

Media Advisory



Shark Alliance Marks Milestone

Coalition poised to react to release of European Commission Shark Conservation Plan

Plan key to end overfishing, protect endangered species & strengthen finning ban

- Event:** Shark Alliance photo call to mark the release of the European Commission's long awaited *Plan of Action for the Conservation of Sharks* and comment on its provisions
- Host:** The Shark Alliance, a coalition of more than 60 conservation, scientific & recreational organisations dedicated to improving EU policies for sharks
- Date:** Thursday, February 5, 2009
- Time:** 1:30 – 2:30pm
- Location:** European Commission, Berlaymont Building, Brussels

Background:

Ten years ago, in response to growing concern of the serious depletion of shark populations around the world, governments of the United Nations adopted an *International Plan of Action for Sharks* and with it pledged to produce shark conservation plans for their waters. One year ago, the European Commission at last released their outline for the EU Shark Plan for consultation.

The Shark Alliance has supported the EU Plan's main aims to stop shark overfishing and improve related knowledge through stronger fishing regulations and new data collection initiatives. The coalition has worked to ensure that the Commission's final Shark Plan includes clear mandates for heeding scientific advice for fishing limits, protecting endangered species, applying wildlife treaties to sharks, and strengthening the EU ban on "finning" – the wasteful practice of cutting off a shark's fins and discarding the body to the sea. The Commission will unveil the final Plan on February 5.

Most sharks and closely related rays are particularly vulnerable to overfishing because of their slow growth and low reproductive rates. Roughly one-third of Europe's shark and ray species are threatened with extinction, according to IUCN. Europe is home to several important shark fishing nations, including Spain, Portugal, the UK and France. Currently, targeted shark fisheries in the EU are either unregulated or managed through excessive quotas. Loopholes make the existing EU finning ban the world's weakest.

EU Member State representatives are expected to agree Council Conclusions on the Shark Plan in April under the leadership of the Czech Republic. Some elements of the Plan may require new legislation.

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Available for interviews: