

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



Thirty-second meeting of the Animals Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 19 – 23 June 2023

Species specific matters

Aquatic species

SHARKS AND RAYS (ELASMOBRANCHII SPP.)

Membership (as decided by the Committee)

- Co-Chairs: representative for Central and South America and the Caribbean (Mr. Gongora) and representative for Oceania (Mr. Robertson);
- Members: alternate representative for Africa (Mr. Diouck),
- Parties: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, European Union, Germany, India, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, Malaysia, Maldives, Namibia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Panama, Peru, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, Spain, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, United States of America; and
- IGOs and NGOs: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, International Union for Conservation of Nature, Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center, Bloom Association, Blue Resources Trust, Defenders of Wildlife, Florida International University, Global Guardian Trust, Humane Society International, International Fund for Animal Welfare, IWMC-World Conservation Trust, OCEANA, Save our Seas Foundation, Shark Advocates International, Shark Trust, TRAFFIC, Wildlife Conservation Society, World Wide Fund for Nature, Zoological Society of London.

Mandate

The Committee established an in-session working group on sharks and rays with the mandate to:

- a) consider document AC32 Doc. 37 (Rev) and the scientific elements in its Annexes, the information on Elasmobranchii spp. in document AC32 Doc. 14.2 and any other relevant information, and
- b) make recommendations, if necessary, on whether any species should be considered under the species selection process for the Review of Significant Trade;
- c) identify information pertinent to the development of guidance on non-detriment findings for sharks and rays, taking into account the ongoing or planned worked described in document AC32 Doc. 37 (Rev. 1), paragraph 11 and 12;
- d) identify information on gaps and needs for the identification of CITES-listed shark-products in trade;
- e) review capacity needs identified by Parties, especially as it relates to assisting developing countries and small island developing states, in the implementation of the Convention for sharks and rays with a particular focus on the species included at the 19th meeting of the Conference of Parties; and

- e) draft recommendations for consideration by the Animals Committee and submission to the Standing Committee as appropriate.

Recommendations

1. The working group recommends the Animals Committee in-session working group on Review of Significant Trade (RST) in Specimens of Appendix-II Species to consider the following ranked list of species/country combinations for inclusion in Stage 2 of RST:
 1. Oceanic Whitetip shark (*Carcharhinus longimanus*) –Yemen
 2. Oceanic Whitetip shark (*Carcharhinus longimanus*) – Oman
 3. Scalloped hammerhead (*Sphyrna lewini*) – China
 4. Scalloped hammerhead (*Sphyrna lewini*) – Mexico
 5. Giant devil ray (*Mobula mobular*) – Sri Lanka
 6. Great hammerhead (*Sphyrna mokarran*) – Mexico
 7. Oceanic manta ray (*Mobula birostris*) – Sri Lanka

The working group recommends the Animals Committee:

Non-detriment findings (paragraph c) of mandate)

2. invite Parties to submit new non-detriment findings (NDFs) to the Secretariat, including negative NDFs, to be posted on the CITES website.
3. draw to the attention of Parties that export sharks and rays on the availability of the useful eNDFs tool¹, to facilitate the preparation of NDFs with associated conditions, if necessary, and enable NDFs to be standardized between Parties to the extent appropriate.
4. encourage Parties that catch and trade in relevant shark species to engage and provide input into the implementation of Decisions 19.135 to 19.139 on *Non-detriment findings for specimens of Appendix-II species taken from areas beyond national jurisdiction*.
5. encourage Parties to use genomics methodologies to assist with stock assessments, including close-kin-mark-recapture techniques.

Species identification (paragraph d) of mandate)

6. urge Parties and relevant stakeholders to develop artificial intelligence, genetic and isotopic tools for the identification of shark and ray species, parts and derivatives and their geographic origins at various stages in the supply chain.
7. invite Parties and organizations to submit genetic sequences of sharks and rays from voucher specimens or scientific studies to open access databases such as the Barcode of Life Data Systems (BOLD) and the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI), taking into consideration FAO's report on Genetic Technologies for Fisheries and Aquaculture.²

Capacity needs (paragraph e) of mandate)

8. urge Parties to consider including a broader range of sectors in their capacity building activities, including fishers, media, law enforcement officers, members of the judicial system and other relevant entities.

Other relevant issues

9. consider the circumstances in which it would be appropriate for the RST process to include country/species combinations at a higher taxonomic level or broader geographic scope.

¹ <https://user.cites-endf.org>

² <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cc1236en;%20>

10. encourage national CITES Authorities to collaborate with national fisheries authorities to validate shark and ray landings and international trade (species, volumes, etc.).
11. encourage Parties to inform the Secretariat of any voluntary export quotas, including any zero export quotas, negative NDFs and national prohibitions on catch for sharks and rays to further facilitate general compliance with CITES and enforcement by all participants in the trade.
12. note the importance of biological data for informing shark and ray stock assessments and the transport of scientific samples and support for scientific research should be enabled even in the case where a negative NDF is issued and there is a consequent negative opinion for permitting trade.
13. note that in the RST process a limited number of species/country combinations are chosen; however for CITES-listed sharks that are highly mobile and/or have shared stocks managed at the regional level by a single Regional Fisheries Management Organization, the RST process could be more effective if focused on a larger grouping of Parties, including on an ocean basin-wide basis.
14. invite Parties to respond to the Notification referred to in paragraph 16 a) and to Notification to the Parties No.2023/050 on *Request for information on non-detriment findings for specimens of Appendix-II species taken from areas beyond national jurisdiction*.
15. invite the Standing Committee to:
 - a) urge Parties to report the trade of sharks and rays using the preferred terms and units (as identified in the latest Guidelines for the preparation and submission for CITES annual reports) at the species level and consider the addition of taxon-specific terms to assist in the reporting;
 - b) consider implications of the limited number of species-specific HS codes available under the WCO's Harmonized System (HS);
 - c) request that Parties adopt more comprehensive national classifications based on WCO's HS Nomenclature;
 - d) urge Parties to use the available HS codes when reporting trade in the annual trade reports;
 - e) consider the development of new digital reporting and traceability mechanisms; and
 - f) consider the appropriate use of pre-Convention permitting for different shark and ray product types.
16. invite the Secretariat to:
 - a) issue another Notification to the Parties as mandated in Decision 19.224 paragraph a) and report on the responses received to the next meeting of the Animals Committee;
 - b) consider the issues raised regarding the apparent mismatch between the trade in products of CITES-listed sharks recorded in the CITES Trade Database and what would be expected against the information available on catches of listed species in information document AC32 Inf. 3 when implementing Decision 19.223 paragraph c); and
 - c) consider the feasibility of including the addition of catch locations, at a minimum by ocean basin, of sharks and rays in the annual reports and the amendment of the Guidelines for the preparation and submissions for CITES annual reports.