

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



Seventy-eighth meeting of the Standing Committee  
Geneva (Switzerland), 3-8 February 2025

Species specific matters

Aquatic species

Sharks and rays (*Elasmobranchii* spp.)

REPORT OF THE ANIMALS COMMITTEE

1. This document has been submitted by the Chair of 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 Annex 1 to this document.
3. This document reports on the implementation of Decision 19.225 directed to the Animals Committee. It should be read in conjunction with the document prepared by the Secretariat on the implementation of Decisions 19.222, 19.223 and 19.224 in document SC78 Doc. 70.3 and the document submitted by the Standing Committee intersessional working group on sharks and ray on the implementation of Decision 19.226 in document SC78 Doc. 70.1.
4. At its 33rd meeting (AC33, Geneva, July 2024), the Animals Committee considered document [AC33 Doc. 41 \(Rev. 1\)](#) on *Sharks and rays (Elasmobranchii spp.)* submitted by the Secretariat on the implementation of Decisions 19.222, 19.223 and 19.224. The Animals Committee agreed recommendations directed to the Chair of the Animals Committee, Parties, CITES Authorities and the Standing Committee that are reported on in the present document, while recommendations directed to the Secretariat are addressed in document SC78 Doc. 70.3.
5. To facilitate the consideration of the present document and its associated Annexes, the recommendations on sharks and rays agreed by the Animals Committee and the draft decisions proposed by AC33 for consideration by the Standing Committee have been included in Annexes to the present document as follows [note: Annex 1 contains Decisions 19.222 to 19.227 on *Sharks and rays (Elasmobranchii spp.)*]:
  - a) Annex 2: Recommendations relating to sharks and rays agreed by AC33, excluding the draft decisions agreed by AC33 for review by the Standing Committee for onward submission to the 20th meeting of the Conference of Parties.
  - b) Annex 3: Draft decisions agreed by AC33 for review by the Standing Committee for onward submission to the 20th meeting of the Conference of Parties; and
  - c) Annex 4: Draft decision proposed by the Chair of the Animals Committee inviting the Secretariat to consider the feasibility of adapting the existing RST process for sharks and rays that selects high priority

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\* 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.

species in international trade in accordance with Resolution Conf. 12.8 (Rev. CoP18) on *Review of Significant Trade in specimens of Appendix-II species*.

#### Implementation of Decision 19.225

6. At AC33, the Animals Committee established an in-session working group on sharks and rays (Elasmobranchii spp.) with the mandate as contained in the executive summary [[AC33 Sum. 2 \(Rev. 1\)](#)]. The working group mandate included the following three broad topics to be discussed:
  - a) issues concerning shark and ray species in the Review of Significant Trade process, including questions raised in AC33 plenary and captured in AC33 Sum. 2 (Rev. 1);
  - b) the document presented by the Secretariat [AC33 Doc. 41 (Rev. 1)], which included responses to Notifications, the study conducted under Decision 19.223 paragraph c) and reviewing the Secretariat's suggestion on adding ocean basins to the *Guidelines for the preparation and submission for CITES annual reports*; and
  - c) the information on gulper sharks ([AC33 Inf. 20](#)).
7. The recommendations agreed by the Animals Committee (see summary record [AC33 SR](#)) are contained in Annex 2 to the present document. The recommendations include draft decisions on sharks and rays for submission to the Standing Committee for onward submission to the Conference of Parties. These draft decisions are contained in Annex 3 to the present document.
8. The Animals Committee furthermore invited the Chair of the Animals Committee to propose in its report to the Conference of the Parties a draft decision inviting the Secretariat to consider the feasibility of adapting the existing RST process for sharks and rays that selects high priority species in international trade in accordance with Resolution Conf. 12.8 (Rev. CoP18) on *Review of Significant Trade in specimens of Appendix-II species*, then determines which stocks are affected, and includes range and fishing States with significant trade in the relevant stocks of concern. A draft decision prepared by the Chair of the Animals Committee is contained in Annex 4 for consideration by the Standing Committee for onward submission to the Conference of the Parties.

#### Recommendations

9. The Standing Committee is invited to:
  - a) note the recommendations of the Animals Committee in Annex 2 to the present document;
  - b) review and submit the draft decisions in Annexes 3 and 4 to the present document for consideration by the 20th meeting of the Conference of Parties.

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 sharks 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.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON *SHARKS AND RAYS (ELASMOBRANCHII SPP.)*  
AGREED BY THE 33RD MEETING OF THE ANIMALS COMMITTEE (AC33)

**Note:** The draft decisions agreed by AC33 for review by the Standing Committee for onward submission to the 20th meeting of the Conference of Parties are included in Annex 3

*Treatment of multiple stock for the same species*

1. Taking into account the recommendations in document AC33 Doc. 17, NDFs should ideally be made at a stock level – e.g., a single NDF covering the stock as a discrete unit irrespective of whether catch / harvest is taking place in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) or in areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ).
2. Taking into account the recommendations in document AC33 Doc. 17, distinct stocks / distinct populations, if defined, should require separate NDFs or a single NDF clearly describing findings for each distinct stock / population.
3. The information in module 5 of CITES NDF Guidance on making NDFs for aquatic species should be taken into account.

