



23 September 2013

France Pegeot
Head of Delegation, Canada

We are writing in regard to shark conservation measures likely to be discussed at this week's meeting of the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) in Halifax.

Our organizations maintain a special focus on shark, skate, and ray conservation due in large part to the low reproductive capacity that leaves most of these species exceptionally vulnerable to overexploitation. We are deeply concerned about the deteriorating status of these species caused by a lack of science-based fishing quotas and poor compliance with international rules.

We are pleased that the United States and the European Union are taking leadership in implementing and promoting prohibitions on at-sea shark fin removal as the best method for enforcing bans on shark finning (slicing off a shark's fins and discarding the body at sea). As they have done at other Regional Fishery Management Organization (RFMO) meetings, we are hopeful that these two Parties will soon propose to amend the NAFO finning with a ban on at-sea fin removal, thereby significantly strengthening this region's only international safeguard for sharks, and setting a strong precedent for other RFMOs. We strongly urge Canada to support and/promote such a change, without exception.

As detailed in a 2010 expert report from the IUCN Shark Specialist Group and the European Elasmobranch Association¹, under such a "fins-attached" policy:

- Enforcement burden is greatly reduced
- Information on species and quantities of sharks landed is vastly improved
- "High-grading" (mixing bodies and fins from different animals) is impossible.

The technique of making a partial cut (allowing fins to be folded against the body) can address industry concerns about safety and storage, and is being used effectively for frozen as well as fresh sharks.

Because of the many practical advantages associated with the fins-attached method, the policy has been mandated by dozens of countries, and is gaining acceptance in international arenas, including the United Nations and the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

With Canada's support, NAFO can become the first RFMO to adopt this best practice for preventing finning.

Thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,

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Shark Advocates International

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Ali Hood,
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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.