

Conservation and Management of Sharks

This document has been submitted by the United States of America.

1. CoP13 Doc. 35, submitted by the Animals Committee on the conservation and management of sharks, provides a thorough analysis and update on the tasks assigned in Decisions 12.47, 12.48, 12.49, and 11.151 and Resolution 12.6. The Animals Committee and the Parties have worked diligently since CoP9 to examine and address the state of international, regional, and national shark management.
2. In addition, the Fisheries Department of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has provided extensive support, cooperation, and expertise in intersessional CITES discussions of shark conservation for the last 10 years. This collaboration is welcomed by the CITES Parties, and should be expanded in the future to facilitate shark conservation internationally.
3. Among other tasks, the Decisions mentioned above and Res. Conf. 12.6 direct the Animals Committee to evaluate progress on implementing the FAO International Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks (IPOA-Sharks), identify key threatened shark taxa, and make species-specific recommendations on improving the conservation status and the regulation of international trade in these species.
4. Doc. 35 reports on each of tasks above, but also advocates (in Annex 3) a suite of new Decisions directed to the Parties, the Animals Committee, and the Secretariat to advance this work in the CITES forum. These Decisions *inter alia* codify the species-specific recommendations from the Animals Committee, and call for an intersessional CITES workshop on a variety of topics related to sharks before COP14.
5. Given the budget constraints currently placed on the Parties, the Secretariat, and the Animals Committee, and the fact that most sharks are not listed in the CITES Appendices, it is questionable whether adoption of the draft decisions in Annex 3 of Doc. 35 will be effective or pragmatic. It is also questionable whether the Decisions would reach enough appropriate fisheries agencies and fishery management organizations, since relevant range states are not identified in the Decisions.
6. With the adoption of Res. Conf. 12.6, and inclusion of three shark species in the CITES Appendices, it is clear that a majority of Parties are concerned about the lack of effective management and conservation of sharks. However, the CITES treaty is not designed or intended to implement management measures for the roughly 1,100 other species of chondrichthyan (shark-like) fishes not included in the CITES Appendices. Thus, it is also clear that any discussion of shark conservation and management must involve appropriate fisheries management agencies, regional fisheries management organizations (RFMO's), and FAO.
7. The draft Decisions found in Annex 1 of this document are intended to provide a different and potentially more effective means to address shark conservation than those found in Annex 3 of CoP13 Doc. 35. It is recommended that the attached Decisions be adopted in lieu of those found in Doc. 35.

DRAFT DECISIONS OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

Directed to the Secretariat

13.xx The Secretariat shall:

- a) Coordinate with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Parties, and other institutions to obtain funding to support a technical consultation of relevant experts on the conservation and management of sharks;
- b) Request FAO to convene before COP14 a technical consultation on conservation and management of sharks *inter alia* to consider: 1) progress with implementation of the IPOA-Sharks; 2) efficacy of national, regional, and international management measures for sharks; 3) species-specific recommendations to conserve and manage highly threatened species of sharks in international trade; and 4) means to develop, adopt, and implement new international instruments and regional agreements for the conservation and management of sharks of the high seas, pelagic shark species, and straddling shark stocks.
- c) Encourage FAO to invite CITES Secretariat staff, the Animals Committee, representatives of major shark-fishing nations, and relevant bodies including FAO, Regional Fishery Management Organizations, the fishing industry, scientists and other experts to the technical consultation; and
- d) Consider with the FAO Secretariat means to establish ongoing intersessional dialog and consultation on the topics in paragraph (b) above and Res. Conf. 12.6;

13.xx The Secretariat shall distribute the species-specific recommendations found in CoP13 Doc. 35 Annex 2 to FAO and the appropriate Parties and Regional Fishery Management Organizations after identifying range states and institutions responsible for managing the species in question.

Directed to the Parties

13.xx Parties that are member states of FAO should encourage their delegations to the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) to actively support the concept of a technical consultation on the conservation and management of sharks.