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

Thirty-third meeting of the Animals Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 12 – 19 July 2024

FEEDBACK FROM MEXICO ON REVIEW OF SIGNIFICANT TRADE IN SPECIMENS OF APPENDIX-II SPECIES FOR *SPHYRNA LEWINI* AND *SPHYRNA MOKARRAN*

This information document has been submitted by Mexico in relation to agenda item 14.3.*

---

* *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.*

Feedback from Mexico to document AC33 Doc. 14.3 on Review of Significant Trade in specimens of Appendix-II species [Resolution Conf. 12.8 (Rev. CoP87)] for *Sphyrna lewini and Sphyrna mokarran* from Mexico.

Document AC33 Doc. 14.3 presented by the CITES Secretariat highlights that Mexico should be commended for the implementation of a strong management framework for the species in order to comply with Article IV for both species (paragraph 10 and Annex 2).

Also, UNEP-WCMC's report on Annex 2 of document AC33 Doc. 14.3 indicates that "Mexico could be invited to provide a progress report on the update of its NPOA-Sharks and the introduction of a more refined model to calculate sustainable export levels".

In this regard, Mexico shares the following information for consideration by the Animals Committee:

1. Progress on NPOA-Sharks updates:

The first edition of the National Action Plan for the Management and Conservation of Sharks, Rays and Related Species in Mexico (PANMCT) was published by CONAPESCA-INP in 2004 (https://www.inapesca.gob.mx/portal/Publicaciones/Libros/2004-Conapesca-INP-Plan-de-accion-tiburones.pdf?download). The second edition is currently in the process of being published and is estimated to be available by the third quarter of 2024.

This document is an instrument elaborated through four workshops with the contributions of different stakeholders involved in the harvest and conservation of these species including: fisheries authorities, the Mexican Institute for Research in Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture (IMIPAS, formerly INAPESCA), National Aquaculture and Fisheries Commission (CONAPESCA), and representatives of the productive, academic and civil society sectors. The PANMCT contains guidelines that contribute to ordering and optimizing the use of sharks, rays and related species in waters under Mexican jurisdiction and their purpose is supported by the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (1995).

Through the second edition of the PANMCT, a set of action lines are proposed for its effective implementation, which will be addressed with the execution of five programs based on: 1) research, 2) information systems, 3) dissemination, education and training, 4) inspection and surveillance and 5) interinstitutional and intersectoral collaboration.

The report by UNEP-WCMC (Annex 2 of document AC33 Doc. 14.3) mentions the evaluation conducted by Pacoureau et al. (2023) to the first edition of the PANMCT, which rated this instrument with a value of 11.5 (in a scale of 20), and which considered that no actions or plans had been established for seven of the objectives of the IPOA-Sharks. These are addressed through the second edition of the PANMCT as follows:

1. *Ensure that shark catches from targeted and non-targeted fisheries are sustainable.*
2. *Identify and pay special attention, in particular, to vulnerable or threatened shark populations.*
    - After the publication of the first edition of the PANMCT in 2004, a solid regulatory framework has been adopted and implemented to guarantee sustainable use of

sharks (see Mexico's response in Annex 1 of document AC33 Doc. 14.3) for which Mexico has been recognized for its management.

- Likewise, Various studies, projects, workshops and evaluations have been carried out to estimate sustainable levels of capture and export, several of them documented in publications (see response from Mexico) such as:
  - Castillo-Géniz and Tovar-Ávila 2016, *Mexican sharks of fishing importance in CITES*;
  - Tovar-Ávila and Castillo-Géniz 2021, M*exican sharks of fishing importance in CITES Part II*.
    - It is worth mentioning that these publications present the information published by IMIPAS on the biology, populations and conservation of *S. lewini* and *S. sphyrna*, including vulnerability levels in the Pacific, sizes and abundance indices of both species in the Mexican fisheries on both coast lines, and the most updated estimates of catches according to historical reconstructions and their maximum sustainable yield (MSY).
  - Book published by CONABIO jointly with experts of IMIPAS and CICESE (Sosa-Nishizaki *et al.* 2022) *Conservation, use and sustainable harvest of Mexican sharks listed in CITES*, which presents the global biological and population information of the species, and which was the basis for estimating the Sustainable Export Volumes (VES).
- Additionally, the second edition of the PANMCT considers Actions 1. "Prepare a list of priority species to carry out population assessments", 3. "Identify and evaluate risks to populations, with emphasis on priority species", and 5. "Evaluate the status of shark and ray populations, with emphasis on priority species", from which future efforts will be prioritized.

