



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



General Fisheries Commission
for the Mediterranean

Rome, 27 June 2016

TO THE ATTENTION OF MR JOHN E SCANLON
CITES Secretary General

Subject: Response to letter 12 May 2016 regarding GFCM requesting comments for amendments to CITES Appendix II

Dear Mr Scanlon,

With reference to your letter dated 12 May 2016 (Ref.: TDM/EII/CoP17), requesting GFCM comments regarding existing proposals to amend CITES Appendix II with the inclusion of the following aquatic species/groups:

- *Carcharinus falciformis*;
- *Alopias* spp.;
- *Mobula* spp.;
- *Potamotrygon motoro*;
- *Pterapogon kauderni*;
- *Holacanthus clarionensis*;
- Nautilidae

I have the pleasure to inform you that your request was presented to the fortieth session of the GFCM (30 May – 3 June 2016, St. Julien's, Malta), and Members agreed to prepare a summary (Annexe 1) reviewing relevant information and management measures in place for those species occurring in the GFCM area of application, and their conclusion on the 2016 CITES proposals. Please find annexed for your information the abovementioned document.

I hope that you will find this information of use, with my best regards,

Abdellah Srour
Executive Secretary
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RELEVANT INFORMATION ON THE MANAGEMENT OF ELASMOBRANCH SPECIES IN THE GFCM AREA OF COMPETENCE, IN RESPONSE TO THE REQUEST FROM CITES ON POTENTIAL AMENDMENTS OF CITES APPENDIX II

INTRODUCTION

The GFCM is the regional fisheries management organization (RFMO) for the Mediterranean and the Black Sea established under the provisions of Article XIV of the FAO Constitution. It started its activities as a Council in 1952, when the Agreement for its establishment came into force, and became a Commission in 1997. The main objective of the GFCM is to promote the development, conservation, rational management and best utilization of living marine resources as well as the sustainable development of aquaculture in the Mediterranean, the Black Sea and connecting waters (GFCM area of application), through the adoption of binding recommendations for fisheries conservation and management. The GFCM is currently composed of 24 Contracting Parties (23 member countries and the European Union), and three Cooperating non-Contracting Parties, and have dedicated Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with 15 international organizations, including all of those which are relevant for the mandate of the GFCM.

This document, presents relevant information in response to the request from Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) on the potential adoption of management measures to protect a number of aquatic species.

2016 CITES PROPOSAL: SPECIES OF RELEVANCE FOR THE GFCM AREA OF APPLICATION

Among the seven proposals for aquatic species to be included in CITES Appendix II, only the following species of sharks and rays (Class Chondrichthyes) are relevant in the GFCM area of application:

- Genus *Alopias*: *A. vulpinus* and *A. superciliosus*
- Genus *Mobula*: *M. mobular*

REVIEW OF RELEVANT MANAGEMENT REGULATIONS AT GFCM LEVEL¹

The following decisions include relevant measures that directly or indirectly address the management/conservation of the above mentioned species:

Direct management measures

- **REC. GFCM/36/2012/3 on fisheries management measures for conservation of sharks and rays in the GFCM area**
 - ✓ Prohibition of “finning”
 - ✓ Prohibition of beheading and skinning of specimens on board and before landing
 - ✓ Prohibition of trawl fishing within 3 nautical miles to enhance protection of coastal sharks
 - ✓ Prohibition of fishing, retaining on board, transshipping, landing, transferring, storing, selling or displaying or offering for sale any shark/ray species included Annex IIⁱ - List of endangered or threatened species of the of the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected

¹ All recommendations and publications mentioned in this document are available at: <http://www.fao.org/gfcm>

Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean (SPA/BD); these species shall be released unharmed and alive to the extent possible.

- ✓ Obligation to report to GFCM Secretariat annual catches of any shark/ ray species included Annex IIIⁱⁱ - List of species whose exploitation is regulated (SPA/BD Protocol)

Indirect management measures

- **REC.GFCM/40/2016/4 establishing a multiannual plan for the fisheries exploiting European hake and deepwater rose shrimp in the Strait of Sicily (GSAs 12 to 16)**
 - ✓ Any fishing activity with bottom trawlers is not allowed in three delimited areas (Fisheries Restricted Areas – FRAs) in the Strait of Sicily, which is considered an area of special relevance for several species of elasmobranchs.
- **RES.GFCM/37/2013/2 on Guidelines on the management of fishing capacity in the GFCM area**
 - ✓ Providing guidelines to Contracting Parties and Cooperative Non Contracting Parties (CPCs) on how to manage fishing capacity in the GFCM area of competence.
- **REC.MCS-GFCM/34/2010/2 on the management of Fishing Capacity**
 - ✓ Preventing fishing capacity to increase in the GFCM area of competence.
- **REC.CM-GFCM/30/2006/3 on Establishment of fisheries restricted areas in order to protect the deep sea sensitive habitats**
 - ✓ Fishing with towed dredges and bottom trawl nets is prohibited in three delimited areas of the Mediterranean Sea off Italy, Cyprus and Egypt.
- **REC.GFCM/30/2005/1 on management of certain fisheries exploiting demersal deepwater species**
 - ✓ Prohibition of using towed dredges and trawl nets at depths beyond 1000 m (to enhance the protection of deep-sea habitats and deep-sea species, including sharks and rays).

