



CONSERVATION
INTERNATIONAL

September 30, 2004

Dr. Abel Pacheco de la Espriella
Presidente de la República
Casa Presidencial
San José, Costa Rica

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Honorable President of Costa Rica:

On behalf of Conservation International, we want to express our wholehearted appreciation for the vital support given by Costa Rica on the issue of a United Nations moratorium on high seas bottom trawling during the 5th UNICPOLOS meetings in New York, this past June. Mr. Randall Arauz, a special delegate sent by Carlos Manuel Rodriguez, Minister of the Environment and Energy, played a critical role in these meetings, bringing the issue to the forefront of discussions and encouraging other nations to support this position. We hope to be able to count on Mr. Arauz, MINAE and the nation of Costa Rica, again this coming autumn as the issue is brought forth to the UN General Assembly.

We recall with pleasure our meeting with you last February, and our discussion about marine protected areas for Costa Rica. Your decision to protect 25% of Costa Rica's Exclusive Economic Zone under a management regime in the near future, through the promulgation of the decree last June 9, is a very progressive step, especially in light of the Eastern Tropical Pacific Seascape shared among Costa Rica, Panama, Ecuador and Colombia. Without doubt, this action and your support of the high seas bottom trawling moratorium has strengthened Costa Rica's position as a global leader in marine conservation. This is of particular importance in the eastern Pacific, a region of great productivity and vast biological richness, especially for pelagic species, many such as leatherback turtles and pelagic sharks that are now critically endangered.

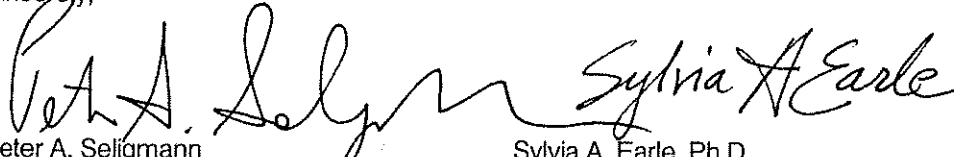
In this regard, we want to express our concern about current shark fishing practices in Costa Rica that are casting a shadow on your nation's highly regarded environmental standards. It is our understanding that Costa Rica's Customs Law Article 212 incise b), requires that the landing of fishery products by international flag vessels must occur only at officially habilitated docks. In spite of this, there are numerous reports of landings occurring at private docks, where official approval and control is not the norm. We urgently request that these private docks be shut down and that any legislation needed to permanently close them be passed by your administration. Furthermore, as shark finning is a cruel and wasteful practice, we urgently ask you to consider strengthening controls on this practice. In particular, we request that you modify regulation AJDIP/415 so that shark fins may not be landed separately from carcasses. The currently used ratio of 12.7% is unsubstantiated and seriously threatens the survival of shark species in your waters.



The legendary populations of hammerhead and other shark species so valuable for ecotourism as well as ecosystem health at Cocos Island and elsewhere within the Eastern Tropical Pacific are dangerously at risk. Full protection for all species is justified and would be widely applauded.

Your leadership and Costa Rica's pioneering efforts to conserve marine biodiversity on par with terrestrial ecosystems are setting new standards for the world, and we look forward to a long and fruitful relationship with you and your country to achieve enduring, favorable outcomes.

Sincerely,



The image shows two handwritten signatures in black ink. The signature on the left is for Peter A. Seligmann, and the signature on the right is for Sylvia A. Earle. Both signatures are fluid and cursive.

Peter A. Seligmann
Chairman of the Board and CEO

Sylvia A. Earle, Ph.D
Executive Director, Marine Programs Division

CC: Carlos Manuel Rodriguez (Ministro, MINAE), Russ Mittermeier