3. *Minimize unused bycatch of sharks.* It is addressed through Actions 12 "Describe the fleets and fishing gear used in directed and incidental sharks and rays fisheries (consider fishing regions and seasons), to evaluate the interaction between fisheries"; 13. "Assess the bycatch of sharks and rays in other fisheries and the bycatch of other species in fisheries targeting sharks and rays," and 14. "Conduct studies to establish bycatch quotas or to review existing quotas for sharks and rays in other fisheries and other species in fisheries directed at sharks and rays."
   - It is important to mention that since 2006-2007, various actions have been carried out to promote the conservation and sustainable use of these species, established in NOM-029-PESC-2006 on Responsible Fishing for Sharks and Rays, specifications for their use (DOF, 14 /02/2007) and in resolutions that Mexico abides by derived from the RFMOs regarding the minimization of incidental species.

4. Contribute to the protection of biodiversity, structure and function of ecosystems. It is addressed through Actions 16. "Define the methodology to identify and evaluate critical habitats"; 17. "Estimate sharks and rays habitat use (with emphasis on critical habitat)"; and 18. "Generate and integrate information by region on the food webs and fisheries that impact them, for use in ecological models that evaluate the impact of fishing on the ecosystem."
   - Additionally, various actions have been established and implemented in NOM-029-PESC-2006 Responsible fishing for sharks and rays, specifications for their use (DOF, 02/14/2007), in the Sharks and Rays Fisheries Management Plan of the Gulf of Mexico (DOF, 06/09/2022), in the Shark Files of the National Fishing

Charter (DOF, 07/26/2022 and 07/21/2023) and various regulatory agreements for the establishment of closed seasons for these species on both coast lines of the country (DOF, 06/11/2012 and 05/14/2014), the Conservation Program for Species at Risk, the Action Program for the Conservation of Species (PACE) for Sharks and Rays within Natural Areas Protected.

5. *Minimize waste and discards from shark catches in accordance with Article 7.2.2.(g) of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (for example, by requiring the retention of sharks which fins have been removed)*. This point is addressed by the specific objectives of the 2004 PANMCT (CONAPESCA-INP, 2004) with the actions of "Minimize bycatch of sharks, rays and related species in other fisheries; Minimization of waste and discards from capture."
    - Likewise, various actions have been established and implemented in NOM-029-PESC-2006 Responsible fishing for sharks and rays, specifications for their use (DOF, 02/14/2007), including the prohibition of "finning" (the exclusive use of the fins of any species of shark is prohibited; in no case may shark fins be brought in if the bodies are not found on board).

6. *Encourage full use of dead sharks*. It is addressed through Action 23. "Promote the improvement of quality and entire use of products derived from the capture of sharks and rays" and has been addressed through the promotion of the complete use of sharks.
    - Likewise, through NOM-029-PESC-2006 Responsible fishing for sharks and rays, specifications for their use (DOF, 02/14/2007), which establishes in its section 4.2.1. All shark specimens must be retained on board commercial fishing vessels for their whole use (https://www.dof.gob.mx/nota_detalle.php?codigo=5381585&fecha=11/02/2015#gsc.tab=0),

7. *Facilitate the identification and notification of biological and commercial data specific to each species*. This action has been attended to since the first edition of the PANMCT in 2004 (CONAPESCA-INP, 2004) through the "Dissemination, Education and Training Program" with workshops and training courses on the use of shark identification guides and the use of information and data records on catches and fishing effort (fishing logs and arrival notices) made by institutions and organizations at the national level. These actions are also strengthened in the second edition of the PANMCT.

2. Introduction of a more refined model to calculate sustainable export levels.

The Sustainable Export Volumes (VES) that Mexico currently uses as a basis for issuing Non-Detriment Findings (NDF) constitute the best scientific information available to determine the sustainable export of *S. lewini* and *S. mokarran*. The data and methods used to estimate VES are detailed in Mexico's response available in Annex 1 of document AC33 Doc. 14.3.

