharks are part of pelagic ecosystems and are caught by vessels fishing for tunas and tuna-like species in the Convention Area;

Recalling that under the Antigua Convention, “fish stocks covered by this Convention” means “stocks of tunas and tuna-like species and other species of fish taken by vessels fishing for tunas and tuna-like species in the Convention Area”, and that under Article VIII, paragraph 1 (c), the Commission shall “adopt measures...to ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of the fish stocks covered by this Convention”;

Considering that 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 this Convention, with a view to maintaining or restoring populations of such species above levels at which their reproduction may become seriously threatened”;

Recognizing the need to collect data on catches, effort, discards, and utilization, as well as information on biological parameters of the species managed by the IATTC, particularly sharks;

Noting that in its Consolidated Resolution on Bycatch (C-04-05), the IATTC requires that purse-seine vessels release unharmed non-target species, to the extent practicable, including sharks, and urges

governments with vessels targeting species covered by the Antigua Convention to provide any required bycatch information as soon as possible;

Further noting the IATTC staff's 2016 conservation recommendations for the release of sharks caught by purse-seine vessels and for prohibiting the use of shark lines by longline vessels targeting tuna and swordfish;

Aware that specific measures to be respected by vessels of all fishing gears are necessary for the conservation of sharks in the Convention Area;

Desiring to consolidate IATTC Resolutions C-05-03, C-16-04, C-16-05, and to strengthen shark conservation and management measures in the eastern Pacific Ocean;

Recalling the analyses and recommendations of the IATTC scientific staff contained in document SAC-14-14, particularly that recommending the adoption of a conservation and management measure requiring sharks with fins naturally attached to the body until the point of the first landing;

Further considering the recommendations of the 1st Working Group on Ecosystem and Bycatch, which were endorsed by the Scientific Advisory Committee at its 14th meeting, regarding the need to address best handling and release guidelines, and the need to explore new bycatch release devices and collect more post-release survival data for non-target shark species impacted by fisheries under the purview of the IATTC;

Considering also the need to improve the identification process of the shark species caught by fishing vessels targeting species under the purview of IATTC, with a view to their management and the integral utilization of the catches;

Recalling that the Working Group on Ecosystems and Bycatch (WGEC) recommends that a conservation and fisheries management measure be adopted requiring that sharks retain their fins attached to the body until the first point of landing;

Addressing the need to consolidate and update the management regime for sharks associated with fisheries developed under the Antigua Convention;

Determined to combat Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing;

Agrees as follows:

DEFINITIONS

1. For the purpose of this Resolution:

Shark finning means the practice of removing any fin from a shark's body and discarding its body prior to landing.

Fin means any shark fin (including the tail) or a portion thereof.

Full utilization means retention by the fishing or transshipment vessel of all parts of the shark, except head and guts, as appropriate, until the first point of landing.

Naturally attached means that all fins of the shark are fully or partially connected to the carcass of the shark by connective tissue or cartilage.

Buoy lines means individual lines or leaders that are attached to the float line or to the floats directly, and that are constructed of steel, metal, wire trace, or other materials, and are deployed in the water column at depths shallower than the mainline¹. Schematic diagram available at Annex 1.

Wire leaders means individual lines or leaders that are constructed of steel, metal, or wire trace, adjacent to the hooks and that are attached to the main line or a branch line. Schematic diagram available at Annex 1.

