



Project AWARE

ICCAT 2017



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Ms. Siphokazi (Mpozi) Ndudane
Chief Director: Marine Resources Management
Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
South Africa

Dr. Khaled El-Hassani
Chairman
General Authority for Fish Resources Development (GAFRD)
Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation
Egypt

Mr. Chris Oliver
Assistant Administrator for Fisheries
National Marine Fisheries Service
United States

Dear Ms. Ndudane, Dr. El-Hassani and Mr. Oliver:

This booklet represents the 10,000 plus voices of scuba divers galvanized by Project AWARE and conservation partners in a shared effort to bring your attention to the critical decisions with respect to **shortfin mako sharks** taking place at the meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) (14-22 November in Marrakech, Morocco).

Project AWARE is an international non-profit ocean conservation organization supported by an extensive network of scuba divers around the world. Our constituents share a unique, underwater perspective on the value of keeping shark populations healthy. Working with a number of partner organizations around the world, we maintain a special focus on shark (and ray) conservation due in large part to the low reproductive capacity that leaves most of these species exceptionally vulnerable to overexploitation. Together, we work to promote shark fishing limits based on scientific advice and precautionary approach as well as compliance with best practices.

Shortfin makos are among the most vulnerable and valuable sharks taken in high seas fisheries and unlimited landings by top mako fishing countries have taken their toll on Atlantic populations. Over 10,000 scuba divers from around the world are calling on you - South Africa, Egypt and United States - to lead the way toward securing a ban on landing Atlantic makos before it's too late.

The new ICCAT population assessment for Atlantic shortfin mako sharks (*Isurus oxyrinchus*) has revealed alarming trends. In particular, the North Atlantic population has been significantly depleted, and overfishing continues. In order to have a reasonable chance (54% probability) of rebuilding by 2040, catches must be cut to zero. Accordingly, ICCAT's Standing Committee on Research and Statistics (SCRS) has recommended a "complete prohibition of retention" as an immediate step to stop overfishing and begin the long recovery. Measures to minimize mako discard mortality have also been advised, as additional, needed steps. High post-release survival rates (70%) make retention bans effective for dramatically reducing mako mortality. Although South Atlantic population status is less clear, a retention ban is prudent in the face of this uncertainty, especially in light of the species' vulnerability, enforcement challenges, and lessons from the North.

We count on your leadership to help secure an Atlantic-wide, complete prohibition on shortfin mako retention, and additional measures to minimize incidental mortality and improve data. **It's make or break time for makos. Please step up now.**

Sincerely,

Ania Budziak
Associate Director, Programs

Safeguarding sharks of the Atlantic and Mediterranean

Project AWARE and its conservation partners, Shark Advocates International, Shark Trust, and Ecology Action Centre, have formed the Shark League for the Atlantic and Mediterranean.

The sharks and rays of the Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean Sea are particularly beleaguered. International and domestic fisheries management improvements are urgently needed to protect these vulnerable species from overfishing and finning.

Our coalition aims to secure through RFMOs and follow-up national actions:

- **Shark and ray catch limits that align with scientific advice;**
- **Strict protections for endangered species; and**
- **Strong, enforceable bans on shark finning.**