*Single stock being harvested by multiple Parties*

4. CITES Authorities should work with their fisheries authorities and consider working closely with Regional Fishery Bodies (RFBs), including Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) and neighbouring Parties, as appropriate, especially those that have NDFs, in sharing/obtaining data to make NDFs in order to avoid duplication of effort.
5. NDFs should consider all sources of mortality within the stock, taking into account the precautionary approach.
6. Adaptive management, including time-bound NDFs (no more than 5 years), should be used so that signals of stock change (whether from offtake from other Parties or other threats) can be taken into account and responded to.

*Feasibility of requesting a stock based NDF*

7. Yes for all species in RST.

*Recommendations on elements for inclusion in NDFs*

8. Develop NDFs for species where catch for export occurs, which could, *inter alia*, include the following elements taking into account the CITES NDF guidance, as well as other existing guidance, tools and resources:
  - a) consideration for each stock as a separate management unit for conservation and harvest purposes;
  - b) adaptive management, with a review period of no more than 5 years, to take into consideration signals from the stock; and
  - c) a precautionary approach, where a cautionary offtake is initially considered, and revised with further information.
9. Encourage Parties in RST to consult with fisheries agencies as responsible bodies for management of these stocks to develop an NDF.

*Recommendations for Party harvesting from shared stock*

10. Take into account the recommendations in document AC33 Doc. 17:

- a) encourage Parties to collaborate regionally, including with CITES Parties not Party to RFMOs, to share information, including information to understand stock status and trends, stock assessments, NDFs, quotas, and capacity-building initiatives; and
- b) invite Parties to consider using stock assessment data from RFBs, including RFMOs, in addition to national information and other relevant sources of information, as appropriate, in informing the making of NDFs for specimens taken from ABNJ.

*Other recommendations*

11. invite the Chair of the Animals Committee to propose in its report to the Conference of the Parties a draft decision inviting the Secretariat to consider the feasibility of adapting the existing RST process for sharks and rays that selects high priority species in international trade in accordance with Resolution Conf. 12.8 (Rev. CoP18) on *Review of Significant Trade in specimens of Appendix-II species*, then determines which stocks are affected, and includes range and fishing States with significant trade in the relevant stocks of concern.
12. invite the Secretariat to continue building relationships with RFBs, including RFMOs.
13. invite the Secretariat to explore options to make the shark eNDF tool available on the sharks and rays portal to facilitate wider use.
14. invite Parties, especially those with shared stocks, and observer organizations to provide support to Parties selected for “action is needed” under RST.
15. invite Parties to consider a rebuilding plan for depleted stocks through fisheries and conservation management measures to ensure that any offtake does not adversely affect the abundance and structure of the stock and the role of the species in the ecosystem.
16. invite CITES Authorities to work with fisheries authorities to ensure that reporting of CITES-listed species to CITES and RFBs is at the species level and uses consistent units, as appropriate.
17. invite the Secretariat to liaise with FAO and RFBs to bring to their attention the study under Decision 19.233 paragraph c) and the need to harmonize data reporting to the extent possible, as appropriate.
18. strongly encourage Parties to report all shark and ray trade in weight and not in number of specimens as indicated in the Guidelines for the preparation and submission of CITES annual reports.
19. invite Parties to adopt traceability systems along the supply chains of CITES-listed species for international trade, noting the definition of traceability<sup>1</sup>, which has been agreed by the Parties to CITES and further guidance.
20. subject to external funding, invite the Secretariat to follow-up on mismatches (differences in transactions reported by exporter/importer countries under the same permit; weights; species; etc.) in the CITES Trade Database and correct the mismatch, where possible.
21. subject to external funding, invite the Secretariat to follow-up with countries that appear to not be reporting exports of sharks and rays (i.e., trade only reported by importing countries) to determine the reason for underreporting and provide necessary support to encourage reporting.
22. invite the Secretariat to examine the trade in source code “C” specimens of shark and rays that are unlikely to be captive-bred based on the biology of the specimens.
23. invite the Secretariat to propose clear guidance on the reporting of specimens taken from ABNJ in the *Guidelines for the preparation and submission for CITES annual reports* to the Standing Committee.