APPLICATION

2. This Resolution shall apply to all vessels operating pursuant to the IATTC Convention in the Convention Area.

NATIONAL PLAN OF ACTION

3. (para 1 – C-05-03 with modification) Members and Cooperating non-Members (“CPCs”) shall **establish and implement a national plan of action for conservation and management of sharks, in accordance with the *FAO International Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks*.**

RETENTION AND UTILIZATION

4. (para 3 – C-05-03 with modification) **CPCs shall take the necessary measures to require that their fishers fully utilize all retained catches of sharks,** with the exception of those species for which a retention ban has been adopted by the IATTC.
5. CPCs shall prohibit shark finning.
6. CPCs shall ensure that all sharks are landed with all fins naturally attached to the body. In order to facilitate on-board storage, shark fins may be partially sliced through and folded against the shark carcass, as appropriate, but shall remain naturally attached to the carcass until the first point of landing (see Annex 2).
7. (para 6 – C-05-03 with modifications) **CPCs shall prohibit the retention on-board, transshipment, carrying and landing of shark fins which** are not naturally attached to the shark carcass until the first point of landing.
8. (para 6 – C-05-03 with modifications) **CPCs shall prohibit the trade,** purchase, offer for sale and sale of **shark fins** which have been removed on-board, retained on-board, transshipped or landed, **in contravention to this Resolution.**

BYCATCH AND RELEASE

9. (para 4 – C-16-05 with modifications) **CPCs shall prohibit vessels targeting tuna and/or swordfish from using buoy lines.**
10. (para 7 – C-05-03 with modifications) **CPCs shall, to the extent possible, encourage the release of live sharks, especially juveniles and pregnant sharks that are caught incidentally and are not used for food and/or subsistence.**
11. (para 3 – C-16-05 with modifications) **All sharks (alive or dead) that are not retained must be promptly released unharmed, to the extent practicable, as soon as it is seen on the line, in the net or on the deck, taking due consideration of the safety of any persons. CPCs shall also require vessels to:**
 - a. Leave the shark in the water, where possible.

¹ These are also commonly known as “shark lines.”

- b. When seen in the net, release sharks directly from the brailer into the ocean. Sharks that cannot be released without compromising the safety of persons or the sharks before being landed on deck must be returned to the water as soon as possible, either utilizing a ramp from the deck connecting to an opening on the side of the vessel, or through escape hatches. If ramps or escape hatches are not available, the sharks must be lowered with a sling or cargo net, using a crane or similar equipment, or as identified pursuant to paragraph 12.
 - c. Prohibit the use of gaffs, hooks, or similar instruments for the handling of sharks.
 - d. Prohibit the lifting of sharks by the head, tail, gill slits, or spiracles, or by using bind wire against or inserted through the body. Prohibit the punching of holes through the bodies of sharks (e.g., to pass a cable through for lifting the shark).
 - e. Prohibit the towing of whale sharks (*Rhincodon typus*) out of a purse-seine net, e.g., using towing ropes.
 - f. Use a line cutter to cut the line as close to the hook as possible and so that less than 1 meter remains on the animal.
12. The IATTC scientific staff, in collaboration with the Working Group on Ecosystem and Bycatch (“EBWG”), shall develop and recommend to the Commission a set of best handling practices for the safe release of sharks for inclusion in this measure in 2024. CPCs shall require that fishers are aware of and use this guide on best handling and release practices. In the meantime, CPCs shall require that, as a minimum, the safe handling and release guidelines described in Annex 3 are followed.

RESEARCH

13. In 2024, the IATTC scientific staff, in consultation with the IATTC Scientific Advisory Committee (“SAC”) and EBWG, shall develop a list of key shark species in the Convention Area.
14. In 2024, the IATTC scientific staff, in consultation with the IATTC SAC and EBWG shall also design and implement a data collection program for sharks associated with fisheries managed by the Commission, making use of existing research and data collection mechanisms and programs where possible. The program will include the monitoring of shark catches by small scale fisheries in coastal developing countries and the establishment, maintenance and strengthening of standardized data management databases, taking into account appropriate assistance to those CPCs.
15. (para 2 – C-05-03 with modifications) In 2025, the IATTC, in cooperation with scientists of CPCs and, if possible, the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission, shall evaluate the information available to determine the status of key shark species and propose a research plan for a comprehensive assessment of these species, and associated financial implications. Key shark species include, but are not limited to: *Carcharhinus longimanus* and *C. falciformis*, *Sphyrna lewini*, *S. zygaena* and *S. mokarran*. This non-exhaustive list will be reviewed and revised, as necessary, with the advice of the scientific staff and the SAC.
16. (para 2 – C-05-03 with modifications) In 2026, the scientific staff, in cooperation with the SAC, shall provide advice on the stock status of key shark species, and recommend the development of any additional management measures, or amendments to existing measures to the Commission.
17. The SAC shall review the information reported by CPCs annually and will, as necessary, provide recommendations to the Commission on ways to strengthen the conservation and management of sharks within IATTC fisheries, including consideration of the use of wire leaders by vessels fishing for tuna and tuna-like species.