Since 2019, an intersectoral working group was formed which is composed of experts from CITES Authorities, fisheries authorities, universities and research centers, and civil society, to develop a strategy that allows strengthening the estimation of reference parameters to build up knowledge about the state of the population. Currently, a work plan is being

implemented in the medium and long term to refine the information, analysis and models used to estimate Sustainable Export Volumes (VES):

- During the 2nd international expert workshop on Non-Detriment Findings (NDFs; Nairobi, Kenya: 4-8 December, 2023), Mexico presented a proposal for evaluating the quality of information for the formulation of NDF (Figure 1) and its application for NDF of *S. lewini*, which constitutes a self-diagnosis tool for Scientific Authorities on the type of information and analysis that can be carried out progressively for the development of robust NDF. This progression is what is being followed in the case of the estimation of VES in Mexico. It is worth mentioning that several elements of the proposal from Mexico were reflected in the results of the 2nd Workshop (see document AC33 Doc. 16, module 2) where the quality and technical capacity of the NDF issued by the CITES Scientific Authority of Mexico was also recognized.
- In this sense, it is contemplated to refine the evaluations carried out previously (prior to 2022; reconstruction of catches and Maximum Sustainable Yield models):
    - The databases will continue to be updated with catch information from arrival notices that contain information on the specific composition by common name. Likewise, this information will be complemented with data on sharks and dogfish (*cazón*) catches, which is not divided by species, from the Fisheries Statistical Yearbooks published annually by CONAPESCA. The information that has been published since then, consisting of relevant publications on data on catches used and proportions by species, will be considered to strengthen the reconstruction of historical catches (scientific articles, reports, technical reports, books, theses, among others) and increase the confidence level. Based on this information, we will continue updating the reconstruction of specific catches for *S. lewini* and *S. mokarran*.
    - Determine anchor points in the catch series using the results of the CPUE analysis estimated with data from on board observer programs or at landing sites by IMIPAS. The estimate will be based on the version of Cmsy that uses a Bayesian Schaefer surplus production model recommended by Froese et al. (2017).
    - Also using information from on board observer programs or at landing sites, catch length composition data will be compiled and an age-structure model will be developed. This will allow us to have the result of two models and a better appreciation of the estimates.
    - Sustainable use scenarios will be generated from the updated estimates with the modeling variants explained in the previous points to refine and strengthen the sustainable export volumes (VES).
    - These exercises will be carried out, as on previous occasions, through expert workshops where the available information will be analyzed, estimates will be made, and the results will be validated.