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<sup>1</sup> *The working definition of CITES traceability is: traceability is the ability to access information on specimens and events in a CITES species supply chain. This information should be carried, on a case-by-case basis, from as close to the point of harvest as practicable and needed to the point at which the information facilitates the verification of legal acquisition and non-detriment findings and helps prevent laundering of illegal products*

24. remind Parties of the obligation to submit annual reports to the CITES Secretariat, which includes introduction from the sea and export of sharks and rays and to report at the species level.
25. note that Decision 19.223 paragraph c) has been implemented.
26. invite the Secretariat to propose option 1 (ocean basins) and option 3 (FAO Major Fishing Areas) to the Standing Committee for consideration, including the question as to whether such reporting should apply to the EEZ in addition to ABNJ, taking into account potential implementation challenges.
27. note that the Animals Committee has identified gulper sharks (*Centrophoridae* spp.) as species of concern since 2004 and that there has been continuing decline in population of these species.
28. invite the Secretariat to issue a Notification to the Parties inviting Parties and organizations to submit information on the catches, use and trade of gulper sharks and their products, and conservation measures for the species that could potentially assist a Party:
  - a) in developing actions they can take for the conservation and management of gulper sharks;
  - b) in developing actions that could be brought to the attention of relevant RFBs; and
  - c) in assessing the need for preparing a proposal to include the gulper sharks in the Appendices.
29. invite the Secretariat to issue a second Notification to the Parties to distribute to Parties the submissions it receives on gulper sharks.



DRAFT DECISIONS ON *SHARKS AND RAYS (ELASMOBRANCHII SPP.)*  
AGREED BY THE 33RD MEETING OF THE ANIMALS COMMITTEE  
FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE STANDING COMMITTEE

**Directed to Parties**

**20.AA** 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, including new or updated national plans of action for sharks, that prohibit commercial take or trade;
- b) respond to the Notification called for in Decision 20.BB including sharing any non-detriment findings (NDFs) and conversion factors used when estimating catch live weight through converting recorded shark landings and trade, where available, and any other scientific information on sharks and rays;
- c) 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;

**Directed to the Secretariat**

**20.BB** 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 identification of CITES-listed shark-products in trade;
    - C. the monitoring of export data of CITES-listed shark, parts and derivatives, and any suitable remedial measures applied to limit the export of specimens in order to maintain each species throughout its range at a level consistent with its role in the ecosystem;
    - D. capacity-building needs; 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, and any other scientific information on sharks and rays, to post in the sharks and rays web portal;
- 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 at the shipment level;
- c) invite non-Party, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organization observers to support Parties by providing concise information related to the above;
- d) collate this information for the consideration of the Animals Committee.

**Directed to the Secretariat**

**20.CC** 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 Fishery Bodies (RFB) including 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 RFB 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;
- c) collaborate closely with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to 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;
- d) seek to collaborate with Parties and organizations to establish a repository to hold imagery under a Creative Commons license of wet and dried unprocessed shark, parts and derivatives (particularly, but not exclusively, those from CITES-listed species) along with related species level taxonomic information to facilitate refinement of automated species identification development through a range of novel technologies; and
- e) bring the results of activities in this present Decision to the attention of the Animals Committee or Standing Committee, as appropriate.

***Directed to the Animals Committee***

**20.DD** The Animals Committee shall:

- a) review the information collated by the Secretariat under Decision 20.BB and the results of activities described under Decision 20. CC; and
- b) make recommendations to the Standing Committee, as appropriate.

***Directed to the Standing Committee***

**20.EE** The Standing Committee shall:

- a) review the comments and recommendations provided by the Parties, the Animals Committee and the Secretariat under Decisions 20.CC and 20.DD; and
- b) prepare a report with any necessary recommendations for improving the implementation of the Convention for sharks and rays for consideration by the 21st meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

DRAFT DECISIONS ON THE *FEASIBILITY OF AN ADAPTED RST PROCESS FOR SHARKS AND RAYS*  
PROPOSED BY THE CHAIR OF THE ANIMALS COMMITTEE  
FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE STANDING COMMITTEE

***Directed to the Secretariat***

**20.FF** Subject to external funding, the Secretariat shall:

- a) draft a report that envisions an adapted Review of Significant Trade process for sharks and rays, which would:
  - i) select high priority species in international trade in accordance with Resolution Conf. 12.8 (Rev. CoP18) on *Review of Significant Trade in specimens of Appendix-II species*;
  - ii) determine the stocks that are affected for the selected species; then
  - iii) identify range and fishing States with significant trade for the relevant stocks of concerns; and
- b) provide the Animals Committee with the report with the implications and feasibility of implementing such a process and any amendments that may be necessary to Resolution Conf 12.8 (Rev. CoP18) on *Review of Significant Trade in specimens of Appendix-II species*.

***Directed to the Animals Committee***

**20.GG** The Animals Committee shall review the report by the Secretariat under Decision 20.FF and make recommendations to the Standing Committee, as appropriate.