

CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES  
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA



Twenty-fourth meeting of the Animals Committee  
Geneva, (Switzerland), 20-24 April 2009

Conservation and management of sharks and stingrays

LINKAGES BETWEEN INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN SHARK FINS AND MEAT, AND ILLEGAL,  
UNREPORTED AND UNREGULATED FISHING

1. This document has been prepared by the Scientific Authority of Australia\*.
2. At its 14th meeting (The Hague, 2007) the Conference of the Parties determined that:

*The Animals Committee, in consultation with FAO, shall examine and report on linkages between the international trade in shark fins and meat and IUU shark fishing activities, including where possible:*

  - a) *the main species of sharks taken by IUU fishing; and*
  - b) *the relative importance of fins compared to meat in international trade arising from IUU fishing [Decision 14.117].*
3. At the 23rd meeting of Animals Committee in April 2008, the representative of Oceania (Dr Rod Hay) advised that in regards to document AC23 Doc. 15.3 (*Linkages between international trade in shark fins and meat and Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing*), Australia would be preparing a report. The Chair suggested asking the Standing Committee clearing house whether the Animals Committee should be involved in this, given that it seemed more of a technical or implementation issue. It was recommended deferring this matter until AC24, as the report commissioned by Australia would assist in making a decision.
4. Noting Australia's intention to undertake a review, the Animals Committee adopted the following recommendation:
  15. a) *Australia is encouraged to take into account available sources, including the outcomes of the forthcoming shark fisheries workshop of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the non-detriment findings workshop, when preparing its paper on IUU fishing for sharks, and to present this report at AC24 for further discussion;*

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\* *The geographical designations employed in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the CITES Secretariat or the United Nations Environment Programme concerning the legal status of any country, territory, or area, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The responsibility for the contents of the document rests exclusively with its author.*

5. Australia contracted TRAFFIC to research and analyse the linkages between the international trade in shark fins and meat, and IUU shark fishing activities, including identification of main shark species taken, and the relative importance of fins to meat (see report at website: [http://www.traffic.org/species-reports/traffic\\_species\\_fish30.pdf](http://www.traffic.org/species-reports/traffic_species_fish30.pdf)).
6. Since the completion of the TRAFFIC IUU report, the outcomes of the CITES Non-Detriment Findings workshop held in Mexico from 17-22 November 2008 ([http://www.conabio.gob.mx/institucion/cooperacion\\_internacional/TallerNDF/taller\\_ndf.html](http://www.conabio.gob.mx/institucion/cooperacion_internacional/TallerNDF/taller_ndf.html)), have become available, noting particular relevance in relation to the findings of the Fishes Working Group.
7. The findings from the FAO workshop on the 'Status, limitation and opportunities for improving the monitoring of shark fisheries and trade' held in Rome from 3-6 November 2008 were not available when preparing this Animals Committee document.
8. Based on available information sources the TRAFFIC report (see information documents) noted the following observations on the nature of IUU fishing for sharks:
  - a) illegal shark fishing is occurring globally but the available information suggests 'hot spots' are found off Central/South America and in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean;
  - b) most illegal fishing of sharks is carried out in national waters by both foreign and national vessels;
  - c) illegal foreign fishing of sharks in national waters often derives from neighbouring countries;
  - d) illegal foreign fishing can result from either unauthorised access or breaches of conditions of access;
  - e) most of the identified illegal fishing involves the retention of fins;
  - f) most of the reported instances and estimates of IUU shark fishing do not specify the species of sharks taken;
  - g) the most frequently cited species taken in illegal fishing are hammerhead sharks *Sphyrna* spp. and silky shark *Carcharhinus falciformis*; and
  - h) long-lining and gill-netting are the most frequently cited methods used in illegal shark fishing.
9. The TRAFFIC report noted that existing literature did not provide a sound basis to make judgements about:
  - a) the quantities of shark taken;
  - b) the relative impact of IUU fishing compared to legitimate fishing on shark populations; or
  - c) the relative impact of IUU fishing on different shark species.
10. Further, the TRAFFIC report stated that available information confirms that globally:
  - a) most shark stocks, apart from some in target shark fisheries, remain unmanaged;
  - b) the lack of, or poor, management arrangements in place for sharks, means that unsustainable, albeit not necessarily IUU fishing is occurring;
  - c) there is clear evidence that IUU fishing for sharks is occurring; and
  - d) the high value of fins to meat in trade is a clear driver for both legal and IUU fishing.
11. The analysis of the available information suggests that the key impediment to better understanding the catch and trade of sharks is lack of species-specific data on shark catch (landings and discards) and trade. Further, available catch, production and trade data are difficult to reconcile.
12. Australia provides this document and an information document for the consideration of Animals Committee in progressing its response to Decision 14.117.