18. (para 1 – C-16-04 with modifications) By 2027, CPCs will undertake, where possible, in cooperation with the IATTC scientific staff, actions to:
 - a. identify ways to make fishing gears more selective, where appropriate, including research into alternative measures to wire leaders;
 - b. improve knowledge of key biological and ecological parameters, life-history and behavioural traits, and migration patterns of key shark species;
 - c. identify key shark mating, pupping, and nursery areas; and
 - d. improve handling practices for live sharks to maximise their post-release survival.

REPORTING AND DATA COLLECTION

19. (para 10 – C-05-03) The Commission shall consider appropriate assistance to developing CPCs for the identification of shark species/groups and the collection of data on their shark catches.
20. (para 11 – C-05-03) Each CPC shall annually report data for catches, effort by gear type, landing and trade of sharks by species, where possible, in accordance with IATTC reporting procedures, including available historical data. CPCs shall send to the IATTC Secretariat, by May 1, at the latest, a comprehensive annual report of the implementation of this Resolution during the previous year.
21. (para 2 – C-16-05 with modifications) CPCs shall require their fishers to collect catch data for key shark species identified by the IATTC scientific staff, and shall submit the data to the IATTC in accordance with IATTC data reporting requirements.
22. (para 2 – C-16-05 with modifications) CPCs shall also record and report to the IATTC, through observer programs, logbooks or other means, the species identification, the number and status (dead/alive) of all sharks caught, including those caught incidentally and/or released by purse seine and longline vessels.

REPEAL AND ENTRY INTO FORCE

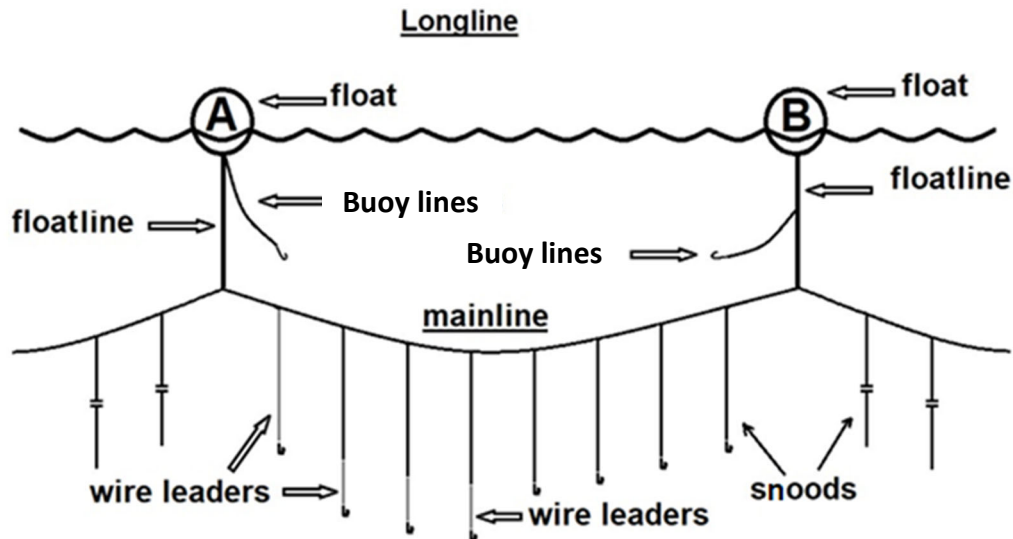
23. This Resolution shall enter into force on January 1, 2024.
24. Upon the date this Resolution enters into force, the following Resolutions are repealed and replaced: C-05-03, C-16-04, and C-16-05.