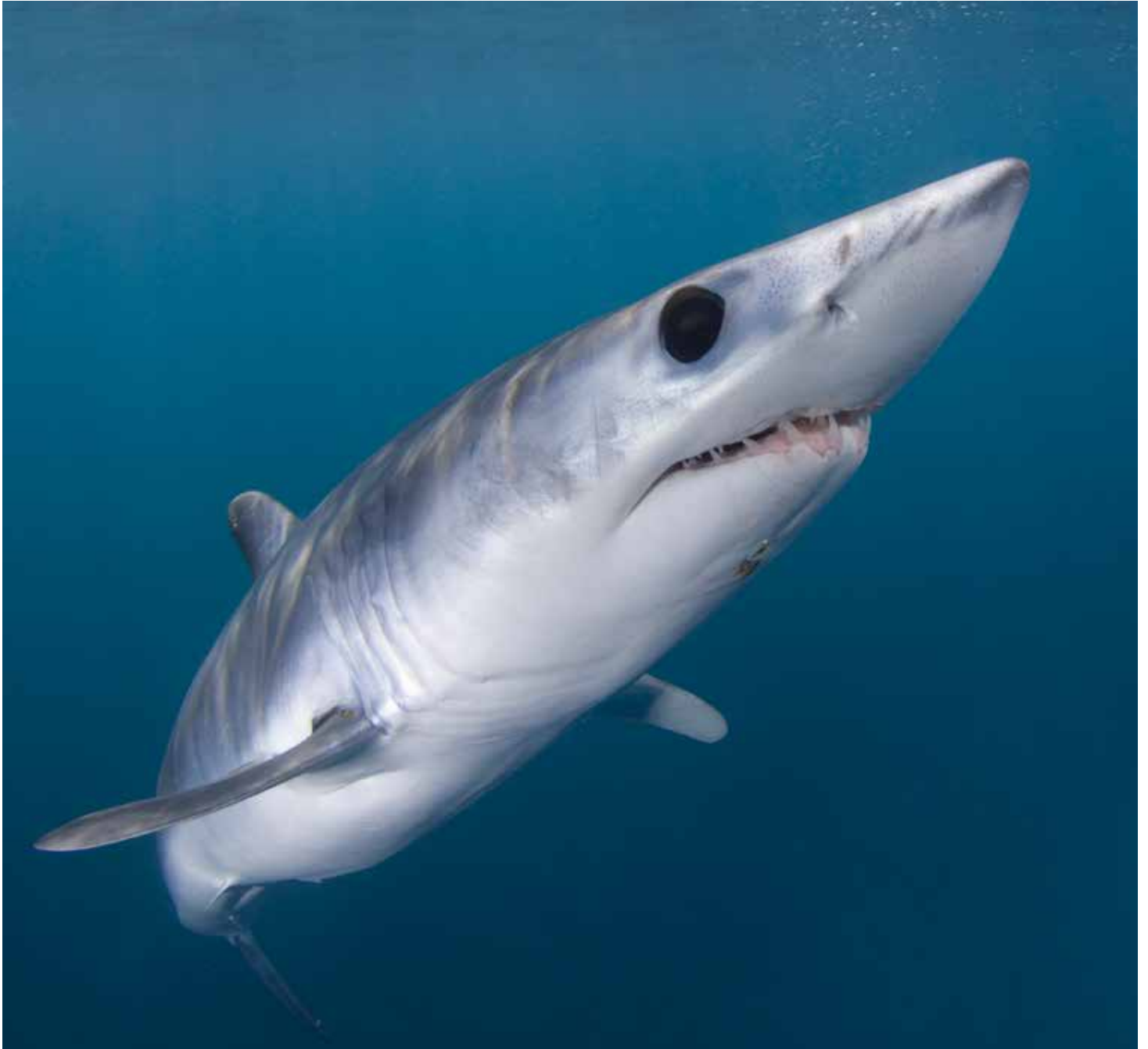


Photo by Andy Murch



We're urging ICCAT member countries to

heed scientific advice and ban retention, transshipment, and landings of makos at ICCAT's annual meeting this November 2017.



The IUCN considers the shortfin mako to be a threatened species, classifying it as globally “Vulnerable” on the IUCN Red List. Yet there are currently no international limits on the amount of makos that can be caught.

Photo by Andy Murch

Over 10,000 scuba divers and ocean advocates signed the #Divers4Makos Petition

“We call on ICCAT Parties to heed the science and ask Egypt, South Africa and the US to lead the way toward securing a ban on landing Atlantic makos before it’s too late. It’s make or break time for makos. Please step up now.”



