

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



Twenty-third meeting of the Animals Committee
Geneva, (Switzerland), 19-24 April 2008

SHARK CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT (AGENDA ITEM 15.1, 15.2 AND 15.3)

Membership (as decided by the Committee)

Chairman: The representative for Oceania (Mr Hay),

Members: Alternate representative for Asia (Mr Giam), Alternate representative for Africa (Dr Maurihungirire), Nomenclature expert (Ms Grimm);

Observers from Parties: Canada, China, Germany, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Spain, Solomon Islands, South Africa, and the United States of America; and

Observers from intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations: Earthtrust, European Commission, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Greenpeace, IUCN–The World Conservation Union, Ornamental Fish International, Species Management Specialists, SWAN International, TRAFFIC and WWF.

Mandate

1. Examine reports provided in accordance with Decisions 14.106 and 14.115 and propose follow-up actions by the Committee as appropriate. Define the critical issues.
2. Examine information in document AC23 Doc.15.2 and other available relevant documents, with a view to identifying key species and examining these for consideration and possible listing under CITES.
3. If necessary, propose species-specific recommendations on improving the conservation status of sharks and the regulation of international trade in these species which the Committee could propose at a future Conference of the Parties.
4. Discuss the progress made in the implementation of Resolution Conf. 12.6 and Decision 14.107, and decide on future activities, work plans and timelines.
5. Regarding agenda item 15.3 assess whether this issue is a matter for the Animals Committee to deal with in the future.

Report of the working group

IUU Fishing (Decision 14.117)

The working group discussed the relevance of IUU fishing to international trade in shark products and agreed that aspects of this issue (particularly unregulated and unreported fishing that supplies international trade) are appropriate matters for the Animals Committee to consider. It recognised, however, that aspects of this issue are also appropriate to the Standing Committee, while the broader issues of IUU fishing extended far beyond CITES.

During the discussion, the working group noted that:

- Australia is preparing a report on IUU sharks which brings together all the different aspects of IUU fishing and its relevance to shark catch. The Animals Committee will be able to use this report in implementing Decision 14.117 at its next meeting;
- A substantial amount of work is being undertaken by FAO on IUU fishing in general, including a Workshop in November 2008 (see below);
- The international expert workshop on CITES non-detriment findings is taking place in Cancun, Mexico, 17–22 November 2008. Individuals of the Shark working Group are encouraged to collaborate with the co-chairs in the elaboration of case studies.

Cooperation with FAO (Decision 14.115)

FAO announced it will be convening a Workshop on 'Status, limitations and opportunities for improving the monitoring of shark fisheries'. This will be held in November 2008, and invitations will be sent out shortly. It will be aimed at countries with extensive shark fishing activities, especially those that have not yet developed National Shark Plans (NPOAs). FAO hopes that CITES will participate.

Topics to be covered include:

- i) What are the main problems in the monitoring of shark fisheries and how can they be overcome?
- ii) What is the relative importance of IUU fisheries to the overall fishing mortality of sharks?
- iii) What are the main problems in reporting of shark catch statistics to FAO, and how can they be overcome?

The working group reviewed reports presented by Parties, and recognised that the above workshop would be of considerable assistance to Parties in fulfilling this and other related Decisions.

In response to a question from a delegate regarding prioritising the species requiring more accurate recording of catches, landings and trade, FAO explained that their policy was not to work on a species-specific basis, but to improve monitoring and strengthen management across the board in order to deliver an ecosystem approach to fisheries management. FAO, however, urged their Members to be aware of their own priorities and responsibilities, for example under CITES.

Customs codes (Decisions 14.104, 14.106)

The working group agreed that Parties' responses to the notification were an improvement on the level of response to earlier notifications, although many of the top fishing and reporting countries had not replied. These Parties should be urged to respond. It might be helpful to draft a new notification with more explicit requests for information, listing the species of concern for which information was sought, as well as requesting information on customs codes.

The importance of more detailed international trade data on shark products was recognised by the working group. This would provide a stronger basis for CITES deliberations on shark trade and would also augment sources of information that can assist with shark fisheries monitoring, management and stock assessments. Chief among these are the use of customs codes for shark fin products that distinguish between dried, wet, processed and unprocessed fins.