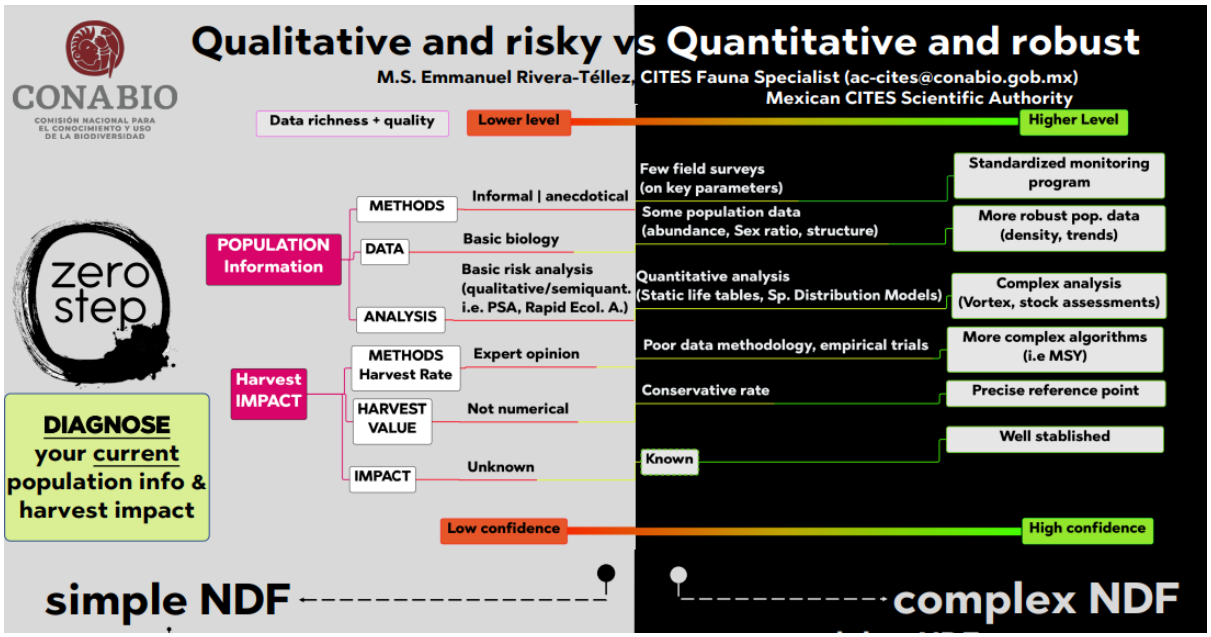

Figure 1.- Proposal for evaluating the quality of information by the CITES Scientific Authority of Mexico.

3. Other relevant points in the UNEP-WCMC report (AC33 Doc. 14.3).

a) Annex 2: "*... Mexico did not report any imports of the species from ABNJ 2013-2022 but noted that it fishes in areas "adjacent to the EEZ"... / "The SEV applies to catches within Mexico's EEZ as well as the high seas...*"

It is worth mentioning that, even though the National Fishing Charter (CNP) indicates that "fishing *[of sharks] is conducted in the Exclusive Economic Zone of Mexico in the Pacific Ocean including the Gulf of California, and on occasion in areas adjacent to the Exclusive Economic Zone.*", the fishing permits are issued solely for within the EEZ and there is no targeted shark fishing in international waters.

Targeted fishing for sharks in the Mexican Pacific Ocean is carried out in the Exclusive Economic Zone, including the Gulf of California. In accordance with NOM-029-PESC-2006 Responsible fishing for sharks and rays, specifications for their use (DOF, 02/14/2007), fishing gear authorized for coastal fisheries may be used in the marine zone, outside of a coastal strip of 18.53 km (10 nautical miles) counted from the baseline with which the Territorial Sea is measured. The use of longlines is prohibited in the coastal marine zone delimited by 27,795 km (15 nautical miles) counted from the baseline with which the Territorial Sea is measured. For fishing gear authorized for medium-height vessels, the use of longlines is prohibited in the coastal marine zone of 37.02 km (20 nautical miles) counted from the baseline with which the Territorial Sea is measured. Finally, in the case of larger vessels, in no case may fishing directed at sharks and rays be carried out in a marine strip of 92.65 km (50 nautical miles) wide from the baseline with which the Territorial Sea is measured and in a marine strip perimeter of 22.24 km (12 nautical miles) wide, measured from the baseline of the coastline around the islands of San Benedicto, Clarión, Roca Partida, Socorro and Guadalupe, of the United Mexican States.

On the other hand, the only Mexican fishing fleet that operates outside the EEZ is the deep-sea tuna purse seine fleet. This fleet has a Scientific Observer Program on Board and constantly reports all catches and activities within the framework of the Research Trust for the Development of the National Program for the Harvest of Tuna and Protection of Dolphins and Other Protected Aquatic Species (FIDEMAR) and this, in turn, reports to the Regional Fisheries Management Organization (RFMO) of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), which does not allow the commercialization of bycatch of shark species. The information recorded during the last three years (2021-2023) indicates that no individual hammerhead sharks (*Sphyrna* spp.) were retained or discarded and that the five individuals of *S. lewini* and one of *S. mokarran* captured, were released.

The concept of "high seas" is used by permit holders/concessionaires to specify that the place of capture was in the open sea within the Mexican EEZ and does not refer to international waters. All fishing permits issued by CONAPESCA for shark fisheries have as their area of operation the "Waters of Federal Jurisdiction of the Pacific Ocean" for larger and smaller vessels, specifying the federal entity (state) to which it belongs.

b) Paragraph 10: *For these species/country combinations, harvest of the species occurs on both the Pacific and Atlantic coastlines of Mexico, which are three distinct population segments with different statuses (Northwest Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico, Central and Southwest Atlantic, and Eastern Pacific).*

The UNEP-WCMC report uses the 2018 IUCN Red List assessments for *Sphyrna lewini* and *Sphyrna mokarran* as a reference:

- These evaluations were carried out with a Bayesian state-space tool (Bayesian model by Winker et al., 2018) that averages relative values of abundance indices. The full Pacific Ocean assessment was based on CPUE data from one program in the South Pacific (Simpfendorfer et al. 2010) that was contradicted by another (Noriega et al. 2011) and on observations by divers and Miller et al. 2014 (later taken up by NOAA, 2020), since there was no data from the North Pacific (where Mexico is located) and a time series was not available for the region.
- With the results of change in the trends of the time series, the probable statuses were estimated by region according to the risk categories of the Red List, and for the global estimate the regional statuses were averaged. However, since time series are not available for this region, its classification does not necessarily reflect the real situation of the populations of both species.
- Currently, Mexico bases its MSY assessments (which are the basis for the VES) on a series of historical catches by coastline and species, which represent the best scientific information available to date and which allow obtaining reliable estimates for sustainable use and export.