Annex 1

Schematic diagram of shark lines and wire leaders

Buoy lines: individual lines or leaders that are attached to the float line or to the floats directly, and that are constructed of steel, metal, wire trace, or other materials, and are deployed in the water column at depths shallower than the mainline².

Wire leaders: individual lines or leaders that are constructed of steel, metal, or wire trace, and that are attached to the main line or a branch line.

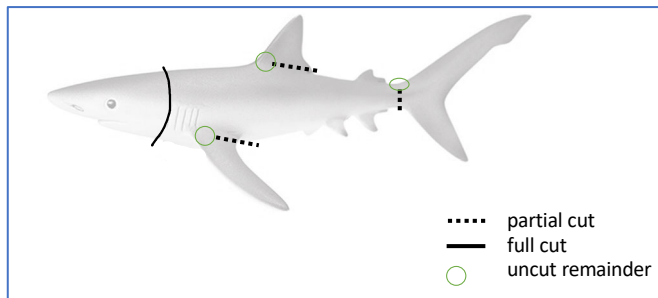


² These are also commonly known as “shark lines.”

Annex 2

Naturally attached means that all fins of the shark must be fully and/or partially connected to the body of the shark by connective tissue or cartilage, while at sea. In order to facilitate on-board storage, shark fins may be partially sliced through and folded against the shark carcass, but shall not be removed from the carcass until the first point of landing. Below is a schematic to guide fishers.

1. Only head and guts, as appropriate, may be removed at sea.
2. A partial cut at the level of the base of the dorsal fin and the base of the pectoral fins is permitted.
3. A partial cut at the level of the caudal peduncle of the base, allowing the caudal fin to be folded over the posterior area of the shark's trunk is permitted.
4. A full cut along the abdominal section is permitted in the case of the Blue Shark (*P. glauca*) in the process of gutting, provided the fins remain naturally attached.



Annex 3

Safe handling and release guidelines

Minimum standards for safe shark handling practices are given below, together with those specified in paragraphs preceding this resolution. Specific recommendations are also offered for both longline and purse-seine fisheries.

1. These minimum standards are appropriate for the release of live sharks, whether under non-retention policies or voluntarily. These basic guidelines do not replace any stricter safety standards that may have been established by the national authorities of each CPC.
2. Safety first: These minimum standards should be considered in light of safety and viability for crew members. Crew safety must always come first. At a minimum, crew members should wear suitable gloves and avoid working around the mouths of sharks.
3. Training: The Secretariat should develop materials to support crew training in implementing this safe handling protocol. These materials should be made available to CPCs in both official languages of the IATTC.
4. Be prepared: Tools should be prepared in advance (for example, canvas or net slings, stretchers for carrying or lifting, large mesh net or grid to cover hatches/hoppers in purse-seine fisheries, long-handled cutters and dehookers in longline fisheries, etc., listed at the end of this document).

General recommendations for all fisheries:

5. The primary aim of release processes is to ensure the highest level of survival of sharks for which retention is not permitted. Whenever possible, prompt and effective action will be taken to return the shark to the sea, provided there is no risk to crew safety.
6. When entanglement occurs (in a net, fishing line, etc.), if safe to do so, carefully cut the net or fishing line to release the animal and return it to the sea as soon as possible without further entanglement.
7. When making a release, to the extent possible, identify the species and condition (live/dead) to record the interaction.
8. If, for any reason, one or more shark individuals for which capture or retention is prohibited or not authorized are unintentionally or unavoidably retained and it has not been possible to identify them previously or remove them from the wells, make a note of this incident in the records of interaction with non-target species, stating when the individual or individuals were identified, and surrender them to the port authority. Keep in mind that any attempt to trade these species constitutes a serious violation.

