



## POSITION STATEMENT RAY & SHARK CONSERVATION MEASURES

23<sup>rd</sup> Session of the  
INDIAN OCEAN TUNA COMMISSION  
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Our organizations appreciate delegates' consideration of our views on proposals currently before the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) with respect to shark and ray fishing. We focus our conservation efforts on these species because of the low reproductive capacity that leaves most of them exceptionally vulnerable to overexploitation.

### **Mobula Rays**

Manta and devil rays (family Mobulidae) are the least fecund fish taken in tuna fisheries, with females giving birth to as few as one pup every two to three years. A particularly cautious approach is warranted for both handling of individuals and management of mortality. The listing of all mobulids on Appendix I and II of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) brings important, binding obligations for many IOTC Parties (Australia, EU, Bangladesh, Eritrea, France, Guinea, India, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique, Pakistan, Philippines, Seychelles, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, UK, and Yemen) to strictly protect these species domestically, and work toward regional conservation.

We thank the European Union (EU) and Maldives for again proposing IOTC measures aimed at ensuring safe, live release of manta and devil rays taken in high seas Indian Ocean fisheries. Specifically, we urge adoption of proposed bans on targeting, retaining, landing, selling, storing, and transshipping mobulid rays, and prohibition on harmful release practices (gaffing, lifting by gill slits or spiracles, punching holes in wings). We also strongly support proposed mandates for careful, immediate release of all mobulids according to safe handling guidelines, as well as prompt reporting on the number and status of individuals discarded and released. We encourage all Parties -- in recognition of the species' exceptionally low productivity -- to ensure effective implementation of similar measures for domestic fisheries.

### **Sharks**

We remain deeply concerned about the precarious status of many other elasmobranch species that are fished without catch limits in Indian Ocean fisheries despite the lack of qualitative regional assessments. In particular -- for shortfin mako, scalloped hammerhead, and silky sharks -- IOTC scientists:

- suggest populations may be locally depleted in southern and eastern areas;
- warn against maintaining or increasing fishing effort; and
- advise precautionary conservation measures and improved fisheries data collection.

The IOTC-CMS Parties have committed to collaborate toward regional conservation of these (CMS Appendix II) species.

All of the above species are listed or proposed for listing under Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), which brings requirements to ensure exports are sourced from legal, sustainable fisheries.

Finally, we urge IOTC Parties to combat finning by applying the ban on at-sea removal of shark fins to all fleets.

*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.*