

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



Seventy-seventh meeting of the Standing Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 6–10 November 2023

Species conservation and trade

Fauna

Aquatic species

Sharks and rays (Elasmobranchii spp.)

REPORT OF THE ANIMALS COMMITTEE

1. This document has been submitted by the Animals Committee.*
2. At its 19th meeting (CoP19; Panama City, 2022), the Conference of the Parties adopted Decisions 19.222 to 19.227 on *Sharks and rays (Elasmobranchii spp.)*, which are presented in the Annex to this document.
3. This document reports on the implementation of Decision 19.225 directed to the Animals Committee and Decision 19.226 directed to the Standing Committee. This document should be read in conjunction with the Secretariat's document on the implementation of Decisions 19.222, 19.223 and 19.224 in document SC77 Doc. 67.3
4. At its 32nd meeting (AC32; Geneva, June 2023), the Animals Committee considered document [AC32 Doc. 37 \(Rev. 1\)](#) submitted by the Secretariat on the implementation of Decisions 19.222, 19.223, 19.224 and 19.226.

Implementation of Decision 19.225

5. At AC32, the Animals Committee established an in-session working group on sharks and rays (Elasmobranchii spp.) with a mandate as contained in executive summary [AC32 Sum. 1 \(Rev. 1\)](#). The Animals Committee considered the recommendations from the working group and agreed [\[AC32 Sum. 4 \(Rev. 1\)\]](#) to invite the Standing Committee to:
 - a) encourage 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 Harmonized System (HS) codes available under the World Custom's Organization (WCO)'s HS;
 - c) request that Parties adopt more comprehensive national classifications based on WCO's HS Nomenclature;

* *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.*

- d) encourage 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 for specimens that meet the requirements of Resolution Conf. 13.6 (Rev. CoP18) on *Implementation of Article VII, paragraph 2, concerning 'pre-Convention' specimens*.

Implementation of Decision 19.226

6. As directed by the Conference of the Parties in paragraph d) of Decision 19.226, the Standing Committee shall, in consultation with the Animals Committee, discuss challenges related to the transport of biological samples for research and data collection purposes in the context of fisheries management, including in the context of the provisions on introduction from the sea in Resolution Conf. 14.6 (Rev. CoP16) and make recommendations to the 20th meeting of the Conference of the Parties. To support the implementation of paragraph d) of Decision 19.226, the Animals Committee agreed to nominate the representative for Central and South America and the Caribbean (Mr. Gongora) and the representative for Oceania (Mr. Robertson) to participate in the Standing Committee intersessional working group on sharks and rays that was established at the 76th meeting (SC76; Panama City, November 2022) of the Standing Committee (see summary record [SC76 SR](#)).

Recommendations

7. The Standing Committee is invited to consider the recommendations of the Animals Committee in paragraph 5 of this document.

DECISIONS ON SHARKS AND RAYS (*ELASMOBRANCHII SPP.*)
ADOPTED BY THE 19TH MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF PARTIES

Directed to Parties

19.222

Parties are encouraged to:

- a) in accordance with Resolution Conf. 12.6 (Rev. CoP18) on *Conservation and management of sharks*, provide brief information (with an executive summary not exceeding 200 words, if the report exceeds four pages) to the Secretariat, in particular on any national management measures that prohibit commercial take or trade and respond to the Notification called for in Decision 19.224;
- b) in accordance with their national legislation, provide a brief report (with an executive summary not exceeding 200 words, if the report exceeds four pages) to the Secretariat about the assessment of stockpiles of shark parts and derivatives for CITES-listed species stored and obtained before the entry into force of the inclusion in CITES in order to control and monitor their trade, if applicable;
- c) respond to the Notification called for in Decision 19.224 and share available national conversion factors used when estimating live catch weight by species, fishery, and product form for more accurate reporting of shark and ray trade data by Parties and indicate whether and how these are used in the development of their non-detriment findings (NDFs);
- d) in accordance with Resolution Conf. 9.7 (Rev. CoP15) on *Transit and transshipment*, inspect, to the extent possible under their national legislation, shipments of shark parts and derivatives in transit or being transhipped, to verify presence of CITES-listed species and verify the presence of a valid CITES permit or certificate as required under the Convention or to obtain satisfactory proof of its existence;
- e) seek external funding for a dedicated marine species officer and consider seconding staff members with expertise in fisheries and the sustainable management of aquatic resources to the Secretariat;
- f) in accordance with Resolution Conf. 11.3 (Rev. CoP19) on *Compliance and enforcement*, actively collaborate to combat illegal trafficking in sharks and ray products by developing mechanisms for coordination between source, transit, and destination countries; and
- g) consider if they are likely to be key beneficiaries from the guidance document(s) reviewed under Decision 19.226, paragraphs a) and b); if so, these Parties are strongly encouraged to participate in any Standing Committee working groups established to address Decision 19.226.

