



**POSITION STATEMENT**  
**EU PROPOSAL FOR A STRONGER SHARK FINNING BAN**  
*20<sup>th</sup> meeting of the*  
**INDIAN OCEAN TUNA COMMISSION**  
*La Réunion; May 23 - 27, 2016*

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 to strengthen the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) ban on shark finning (slicing off a shark's fins and discarding the body at sea). We are deeply concerned about the deteriorating status of Indian Ocean shark populations caused by seriously lacking fisheries management in the face of strong fishing pressure. While maintaining our support for additional safeguards, including species-specific limits on retention, we applaud the EU for proposing measures to prevent waste while improving shark catch data across species.

**Specifically, we urge the IOTC 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*.**

In 2010, the IUCN Shark Specialist Group and the European Elasmobranch Association<sup>1</sup> 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 Indian Ocean shark catches. The technique of making a partial cut and folding fins against the body can address industry concerns about safety and storage. EU fishermen are using this method for frozen as well as fresh sharks.

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 Sri Lanka, India, parts of Australia and the United States, most of Central and South America, and elsewhere. It is also gaining acceptance in international arenas, as demonstrated by adoption in 2014 by the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission, and support from a majority of Parties to the International Commission for Conservation of Atlantic Tunas. We urge the IOTC to take the lead this year by becoming the first tuna Regional Fishery Management Organization to adopt this best practice.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

*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.*