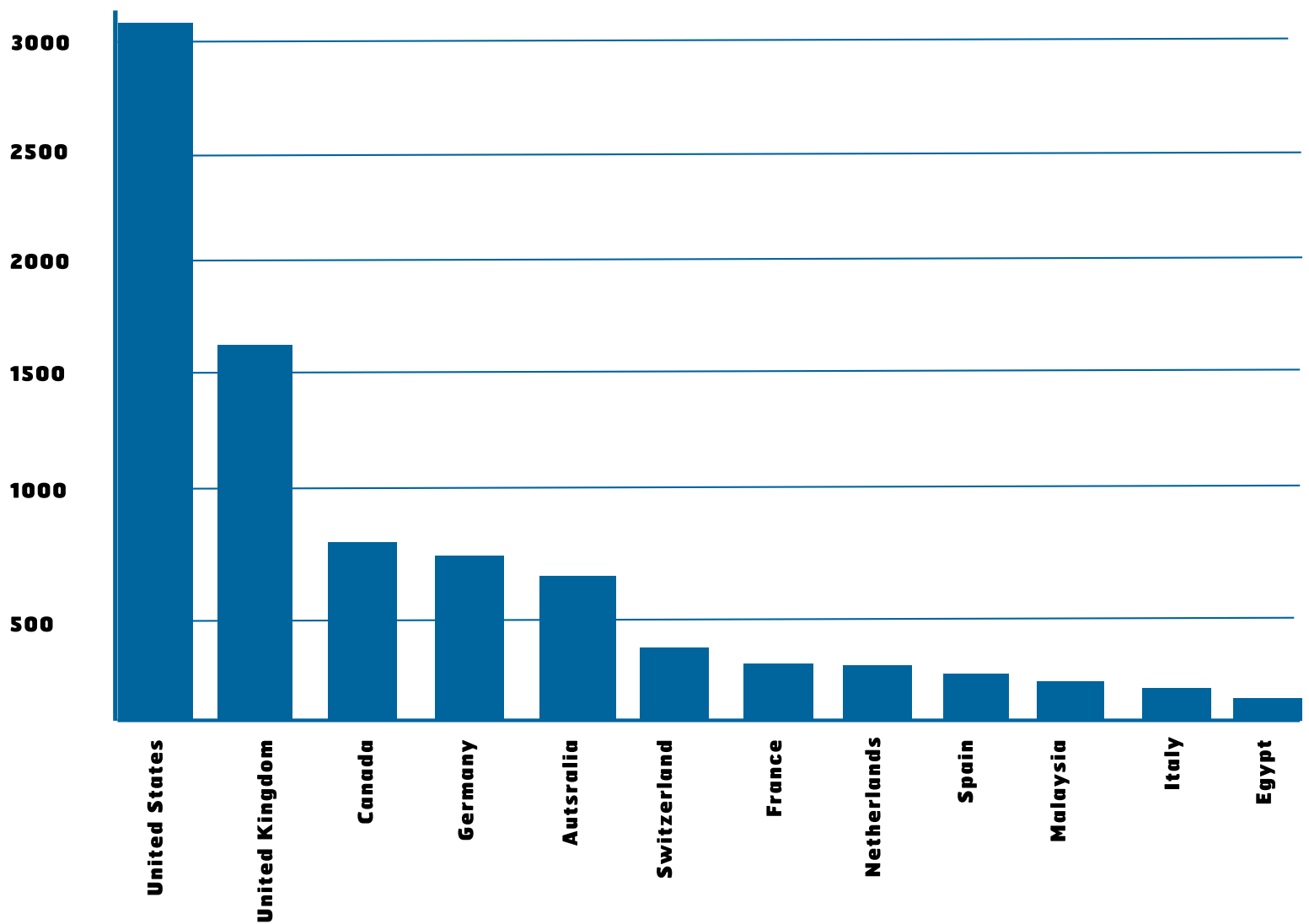
Divers at Rainbow Reef Dive Center, USA sign petition online

Divers from 130 Countries & Territories



10,830 signatures*

Top 10 Countries plus Egypt



*as of November 8, 2017



Although single mako populations are fished by multiple countries, there are no international limits on mako catch.



Photo by Andy Murch



Scientific evidence supports the case for immediate ICCAT limits on shortfin mako catch.



Scientists estimate that female shortfin makos don't mature until around age 18, are pregnant for up to 18 months, and usually give birth to just a dozen or so pups every three years. These life history characteristics leave them particularly vulnerable to overfishing.

Photo by Blue Shark Conservation / Katrien Vandevelde



Project AWARE is a global movement of changemakers taking action for ocean protection. We empower people to be agents of positive change for the ocean scaling local actions for global impact. Together, we rally community support, help implement policies to protect the most vulnerable marine species and take action - in and out of the water - to help save the ocean.

Project AWARE is a registered non-profit organization.



Shark Advocates International, Shark Trust, Ecology Action Centre, and Project AWARE have formed the Shark League for the Atlantic and Mediterranean, a coalition dedicated to responsible, science-based regional shark conservation.