Safe handling practices specific to longline fisheries:

9. Except for shark species for which capture and retention are permitted:

- a) To the extent possible, all sharks to be released must remain in the water at all times, unless they need to be raised to identify the species. If sharks are brought on deck, attempts must be made to release them in as little time as possible.
- b) Bring the shark as close to the vessel as possible, without putting too much tension on the branchline to prevent a released hook or breakage in the branchline from causing hooks, weights, and other items to flyback at great speed toward the vessel and crew.

- c) Secure the far side of the longline to the vessel to prevent any gear remaining in the water from pulling on the longline and animal.
- d) Use a line cutter to cut the line as close as possible to the hook.
- e) If hooked, and the hook is visible in the body or mouth, use a dehooking device or long-handled bolt cutter to remove the hook barb and then remove the hook.
- f) If it is not possible to remove the hook or the hook is not visible, cut the trace line (or snood, leader) as close as possible to the hook (ideally leaving as little line and/or leader as possible with no weights attached to the animal).

10. Safe handling practices specific to purse-seine fisheries:

- a) If sharks are encountered in purse-seine fishing, endeavor to release them in the shortest possible time. Recommended practice is to remove the shark from the brailer, hopper or chute by taking it by the caudal peduncle to place it on deck. This should be done manually whenever possible.
- b) It is prohibited to lift the shark by its head, tail, gill slits or spiracles.
- c) It is prohibited to use bind wire against or inserted through the body, and no holes may be punched through the bodies of sharks (e.g., to pass a cable through for lifting the shark).
- d) If in a purse-seine net: Scan the net as far ahead as possible to spot sharks in time and react promptly. Avoid lifting them up in the net toward the power block. Reduce vessel speed to slacken tension on the net and allow the entangled animal out of the net. If necessary, use clippers to cut the net.
- e) If in the brailer or on deck: Use a large mesh cargo net, canvas sling or similar device. If vessel layout allows, these sharks may also be released by emptying the brailer directly into a hopper and release ramp held up at an angle that connects to an opening on the top deck railing, with no need for them to be lifted or handled by the crew.

11. DO NOT (all fisheries):

- a) To the extent possible, do not lift sharks from the water using the branchline, especially if hooked, unless it is necessary to lift sharks to identify species.
- b) When releasing a shark, do not lift it using thin wires or cables.
- c) Do not strike a shark against any surface to remove it from the line.
- d) Do not attempt to dislodge a hook that is deeply ingested and not visible.
- e) Do not attempt to remove a hook by pulling sharply on the branchline.
- f) Do not cut the tail or any other body part.
- g) Do not cut or punch holes in the shark.
- h) Do not hit or kick a shark.
- i) Do not insert hands into the gill slits.
- j) Do not expose the shark to the sun for extended periods.

k) Do not wrap your hands or arms on the line when bringing a shark or ray to the vessel (this may result in serious injury).

13. Recommended useful tools for safe handling and release:

a) Gloves (shark skin is rough; this ensures safe handling of the shark and protects crew members' hands from bites).

b) Towel or cloth (a towel or cloth soaked in seawater can be placed over the shark's eyes to calm it down).

c) Dehooking devices (for example, pigtail dehooker, bolt cutter or pliers).

d) Shark harness or stretcher (if necessary).

e) Tail rope (to secure a hooked shark if it needs to be removed from the water).

f) Saltwater hose (if anticipated that it may take more than 5 minutes to release a shark, place a hose in the shark's mouth so that moderate amounts of seawater flow in. Make sure the deck pump has been running several minutes before placing it in the shark's mouth).

g) Measuring device (for example, mark a pole, leader and float, or a measuring tape).

h) Data sheet for recording all catches.

i) Tagging equipment (if applicable).