

Technical workshop on Non-detriment Findings for specimens of Appendix-II species taken from areas beyond national jurisdiction

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Geneva, Switzerland

**Case study: applying scientific advice from Regional Fishery Bodies to develop a stock-specific NDF template for a CITES-listed shark species taken in ABNJs**

**Summary**

This document was prepared in response to Notification 2024/025, circulated under Decision 19.135. Parties, other governments, and stakeholders were invited to submit information on experiences in making non-detriment findings (NDFs) for specimens of CITES Appendix II-listed species taken from areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ), and to share any suggestions that they might have for improvements.

This discussion document presents information on the development of an e-NDF template for the North and South Atlantic stocks of Blue Shark (*Prionace glauca*), which has been prepared for the consideration of all Parties fishing these stocks, most of whom are members of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT, see Table 1). This e-NDF template incorporates the results of the stock assessment carried out by [the ICCAT Blue Shark Stock Assessment Meeting in July 2023](#); research, data collection and management recommendations developed at the [2023 ICCAT Standing Committee on Research and Statistics \(SCRS\) Species Group meeting](#), and ICCAT [Recommendations](#) for Blue Shark management formally adopted by the Commission since 2019.

**Background**

The CITES-listed oceanic sharks taken in ABNJ are shared stocks that may be caught by the fleets of numerous countries fishing on the high seas (ICCAT alone has >50 members), sometimes transhipped, introduced from the sea, and landed in these and other countries. Furthermore, the same stocks are also fished within Parties' national jurisdictions and, under bilateral or regional fisheries agreements, by fleets in other Parties' waters. It is widely recognised that Scientific Authorities preparing NDFs should ideally take into account all pressures upon the stock under consideration, including pressures beyond their national jurisdictions, and that fisheries bodies need to play a central role in implementing CITES for commercially-fished aquatic species. It is also recognised that some Parties have limited capacity and technical resources to carry out NDFs for aquatic species, and that a variety of regional initiatives could potentially address this issue if requested to do so by Parties (see [CITES Non-Detriment Findings Project](#)).

The [report of the 1<sup>st</sup> Joint tuna RFMO By-catch Working Group](#), held in 2019, recommended improving communication and cooperation between CITES and tuna-Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (t-RMFOs) to provide guidance and advice for the CITES listed species caught within the jurisdiction of each t-RFMO.

The third workshop held under the government of Germany's initiative for 'Improving synergies between Regional Fishery Bodies (RFBs) and CITES Authorities' discussed how RFBs (which include RFMOs and regional fishery advisory bodies – RFABs) could contribute to NDFs, recognising *inter alia* the links and complementarity between CITES NDF provisions and RFMO measures. Polling during the workshop identified strong support, and limited opposition, to exploring RFMO NDF contributions, including ensuring that accurate, updated and consistent datasets for CITES-listed species are made available from RFMOs to CITES Authorities. It was suggested that this would lead to strengthened and better-aligned NDFs across RFMO member States and could help ensure that NDFs were aligned with and did not exceed the conservation limits of shared stocks.

### **Blue Shark eNDF template**

The discussions summarised above have not included practical suggestions for how RFBs, including RFMOs such as ICCAT, and RFABs such as ICES, might in future contribute advice and data to CITES NDFs. This document summarises a pilot project that offers, for the consideration of Parties and the Technical workshop on NDFs in ABNJs, a case study of how this might be done.

This pilot project adapted an eNDF tool for sharks and rays, based on NDF guidance for sharks and rays developed in 2013-14, to prepare stock-specific templates for North and South Atlantic Blue Shark stocks. These templates incorporate the most recent data and projections compiled in 2023 by the ICCAT Blue Shark Data Preparatory Meeting, and the conclusions and recommendations from the Report of the 2023 ICCAT Blue Shark Stock Assessment Meeting.

Figure 1 (appended) presents the flow chart illustrating the shark and ray NDF process developed in 2013-14, which is also applied by the eNDF tool. The Atlantic Blue Shark templates include, to the extent possible, stock-specific data and management measures in these sections:

#### Step 2: Biology and status

2.1: Intrinsic biological vulnerability to harvest.

2.2: Conservation concern.

#### Step 3: Pressures

3.1: Fishing pressures (as evaluated by the ICCAT stock assessment workshop).

3.2: Trade pressure data are provided where available, recognising that these vary between CITES Parties.

Step 4: Existing management measures requires information on measures in place – these are provided in the template where they apply to the entire stock (e.g. ICCAT Recommendations). Parties can add national or other regional measures to this section.

Step 5: The NDF decision is left blank for completion by Scientific Authorities.

Step 6: Mitigation measures/NDF conditions includes prompts for actions identified in the Recommendations formally adopted by meetings of the ICCAT Commission, *inter alia* improvements in data collection and management, the stock-specific 2023 recommendations of ICCAT's Shark Species Group and the Standing Committee on Research and Statistics, and more generic fisheries and trade management measures for Scientific Authorities to consider.

The aim is to provide Scientific Authorities of the many Parties that fish and need to develop NDFs for Atlantic Blue Sharks with a standardised, up-to-date, source of information, so that they do not all need to undertake their own detailed research. This should also ensure that NDFs are consistent across each stock.

If Parties find this approach useful, they could formally request that the relevant RFBs provide similar information for other shared stocks of CITES-listed species.

### Acknowledgements

Development of [NDF guidance for shark species](#) and the online [e-NDF tool](#) (user manual available [here](#)) was supported by the Government of Germany. Development of the Atlantic Blue Shark eNDF templates was supported by the Shark Conservation Fund.

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**Table 1. ICCAT Contracting and Cooperating Parties** (source: [FAO website](#))

<b>Members:</b>			<b>Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties:</b>
Albania	Ghana	Philippines	Bolivia (Plurinat.State)
Algeria	Grenada	Korea, Republic of	Costa Rica
Angola	Guatemala	Russian Federation	Colombia
Barbados	Guinea	Saint Vincent/Grenadines	Niger
Belize	Honduras	Sao Tome and Principe	Guyana
Brazil	Iceland	Senegal	Suriname
Canada	Japan	Sierra Leone	
Cabo Verde	Liberia	South Africa	
China	Libya	Syrian Arab Republic	
Côte d'Ivoire	Morocco	Trinidad and Tobago	
Curaçao	Mauritania	Tunisia	
Egypt	Mexico	Türkiye	
El Salvador	Namibia	United Kingdom	
Equatorial Guinea	Nicaragua	United States of America	
European Union	Nigeria	Uruguay	
France	Norway	Vanuatu	
Gabon	Panama	Venezuela (Boliv Rep of)	

Figure 1. Flow chart illustrating NDF process