Measures addressing other species of sharks in the GFCM area of application

- **REC. GFCM/39/2015/4 on management measures for piked dogfish (*Squalus acanthias*) in the Black Sea**, providing minimum landing size and requesting CPCs to collect information on catches of this species.

REVIEW OF GFCM ACTIVITIES OF RELEVANCE TO THE ASSESSMENT OF STATUS AND MANAGEMENT OF ELASMOBRANCHS

Since 2010, the GFCM had developed several activities on elasmobranchs with the aim of identifying and filling priority gaps in the current knowledge of the status of elasmobranchs populations in order to better assess and manage their populations in the Mediterranean and Black Sea. A summary of the main activities in relation with elasmobranchs is here below presented:

- **Organization of technical workshops/working groups**
 - Workshop on elasmobranchs conservation in the Mediterranean and Black Sea (10-12 December 2014, Sète, France)
 - Training workshop on age reading of elasmobranchs in the GFCM area (8-12 October 2012, Antalya, Turkey)

- Stock assessment of selected species of elasmobranchs² (12-16 December 2011, Brussels, Belgium)
- Transversal expert meeting on the status of Elasmobranchs in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea (20-22 September 2010, Sfax, Tunisia)

- **Publications**

- Age determination of elasmobranchs, with special reference to Mediterranean species: a technical manual (Campana S.E. Studies and Reviews. General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean. No. 94. Rome, FAO 2014. 38 p.)
- Elasmobranchs of the Mediterranean and Black Sea: status, ecology and biology, biographic analysis (Bradai M.N., Saidi B. and Enajjar S. Studies and Reviews. General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean. No. 91. Rome, FAO 2012. 103 p.)

CONCLUSIONS ON THE REQUEST FROM CITES AS EMANATING FROM THE FORTIETH SESSION OF THE GFCM (Malta, May 2016)

With reference to the 2016 proposals by CITES concerning relevant species in the GFCM area of application, *i.e.* *Alopias vulpinus*, *A. superciliosus* and *Mobula mobular*, the Commission concluded that these species were already protected by specific GFCM (see section above) or ICCAT³ management measures and that such measures are compatible or stricter than those foreseen by the inclusion of those species in the Appendix II of Cites, therefore the GFCM expressed no objection to the CITES proposals. In addition, the Commission highlighted that during its 40th Session a new mid-term strategy (2017-2020) toward the sustainability of Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries has been approved, and includes a specific target towards minimizing and mitigating unwanted interactions between fisheries and marine ecosystems and environment, in which further dedicated measures for the protection of vulnerable species such as elasmobranchs are expected to be promoted.

REMARK

In the CITES proposal of including *Mobula* spp. in Appendix II, references to GFCM (pp. 4, 15, 18) and regulated trade of *M. mobular* are wrong/unclear; GFCM protected *Mobula mobular* in 2012 with the adoption of a binding decision (not a resolution; see section on *relevant management measures above*) which forbids fishing and trading of this species.

ⁱ*Carcharias taurus*, *Carcharodon carcharias*, *Cetorhinus maximus*, *Galeorhinus galeus*, *Gymnura altavela*, *Isurus oxyrinchus*, *Lamna nasus*, *Leucoraja circularis*, *Leucoraja melitensis*, ***Mobula mobular***, *Odontaspis ferox*, *Oxynotus centrina*, *Pristis pectinata*, *Pristis pristis*, *Rhinobatos cemiculus*, *Rhinobatos rhinobatos*, *Rostroraja alba*, *Sphyrna lewini*, *Sphyrna mokarran*, *Sphyrna zygaena*, *Squatina aculeata*, *Squatina oculata*, *Squatina squatina*

ⁱⁱ*Alopias vulpinus*, *Carcharhinus plumbeus*, *Centropristis striata*, *Heptranchias perlo*, *Mustelus asterias*, *Mustelus mustelus*, *Mustelus punctulatus*, *Prionace glauca*, *Squalus acanthias*

²*Raja asterias*, *R. clavata*, *Scyliorhinus canicula*, *Galeus melastomus*, *Glaucostegus cemiculus*, *Squalus acanthias*.

³ ICCAT Recommendation on the conservation of thresher sharks (Family Alopiidae) caught in association with fisheries in the ICCAT convention area [09-07]; ICCAT Recommendation on the Conservation of Bigeye Thresher Sharks (*Alopias superciliosus*) Caught in Association with Fisheries Managed by ICCAT [Rec. 08-07].