S. lewini

Mexican Pacific

The catch of this species is carried out mainly by the artisanal or small-scale fleet in the Mexican Pacific, especially at the mouth of the Gulf of California to the southern border of Mexico, however there are also catches to a lesser extent by the medium-sized vessels or fleet, within the waters of the Exclusive Economic Zone of Mexico. In the latter, the catch of

this species can represent up to 10.7% of the total catch of sharks with longlines and carried out in the operation area of the Mazatlán fleet (Castillo-Géniz et al., 2016).

The common hammerhead shark is mostly a coastal species, but it presents temporary movements towards the oceanic zone, having different patterns between males and females (Coraiton and Amezcua, 2020) and forming aggregations in underwater mountains and islands, where it can have a moderate residence (Aldana-Moreno et al., 2020). These characteristics explain the results of a series of genetic studies that have been carried out to understand the structures of the stocks that are fished throughout the distribution of *S. lewini* in the world.

The study by Green and collaborators (2022), about the genome of this species in Pacific and Indian Oceans (OPI), where mitochondrial DNA and Single Nucleotide Polymorphism (SNP) were analyzed, suggests four large stocks in the OPI: 1) West Indies (Seychelles); 2) Central Indo- Pacific (Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Taiwan, Australia and Fiji); 3) Central Pacific (Hawaii); and 4) Western Pacific (Gulf of California).

Mexico catches *S. lewini* along the coastal zone on the continental shelf, and it has been shown that the genetic structure along the coastal region of the Eastern Pacific suggests that the Mexican populations represent a discrete group separated from the rest (Elizondo-Sancho et al., 2022), and using the mitochondrial control region of DNA, recognizes the existence of two genetically discrete groups and the need to recognize two different management units: the Mexican Pacific and the Eastern Tropical Pacific (Guatemala, Costa Rica, Panama and Colombia).

Also, the previously mentioned genomic studies (Elizondo-Sancho et al., 2022, Green et al., 2022) found greater genomic homogeneity when using microsatellites or SNP when compared with the results of the stock structure based on mitochondrial DNA, and microsatellite results suggested greater connectivity with other Pacific sub-stocks distributed in neighboring countries.

However, Elizondo-Sancho and collaborators (2022) also conclude that individuals in breeding areas were more closely related than expected by chance, suggesting that *S. lewini* could exhibit reproductive philopatry within the Eastern Tropical Pacific region.

For their part, Coiraton and collaborators (2020) used biogeochemical trackers to micro-chemically analyze the vertebrae of common hammerhead sharks to characterize the types of habitat that each individual occupied during their life and until the moment of their death (sampling), and characterized different patterns between the sexes: males stayed all their lives in coastal habitats or migrated away from the coast between 4 and 7 years and returned to coastal habitats after a period of time; while the females, between 3 and 5 years, after being in a coastal habitat migrated to oceanic waters and later returned to the coast (possibly to give birth to their young).

The most recent study in this regard by Rangel-Morales and collaborators (2022) analyzed philopatry in *S. lewini* females in breeding areas based on mitochondrial DNA sequencing and the genetic variation of two mitochondrial DNA genes (ND2 and Control Region) and 11 nuclear microsatellite loci. The authors detected potential breeding areas in Sinaloa-Nayarit, Jalisco and Oaxaca-Chiapas, being evolutionarily significant different units,

consistent with philopatric behavior by the females to the breeding areas of *S. lewini* in the Mexican Pacific.

It is important to highlight that the "sub-stock" of the Mexican Pacific (Elizondo-Sancho et al., 2022) is managed under the same management strategy and regime of the Mexican regulatory system (which includes a closed season in the Mexican Pacific fishery from May 1st to July 31st that does not exist in neighboring countries) that is considered robust in the report of the CITES Secretariat and UNEP-WCMC, and that promotes the generation of information to feed the models based on systematized fishing statistics, used in the evaluation of fisheries and the estimation of VES (see Mexico's response in Annex 1 of document AC33 Doc. 14.3).