Directed to the Secretariat

19.223

Subject to external funding, the Secretariat shall

- a) continue to provide capacity-building assistance for implementing Appendix-II shark and ray listings to Parties, especially developing countries and small island developing states, upon request;
- b) liaise with relevant Regional Fisheries Management Organizations and Arrangements (RFMO/As) to identify opportunities for capacity-building with the same organizations, possibly in the form of attending meetings (where the RFMO/A permits such attendance) or by directly liaising with the Secretariat of the organization

to provide this information to its membership and/or the provision of training. The aim of this exercise would be to share information to improve the knowledge of CITES in the workings of each relevant RFMO/A;

- c) conduct a further study to look into 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, building on the study entitled *Missing sharks: A country review of catch, trade and management recommendations for CITES-listed shark species* and share both studies with proposed solutions to resolve this issue to the Animals Committee and Standing Committee, in a timely manner;
- d) collaborate closely with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to:
 - i) verify that information about Parties' shark management measures is correctly reflected in the shark measures database developed by FAO (<http://www.fao.org/ipoa-sharks/database-of-measures/en/>) and if not, support FAO in correcting the information;
 - ii) compile clear imagery of wet and dried unprocessed shark fins (particularly, but not exclusively, those from CITES-listed species) along with related species level taxonomic information to facilitate refinement of iSharkFin software developed by FAO;
 - iii) conduct a study analysing the trade in non-fin shark products of CITES-listed species, including the level of species mixing in trade products and recommendations on how to address any implementation challenges arising from the mixing that may be identified; and
- e) bring the results of activities in this present Decision to the attention of the Animals Committee or Standing Committee, as appropriate.

19.224

The Secretariat shall:

- a) issue a Notification to the Parties, inviting Parties to:
 - i) in accordance with Resolution Conf 12.6 (Rev. CoP18) on *Conservation and management of sharks*, provide concise (with 200 word executive summary, if the report exceeds four pages) new information on their shark and ray conservation and management activities, in particular:
 - A. the making of NDFs;
 - B. the making of legal acquisition findings (LAFs);
 - C. the identification and monitoring of CITES-listed shark-products in trade, in source, transit, and consumer Parties;
 - D. recording stockpiles of commercial and/or pre-Convention shark parts and derivatives for CITES Appendix-II elasmobranch species and controlling the entry of these stocks into trade; and
 - E. capacity-building needs to assist developing countries and small island developing states with reporting requirements; and
 - ii) share with the Secretariat their non-detriment findings (NDFs) and conversion factors used when estimating catch live weight through converting recorded shark landings and trade, where available, to post in the sharks and rays web portal;

- iii) in accordance with Resolution Conf. 11.17 (Rev. CoP19) on *National reports*, highlight any questions, concerns or difficulties Parties are having in writing or submitting documentation on authorized trade data (e.g. which units are used in reporting trade) for the CITES Trade Database;
- b) provide information from the CITES Trade Database on commercial trade in CITES-listed sharks and rays since 2010, sorted by species and, if possible, by product;
- c) invite non-Party, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organization observers to support Parties by providing concise information related to the above;
- d) disseminate new or existing guidance identified by the Standing Committee on the control and monitoring of stockpiles of shark parts and derivatives pursuant to Decision 19.226, paragraph b);
- e) share information concerning capacity-building needs of developing countries including the possibility of training workshops; and
- f) collate this information for the consideration of the Animals Committee and the Standing Committee.

Directed to the Animals Committee, in collaboration with relevant organizations and experts

19.225 The Animals Committee, in collaboration with relevant organizations and experts, shall:

- a) continue to develop guidance and review outcomes from the proposed international expert workshop on NDFs to support the making of NDFs for CITES-listed shark species, in particular in data-poor, multi-species, small-scale/artisanal, and non-target (by-catch) situations, and for shared and migratory stocks, and introduction from the sea;
- b) review the information submitted by the Secretariat under paragraph e) of Decision 19.223 and paragraph f) of Decision 19.224 and;
- c) report the outcomes of its work under the present Decision to the Standing Committee for incorporation into the joint report to the 20th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

Directed to the Standing Committee

19.226 The Standing Committee shall:

- a) review the revised *Rapid Guide on the making of legal acquisition findings*, and related assessments as they relate to trade in CITES-listed shark species caught in areas beyond national jurisdiction (including introductions from the sea), and determine if more specific guidance is needed for CITES-listed-shark species, including engagement with RFMOs and any capacity-building which might support their role in the making of LAFs and related assessments;
- b) develop new guidance or identify existing guidance on the control and monitoring of stockpiles of shark parts and derivatives, in particular for specimens caught prior to the inclusion of the species in Appendix II;
- c) review the FAO's on-going guidance on Catch Document Schemes, Port State Measures and any other measures to reduce Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) fishing;
- d) in consultation with the Animals Committee, discuss challenges related to transport of biological samples for research and data collection purposes in the context of fisheries management including the context of the provisions on introduction from the

sea in Resolution Conf 14.6 (Rev. CoP16) and make recommendations to CoP20;
and

- e) report its findings under the present Decision to the 20th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

19.227

The Standing Committee shall:

- a) review the comments and recommendations provided by the Parties, the Animals Committee and the Secretariat under Decisions 19.222 to 19.225; and
- b) prepare a report with any necessary recommendations for improving the implementation of the Convention for sharks and rays for consideration by the 20th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.