

STATEMENT ON THE PROTECTION OF SHARKS

We, the undersigned, call on the governments of the Latin American region to step up their efforts to protect sharks before it is too late.

Every year, tens of millions of sharks are killed just for their fins, resulting in a dramatic global decline in populations. The fins are sliced off and they are then thrown back, often alive, into the ocean to die slowly. This cruel practice is known as shark "finning". The terrestrial equivalent of this would be capturing jaguars, cutting off their paws and leaving them to die. Humanity would never allow this to happen, yet sharks are victims of this practice, unseen and unrecorded, every day all over the world.

A particularly serious problem in the region is the presence of foreign fishing vessels crossing the waters of the eastern Pacific, taking advantage of our countries' inability to prevent this destructive activity.

As apex predators, sharks are indispensable, as they regulate the health of the oceans, helping to keep in balance the ecosystems that all marine life forms depend upon. The fishery sector will be the first to suffer when marine ecosystems collapse.

Sharks are also an important source of protein for impoverished coastal communities in the developing world. For them, the fact that shark fins are used to make an expensive soup in East Asia is no consolation for the fact that millions of shark carcasses lie wasted and unreachable at the bottom of the sea.

Sharks are worth far more alive than dead. In our countries, sharks attract millions of dollars in revenue from recreational diving. Each year, increasing numbers of divers are reporting a decline in shark sightings.

Thus,

- ? We call on our governments to act immediately to ensure that shark finning is stopped in our waters. Those countries that have led the way in adopting shark finning prohibitions should ensure that their law is enforced and that strong sanctions are imposed on violations. Those countries that have not yet legislated against shark finning should take the necessary steps towards adopting such laws as soon as possible.
- ? It is vital that all countries in the region play a much more prominent role in all international fora where decisions are made about shark conservation. We also request that OSPESCA and OLDEPESCA establish a regional agreement which commits each signatory country to impose penalties on shark finning.
- ? We call upon the governments of the world to ensure that their fishing fleets do not fin sharks and to impose meaningful penalties for violations.
- ? We call upon the governments of China, Hong Kong, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and all other nations where shark fin soup is consumed, to establish consumer education programmes and to encourage their citizens to consume more environmentally friendly products.
- ? We call upon the United Nations General Assembly, the European Union and all Regional Fisheries Management Organisations to remove weak or ambiguous language from their resolutions and to replace it with bold and proactive prohibitions on shark finning.

Shark finning is a global ecological outrage that has no place in the 21st century.

Humane Society International
Patricia Forkan

México

IEMANYA OCEANICA

Jorge Ramírez

El Salvador

FUNZEL

Carlos Hasbún

Asociación Barra de Santiago

Enriqueta Ramírez

Honduras

Utila Whale Shark Research

Steve Fox

Costa Rica

PRETOMA

Randall Arauz

MarViva

Vicky Cajiao

Humane Society International

Jennifer Felt

Panamá

ITEC / -UICN Grupo de especialista de tiburones

Carlos Ormond

Colombia

Fundación Malpelo

Rocío Rodríguez

Ecuador

Ambientalista

Deborah Chiriboga High