Gulf of Mexico

Another recent study by Alfonso-González et al. (2024), on the population genetics of *S. lewini* in the Gulf of Mexico (in collaboration with IMIPAS), indicates that the genetic diversity estimated for this species is lower than that recorded for other populations of the species. The genetic homogeneity detected within the Gulf of Mexico with nuclear and mitochondrial markers suggests the absence of natal and regional philopatry in females at the geographic scale analyzed. Hammerhead shark juveniles off the Mexican coast appear to form a panmictic population, so they should be treated as a single management unit (Alfonso-González et al., 2024, in press). Preliminary results on the population dynamics of *S. lewini* in waters of the southern Gulf of Mexico, carried out by IMIPAS in collaboration with other national research centers, indicate that mature females in maternal condition are not as susceptible to capture due to their migratory behavior (Lara-Mendoza et al., 2024, document in preparation).

S. mokarran

Pacific

The catches of *S. mokarran* occur outside the continental shelf, mainly by the middle-distance fishing fleet in the Mexican Central Pacific. According to the records of the last ten years of information compiled from the National Program of Observers Aboard Shark Vessels in Mexico, the catch of this species is very low (<4.1% of the total catch of sharks by number of organisms) and takes place within the Exclusive Economic Zone of Mexico.
It is the largest in size among the hammerhead shark species, and it is mainly a tropical coastal species, which can make migrations of up to 3,000 km, but can exhibit philopatric behavior (Boube et al., 2023). Little is known about the biology and population structure worldwide (Brunjes et al., 2024) and information on the structure of stocks in the Mexican Pacific is very scarce. González-Rodríguez (2017) studied the relationship of the population of southern Florida based on the mitochondrial genomics of captured organisms and did not find a local stock structure, but when comparing with other localities in other parts of the world, they found genetic differences between the organisms from different oceans. Brunjes and collaborators (2024) found similar results when comparing populations from northern Australia and those from the Persian Gulf and a certain degree of connectivity has been demonstrated between the Bahamas and the east coast of the United States (Guttridge et al., 2022). In this region (west coast of the US) Pacoureau and collaborators (2021) report an upwards trend (increase) in the population of this species.

c) Strengthening capacity building

Regarding sharks and rays included in the CITES Appendices, PROFEPA has participated from 2014 to 2024 in the following actions to strengthen capacities of compliance and law enforcement in Mexico:

- PROFEPA, together with TRAFFIC, and thanks to the financial support of the USFWS Wildlife Without Borders Program, launched in 2014 the project **"Wildlife Watch"** in which the "**Workshop for Intra and Inter Institutional Strengthening for International Wildlife Trade in Mexico"** was held, resulting in a proposed coordination protocol for government agencies involved in verifying legal trade and addressing alleged cases of illegal trafficking, including species such as sharks and rays. This protocol proposal was also promoted by the UNODC Office in Mexico in 2017 and 2018 as part of its joint activities with the Mexican Government.

- On July 28th and 29th 2014, the Mexican CITES authorities held the **"Workshop on the Implementation of CITES Appendix II for Sharks from Mexico"** in Mexico City, which aimed to disseminate the amendments and strengthen actions in management, compliance mechanisms and law enforcement regarding the newly included shark and ray species. Staff from PROFEPA at ports, airports, and borders participated in this workshop.

- In January 2015, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) with the support of CITES launched a **software called iSharkFin**. This software used automatic information gathering techniques to identify shark species considering their fins. PROFEPA tested it with its staff at ports, airports, and borders to assess its usefulness in verifying export shipments.

- On January 17th and 18th 2017, the **"Workshop on strengthening the conservation and sustainable use of priority species for North America listed in Appendix II of CITES: formulation of an action plan for shark species"** was held in Mexico City. This workshop was a consultation between stakeholders to gather information and recommendations for sustainable trade and conservation of priority shark species. The North American Action Plan for sustainable trade in shark species (2017) is based on information stemming from this workshop and from additional consultations carried out with by authorities responsible for the implementation of CITES in Canada, the United States, and Mexico. Staff from PROFEPA at ports, airports, and borders participated in this workshop.