The working group acknowledged the benefits of a more universal tracking system, and agreed that this would improve implementation of CITES with respect to both plant and animal species. However, it also recognized the practical difficulties of developing uniform customs codes among all CITES Parties. In light of these difficulties, it noted with appreciation the approach highlighted by Canada in Doc. AC23 Inf. 2 (*Conservation Biology* 2008; Vol. 22(1), p. 4-7, "Monitoring international wildlife trade with coded species data", <http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/j.1523-1739.2007.00857.x>), but agreed that this approach may entail technical and practical matters that could not be fully assessed by this Group.

The majority view within the contact group was that this matter should be taken up by the Standing Committee, with a view to identifying and assessing options, including but not limited to the approach highlighted in Doc. AC23 Inf. 2. Some participants considered that the Standing Committee should defer its assessment until WCO has finalized and adopted the above-mentioned customs data model.

Shark species of concern (Decision 14.107)

The working group discussed the intent of the table presented in the Annex to AC23 15.2: primarily to identify the actions required to avoid the need for listing. Actions already completed were identified but it was also recognised that many had not been implemented. This information would be updated, compiled and circulated intersessionally for consideration by the 24th meeting of the Animals Committee.

The process outlined by USA in AC23 inf. 6 for prioritising species for action was reviewed and agreed as a useful way forward. The USA was requested to progress this further intersessionally, in collaboration with members of the working group and other experts. The intent is to prepare a more detailed paper identifying priorities for action, based on the list in AC23 Doc 15.2 but focusing where possible on species rather than at higher taxonomic level, for discussion at the 24th meeting of the Animals Committee.

The working group recognised that trade regulation through the listing of species on the Appendices was often insufficient to address all conservation concerns. In the case of the sawfishes, the FAO expert panel had warned that national conservation and management measures would also be required in order to provide species protection, mitigate bycatch, and identify and protect critical habitat.

Regarding Decision 14.109, the working group emphasised the need for a workshop on the South American freshwater stingrays, following an update from the Ornamental Fish International on the status of trade in these species. The Secretariat reported that it had consulted with FAO and with their experts and regional bodies in the region, who are keen to collaborate in this initiative, and the Secretariat has included this workshop in their list of funding requirements.

Regarding Decision 14.114 on capacity building and *Galeorhinus galeus*, the working group identified this species as an important case study for the Non-detriment Workshop in November 2008. FAO is keen to collaborate with CITES on the capacity-building workshop but is unable to contribute to its funding. The time window for this workshop is very restricted since it is required to take account of the NDF workshop in November and report to the 24th Animals Committee meeting in early 2009.

Recommendations

1. The Animals Committee encourages Australia to take into account available sources including the outcomes of the forthcoming FAO shark fisheries workshop and the Non-Detriment Findings workshop when preparing its paper on IUU fishing, and to present this report to CITES AC24 for further discussion.
2. The Animals Committee requests the Secretariat to monitor discussions within the World Customs Organization regarding the development of a customs data model, and the inclusion therein of a data field to report trade at a species level, and to notify Parties regarding the existence of these discussions and significant developments therein.
3. The Standing Committee is encouraged to identify and assess options for developing a more universal tracking system, including but not limited to the approach highlighted in Doc. AC23 Inf. 2.

4. Parties are encouraged to develop and utilise customs codes for shark fin products that distinguish between dried, wet, processed and unprocessed fins.
5. The USA was requested to head the work of an intersessional group on the implementation of Decision 14.107 and prepare a paper for discussion at the next meeting of the Animals Committee. This will include progress on previous recommendations and prioritise future actions for species of concern.
6. Range States for the sawfishes (Pristidae) that have not already done so are urged to adopt appropriate national conservation and management measures to protect species, mitigate bycatch, and identify and protect critical habitat.
7. Parties' CITES Authorities and Fisheries Departments are asked to consider the Secretariat's request for financial support for the proposed workshop on South American stingrays.
8. Parties' CITES Authorities and Fisheries Departments are asked to consider the Secretariat's request for financial support for the proposed capacity building workshop on the conservation and management of sharks.