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04 April 2002

Dr. Marinus S. Hoogmoed
Chairman, CITES Animals Committee
Nationaal Natuurhistorisch Museum
Postbus 9517
2300 RA Leiden
The Netherlands

Dear Dr Hoogmoed,

As the Fisheries Department Focal Point for the FAO's *International Plan of Action for the Management and Preservation of Sharks* (IPOA – Sharks) I am writing to advise you of our current activities relating to the Plan's implementation.

In describing these activities I should note that the Plan encourages member countries to draw up and implement their own plans for the conservation of national elasmobranch resources. It also provides guidelines for the formulation and execution of national plans by FAO's member countries. It had been hoped that additional financial resources would be made available to the FAO to support member countries in the implementation of these plans. However, the support that has been received (which is only from Japan) has permitted us to only address general elasmobranch issues and those at a global level, though we believe that these are still of much importance. Though at present the FAO has no specific programme for providing support to IPOAs at national levels, some limited funds have been made available from the Japanese-funded programme in anticipation of assisting three West African countries with starting the process of drafting national plans of action for elasmobranch management. But, more widely, the process of Plan formulation and implementation must depend on means and resources provided at the respective national levels.

The Fisheries Department can provide some technical assistance through our Regular Programme and HQ-based projects, mostly through the provision of information, manuals, species identification guides (information on achievements of this programme is given on the attachment to this letter) and the related documents we produce. Further, we can advise on technical issues Governments may encounter in formulating their national plans. In these cases we may be able to fund a visit by a Departmental staff member, or a consultant, to assist in formulating and, or, implementing such plans.

The FAO's activities to date have mainly been undertaken in response to the proposals of the Technical Working Party on Conservation and Management of Elasmobranchs, which was held in April 1998 in Tokyo, Japan. As a consequence, a series of elasmobranch-related publications have been produced, most importantly the guidelines on management of shark fisheries. The references for these FAO publications are noted on the attachment.

FAO is in the process of expanding the information on its Web Site to include a list of experts in various fields relating to elasmobranchs, our publications and news about IPOA-Sharks raised at meetings of our Committee on Fisheries (COFI). Some of this information is directly accessible through the web the page address (www.fao.org/fi/ipa/manage.asp). Information on national presentations concerning IPOA-Sharks given at the 24th session of the COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES (COFI) is posted at http://www.fao.org/docrep/meeting/003/X9187E.htm#P78_9028. It notes that

“A first assessment of the status of shark stocks has been conducted by a number of countries and a few countries indicated that a national shark plan would be completed before the Twenty-fourth Session of COFI in 2001. The EC reported that it had not undertaken the assessment but it is hoped a Community plan will be prepared in 2001. Thailand also indicated that an NPOA-sharks would be available before COFI in 2001.”

The following countries were reported to have undertaken some form of activity in relation to national shark management plans: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, Cuba, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ecuador, Gambia, Indonesia, Japan, Peru, Philippines, Seychelles and the USA.

I trust that this information is of use. I would be happy to provide any further information possible should it be required.

Yours sincerely,

R. Shotton
Focal Point for the FAO IPOA – Sharks
Marine Resources Service

FIRM/SIDP Activity Related To The Production of Elasmobranchs Species Identification Documents

Catalogue of sharks of the world.

A revised and expanded version of the catalogue "Sharks of the World" is being published as part of FAO-SIDP's Species Catalogues for Fishery Purposes. The original catalogue published in 1984 covered 342 species and was published in two volumes. The new catalogue will include 480 species (an increase of about 37%) and will be published in three volumes. Improvements in the new catalogue include two-colour GIS maps of distribution, fully illustrated keys of identification for all groups and improved illustrations of all species.

The first volume finished (in fact Volume II) is to be released in February 2002. The author is working on the preparation of the other two volumes and the text for Volume I is expected to be ready for proof reading by the middle of 2002, while Volume III should be ready towards the end of 2002 or early 2003.

Catalogue of batoid of the world.

A meeting is scheduled in Paris from 12 to 23 March 2002, to plan a new catalogue of batoids of the world. The meeting will be attended by five leading specialists in the taxonomy of this fish groups. The meeting will determine the contents of the entire catalogue, which will have three volumes, and make detailed plans for the preparation of volume I, including the list of species and guidelines for authors and a list of potential contributors.

Field Guide of Elasmobranchs of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.

A Field Guide of Elasmobranchs of the Red Sea, consisting of 44 species of sharks and 32 species of rays, is ready for desktop publishing and printing. It is expected to be ready for distribution in the second half of 2002. The presentation follows the same as other similar FAO field guides with two or three species shown per page.

Field Guide of Elasmobranchs of the Mediterranean.

A Field Guide of Elasmobranchs of the Mediterranean is in preparation as requested by GFCM with the support of the COPEMED project. The field guide is aiming at identifying the Elasmobranchs species and will have the same form of presentation as the other guides. It will have two or three species per page. The text will be in English and include a brief paragraph on the fishery and the relevant conservation status. It will include 85 species.

The sources used for the guide will mainly be the "Guide d'identification des ressources vivantes du Maroc", the Field identification guide to Sharks and Rays of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden and the Catalogue of sharks of the world, currently being revised by L. Compagno. The delivery of the manuscript is expected by mid 2002.

Recent Publications by the Fisheries Department of the FAO Relating to Management of Elasmobranchs Fisheries

- FAO 1994. Overview of world elasmobranch fisheries. Tech. Rep. No. 341. 119pp.
- FAO 1999. A preliminary evaluation of the status of shark species. Tech. Rep. No. 380. 720pp.
- FAO 1999. Case Studies on the Management of Elasmobranch Fisheries. Tech. Rep. No. 378. Vols 1 & 2. 920pp.
- FAO 1999. Shark utilization, marketing and trade. Tech. Rep. No. 389. 470pp. 920pp.
- FAO Marine Resources Service. Fisheries Management 1. Conservation and Management of Sharks. FAO Technical Guidelines for Responsible Fisheries No. 4. Suppl. 1. 37pp. Rome, FAO Rome 2000. 37pp.