

November 11, 2016

Russell Smith  
Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Fisheries  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
Department of Commerce  
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20230



Dear Mr. Smith:

Based on our concern over the lack of science-based fishing quotas and poor compliance with best practices that leave inherently vulnerable Atlantic sharks in a precarious state, we encourage US efforts to ensure that 2016 meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) results in more responsible shark fisheries management.

**Specifically, we urge continued US leadership toward establishing at this year's ICCAT meeting:**

- **A prohibition on removing shark fins at sea, and**
- **Precautionary catch limits for blue sharks.**

We are pleased that the US is collaborating with the EU and a remarkable number of countries in proposing the best practice for finning ban enforcement (requiring that all sharks be landed with fins naturally attached) at Regional Fishery Management Organizations (RFMOs) around the world. An ICCAT **ban on at-sea shark fin removal** would bolster such bans adopted northwest and northeast Atlantic RFMOs, help to prevent this wasteful practice throughout the Atlantic, and set a key precedent for the Pacific and Indian Oceans.

We are disappointed that ICCAT has yet to establish limits for heavily fished **blue sharks** (*Prionace glauca*). We maintain that immediate blue shark landings caps are supported by scientific advice from the Standing Committee for Research and Statistics (SCRS), the precautionary approach, and the benefits of consistent action across the Convention Area. We urge the US to work with other ICCAT Parties, as a matter of priority, to propose and secure North and South Atlantic blue shark limits at or below the average landing levels for the SCRS reference period (2009-2013).

We are hopeful that -- with your leadership -- ICCAT will soon take these groundbreaking conservation steps.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Sonja Fordham  
President  
Shark Advocates International

Ali Hood  
Director of Conservation  
Shark Trust

Ania Budziak  
Associate Director, Programs  
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