



POSITION STATEMENT
AMENDMENT FOR A STRONGER SHARK FINNING BAN
42nd meeting of the
GENERAL FISHERIES COMMISSION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN
Rome, 22-26th October 2018

Our organizations, which have a special focus on shark and ray conservation, appreciate delegates' consideration of our views on the pending proposal from the European Union (EU) to strengthen the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) ban on finning (slicing off a shark's fins and discarding the body at sea). We applaud the EU for proposing measures to prevent waste while improving shark catch data across species.

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

The IUCN Shark Specialist Group and the European Elasmobranch Association¹ have found that 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 "fins-naturally-attached" method is widely accepted as the best practice for enforcing finning bans, and - indeed - the only way to guarantee that sharks have not been finned. Such a rule could also facilitate sorely needed, species-specific data on Mediterranean shark catches. The technique of making a partial cut and folding fins against the body can address industry concerns about safety and storage.

Because of the many practical advantages associated with the fins-naturally-attached method, the policy has been mandated not only in the EU, but also in the United States, Canada, most of Central and South America, and many countries fishing in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. It is also gaining acceptance in international arenas, as demonstrated by adoption by the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (2014) and the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (2016), as well as support from a majority of Parties to the International Commission for Conservation of Atlantic Tunas, including Albania, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, the Russian Federation, and most of West Africa.

We urge the GFCM to ensure enforceability of the existing finning ban by prohibiting at-sea removal of shark fins.

Please support the EU proposal to amend GFCM/36/2012/3.

¹ Fowler, S. and Séret, B. 2010. *Shark fins in Europe: Implications for reforming the EU finning ban*. European Elasmobranch Association and IUCN Shark Specialist Group.

The Shark Trust is a UK charity working to safeguard the future of sharks through positive change.

Shark Advocates International is a project of The Ocean Foundation dedicated to securing science-based policies for sharks and rays.

Ecology Action Centre promotes sustainable, ocean-based livelihoods, and marine conservation in Atlantic Canada.

Focused on sharks in peril and marine debris, Project AWARE is a growing movement of scuba divers protecting the ocean planet – one dive at a time.

These groups have formed the Shark League (www.sharkleague.org).

The Shark League is funded by the Shark Conservation Fund.