

# Oceana Opening Statement to the Plenary



## 23<sup>rd</sup> Regular Meeting of ICCAT

Oceana acknowledges the significant progress made by ICCAT in recent years towards the improved fisheries management of highly migratory species in the Convention area. Indeed, ICCAT has become a point of reference for fisheries management worldwide, with respect to some of the measures it has adopted. However, proper **implementation and compliance with ICCAT management rules still represent major challenges**, which seriously undermine the objectives they are intended to achieve. Now is the time for ICCAT to ensure that management rules do not only exist on paper; it must now demonstrate its commitment to consolidating, implementing, and enforcing them.

In a key step to redress this situation, during this 23<sup>rd</sup> Regular Meeting, the Commission will be implementing Recommendation 11-15. Doing so is essential for securing the pillar of the science that must inform any managerial decision within ICCAT: fisheries data and information. However, non-compliance starts with, but is not limited to the scope of Recommendation 11-15. Illegal fishing continues to plague major ICCAT fisheries, while efforts on enforcement have been exclusively focussed on Eastern bluefin tuna fisheries. Oceana believes that **this meeting should send a strong message: that non-compliance and lack of enforcement are not an option** for those who benefit from participating in ICCAT fisheries.



In addition, **ICCAT's commitment to precautionary, science-based management** needs to be strengthened, in particular for Eastern bluefin tuna and sharks. The Eastern bluefin tuna stock is a story of progressive success in fisheries management, and the dramatic efforts made to secure its recovery appear to be producing positive results. However, the high uncertainty about the extent of recovery, combined with the lack of a stock assessment for 2013, makes it highly premature to consider any changes to management. To do so would risk sacrificing the gains which CPCs have strived so hard to achieve, by setting back the clock to the mismanagement scenario of years ago.

Sharks rank among the key species caught in ICCAT fisheries, representing 11% of all reported catches by weight in 2012. Despite their relevance, management of sharks within ICCAT is far from precautionary – most shark species caught in ICCAT fisheries remain **completely unmanaged**. Highly threatened species continue to be landed and sold, commercially-caught species are fished without any limits, despite high uncertainty about their stock status, and efforts to prohibit the practice of shark finning rely on a weak, unenforceable Recommendation.

### At the 23<sup>rd</sup> Regular Meeting of the Commission, Oceana urges ICCAT Contracting Parties to:

1. Follow a stable path towards recovery of Eastern bluefin tuna, by maintaining the TAC at its current level until a new stock assessment takes place in 2015.
2. Assess and penalise non-compliance with shark data reporting requirements.
3. Require sharks to be landed with their **fins attached**, thereby closing long-standing loopholes in the ICCAT ban on shark finning.
4. Set science-based, precautionary catch limits for the major commercially fished shark species in ICCAT fisheries: **shortfin mako** and **blue sharks**.
5. Prohibit the retention, landing, and trade of highly threatened species, such as **porbeagles**.

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*Oceana campaigns to protect and restore the world's oceans. Our team of marine scientists, economists, lawyers and other collaborators are achieving specific changes in the legislation to reduce pollution and prevent the irreversible collapse of fish stocks, protect marine mammals and other forms of marine life. With a global perspective and devoted to conservation, Oceana has offices in Europe, North America, South America and Central America. Over 300,000 collaborators and cyber activists in 150 countries have already joined Oceana. For more information, visit [www.oceana.org](http://www.oceana.org)*