



European Shark Week Opens With Call to “Focus on Finning”

08.10.10: The Shark Alliance, a coalition of more than 100 conservation, scientific and recreational organisations is marking the start of the fourth annual European Shark Week by calling on Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) to help strengthen the European Union’s ban on finning—the wasteful practice of slicing off a shark’s fins and discarding the carcass at sea.

The current EU finning ban is among the weakest in the world, with loopholes that seriously hamper enforcement. The simplest, most effective way to implement a finning ban is to require that sharks be brought to port with their fins still connected to the body (“naturally attached”). In the European Parliament, concerned MEPs are gathering support from their colleagues for a Written Declaration that calls on the European Commission to include such a requirement in its forthcoming proposal for a revised regulation.

Over the coming week, aquariums, dive groups and conservation organisations in the United Kingdom, Italy, Germany, Malta, Spain, France, Belgium, Sweden, Finland, Poland, the Netherlands, Ireland and Portugal will host events and activities to encourage more MEPs to sign the Written Declaration.

“The ever-increasing interest in European Shark Week is bringing unprecedented opportunities to raise awareness and demonstrate concern about sharks,” said the PROTECT THE SHARKS FOUNDATION. “This year, European citizens are calling on their MEPs to ‘focus on finning’ and help prevent this incredibly wasteful practice.”

Sharks and rays are particularly vulnerable to overfishing because they generally grow slowly, mature late and produce few young. Most European populations of these species are overfished; a third are already threatened with extinction.

“As a leader in the global catch, consumption and trade of sharks, Europe has the duty to adopt sound shark conservation policies,” said Uta Bellion, director of the European Marine Programme of the Pew Environment Group and coordinator of the Shark Alliance’s European activities. “We are hopeful that the public support expressed through European Shark Week will encourage many elected representatives to take a stand to protect these important animals.”

For more information about European Shark Week, which runs from Saturday, October 9 through Saturday, October 16, visit www.europeansharkweek.org.