- In February 2018, in the framework of the Mexico-Canada Strategic Alliance, the **"Workshop on Biodiversity, the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, and the DNA Barcode"** was held in Mexico City to show the use of genetic barcodes for taxonomic identification of wild species subject to international trade. This was done using tissue and environmental DNA samples with the expertise of Canadian and Mexican specialists. **Binational interest was shown for sharks and rays, and it was agreed to hold a seminar on the prevention and combat of illegal trafficking of these species.** Staff from PROFEPA at ports, airports, and borders participated in this workshop**.**

- In the framework of Goal 6 of the Action Plan for North America: Sustainable Trade in Sharks, the **"Training workshop on shark fin identification and the transnational illegal trade in shark fins"**, was held in Vancouver, Canada, in July 2018. This workshop aimed to train law enforcement officials on the following topics: i) recognition of various shark products in trade; ii) basic principles of international shark fin trade; iii) scenarios for the enforcement of trade laws and regulations in North America; iv) identifying shark fins at different processing stages; v)

differentiation of adult and juvenile fins of shark species included in CITES; vi) handling of high-volume shipments and, vii) sample selection for forensic analysis. Staff from PROFEPA at ports, airports, borders and natural resources inspection participated in the workshop.

- PROFEPA, together with Environment and Climate Change Canada, in the framework of the Mexico-Canada Strategic Alliance's Environment Working Group, organized and carried out the **"CPTPP Workshop on Combating Illegal Trade of Wildlife Species: Sharks and Stingrays"** held on May 2nd and 3rd 2023. This workshop was aimed at border control and law enforcement officers, members of the scientific and technology community, diplomats, and international affairs experts from CPTPP member states to discuss on how to address the supply and demand of illicit wildlife trade, and sought to strengthen their capacities in inspection, sampling, and monitoring of cross-border movements of protected wildlife species.

- In May 2023, the Government of Singapore launched the **app "FinFinder"** as a tool to identify shark fins using a database of fins images with a 90% confidence level, based on an algorithm-based software. PROFEPA tested the app and developed pilot tests with its staff at ports, airports and border from September 2023 to January 2024 to assess its usefulness in verifying export shipments.

d) Combatting illegal trade

Combatting illegal wildlife trade is a priority for Mexico. Therefore, the enforcement focal point for CITES (PROFEPA), besides verifying the declared wildlife cross-border movements, constantly monitors the official communications issued by its counterparts and/or PROFEPA's countries of interest customs to detect any case of irregular exportation, gather intelligence information, and carry out relevant national actions.

Likewise, the Mexican Customs Agency (ANAM), in the framework of the Green Customs Initiative, the International Affairs Coordination Unit (UCAI) of SEMARNAT and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (SRE) collaborate with the Mexican CITES authorities to combat illegal wildlife trafficking, through the exchange of information with their counterparts on cases of illegal trade.

Regarding the seizure of 1.2 ton of alleged dried shark fins of protected species at the Hong Kong International Airport on February 17th 2023, the Mexican Government, through its Consulate General in Hong Kong, requested information to the Customs and Excise Department of the Hong Kong SAR, without having received an answer so far.

In order to assist the aforementioned actions carried out by Mexico, the Mexican Customs Agency (ANAM) contacted the Customs and Excise Department of Hong Kong, on June 17th to request detailed information on *Sphyrna lewini* and *Sphyrna mokarran* specimens imported from Mexico that have been identified and/or seized by that country from 2017 to 2024. ANAM requested information on: 1. Details on the seized cargo: shark species, weight, route, description of the merchandise and identified method of concealment, among others that may be useful to identify the operation, 2. Photographic-technical support or copy of labelling specifying commercial information attached to the containers.

In addition, following up on the press release issued by Hong Kong in 2023 that was identified by PROFEPA, ANAM requested the customs authorities of that country to clarify if the seizure corresponded to parts of *Sphyrna lewini* and *Sphyrna mokarran*. On June 18th 2024, the Hong Kong Customs and Excise Department confirmed receipt of ANAM's request, stating that it would contact the Hong Kong Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department to request the information, as it is the main authority for the implementation of CITES-related issues. On July 26th 2024, the Hong Kong Customs and

Excise Department answered that the seized specimens were not identified as *S. lewini* and *S. mokarran*.