

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

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Sixty-fifth meeting of the Standing Committee  
Geneva (Switzerland), 7-11 July 2014

Strategic matters

Capacity building

EU-CITES SHARKS PROJECT UPDATE

The attached information document has been submitted by the Secretariat in relation to agenda item 20.2 on *Capacity building activities for implementation of the CITES listing of sharks and manta rays*.

## Background

Since the first listings of sharks and other commercially exploited aquatic species on one of the CITES Appendices, it has become obvious that the proper implementation of CITES regulations for such species is complex and requires adequate consideration of existing national and regional fisheries management regimes, and close collaboration with fisheries managers and resource users.

At the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES (CoP16; Bangkok, March 2013), Parties decided to include five additional shark species and all manta rays in Appendix II. At the same meeting, the European Union announced a contribution of EUR 1.2 million to CITES to assist developing countries in their implementation of these new listings. The CITES Secretariat subsequently prepared and submitted a full-fledged project proposal to the European Union, which received technical clearance in August 2013 and official approval in October 2013.

The over-arching objective of this project is to improve the implementation of the Convention, particularly among developing countries, to ensure that trade in CITES-listed species is sustainable, legal and traceable. The specific objective of the project concerning commercially exploited marine species is: to build scientific, legislative and administrative capacity of Parties, in particular developing country Parties; and to help implement CITES for commercially valuable marine species, in particular the species of sharks and manta rays that were listed in the CITES Appendices at CoP16, and for which entry into effect was delayed by 18 months until 14 September 2014. The implementation of activities under this project has progressed at a very rapid pace in response to the urgent need to support Parties to resolve technical and administrative issues related to the implementation before the listing of manta rays and five species of sharks enters into effect.

## Working partnership with FAO

The project builds on the existing collaboration between the CITES Secretariat and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and in particular its Fisheries and Aquaculture Department (FAO-FI). Since 1997, FAO-FI has advised CITES Parties with regard to commercially exploited aquatic species, and supported developing countries with the proper implementation of CITES listings of such species. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed in this regard in 2006.

For the purpose of this project, the CITES Secretariat has engaged FAO-FI from the outset, and successfully established a solid working partnership. As the sole global agency whose main competencies include fisheries and aquaculture, FAO-FI provides the technical expertise and political support of the fisheries agencies to the CITES community.

CITES and FAO-FI are collaborating on a number of activities, including the planning and organization of regional consultative workshops, which are designed to provide detailed information on the capacity and needs of developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America to export, re-export and/or import the recently listed sharks and manta rays in accordance with CITES provisions. In preparation for these consultations, FAO has selected priority countries in each region based on shark catches and shark trade. CITES has conducted a quick survey of these countries to review their current status on the shark fisheries and information/data availability.

These workshops, along with the preparatory study/survey, provide a setting for further regional and national capacity-building activities under the project. The first consultative workshop, for the African region, took place in Casablanca, Morocco, in February 2014; the Asian regional consultation was held in Xiamen, People's Republic of China, in May 2014. Both meetings resulted in a joint declaration by the participating countries, and an action plan of priority needs. Since a regional workshop organized by the Brazilian government in Recife, Brazil, in December 2013 already generated comprehensive information on regional capacities, CITES and FAO agreed not to duplicate this effort. Instead, a questionnaire seeking additional information was sent to relevant countries to complement the results of the workshop.

Discussions are also underway to build upon the ongoing activities at FAO-FI to inform countries about the new CITES-listing of sharks and manta rays and incorporate issues associated with the implementation of CITES measures. Such activities include FAO's support for the implementation of the International Plan of Action on the Conservation and Management of Sharks (IPOA-sharks), establishing stronger CITES linkage to the fish trade and market access discussions, and national fisheries legislative support.

### Working partnership with RFMOs

One of the outcomes of the project's activities in 2013 was the inclusion of CITES sharks-related issues in several important meetings of RFMOs. In 2013, the Secretariat attended meetings of two major tuna-related RFMOs (twenty-third regular meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas – ICCAT and tenth regular session of the Western & Central Pacific Fisheries Commission - WCPFC) as observers and made official interventions, which were generally received well. The project has seen positive cooperation with RFMOs and RFBs in the making.

FAO has provided significant support to CITES in liaising with Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) and Regional Fishery Bodies (RFBs). Thanks to FAO's efforts, CITES was invited to attend as an observer at the fifth meeting of the Regional Fishery Bodies Secretariats' Network (RSN-5) held in Rome on 7 and 14 June 2014. The CITES Secretariat addressed the RSN participants with a presentation entitled "CITES and international trade in freshwater and marine commercially-exploited aquatic species", and exchanged views with the RFBs on further steps in linking with the RFMOs.

### Financial and technical support to Parties

So far, support to Parties has been provided mainly through regional activities. The understanding of scientific requirements of the new CITES-listing of sharks was promoted through financial support to developing country participants and resource persons from the CITES Secretariat or FAO-FI. CITES and FAO-FI staff also made interventions/presentations on behalf of the project partnership at the following regional meetings and workshops organized by Parties and international organizations:

- U.S. Department of the Interior International Technical Assistance Program Workshop to Strengthen the Capacity of Authorities to Conduct CITES Non-Detriment Findings, San Salvador, September 2013
- Southeast Asia Fisheries Development and Education Center (SEAFDEC) Regional Workshop on Data collection methodology for the Assessment of Shark Stock Status, Bangkok, October 2013
- Permanent Commission for the South Pacific (CPPS) Scientific Technical Committee meeting for the regional plan of action on the conservation of sharks, rays and chimeras, Cali, October 2013
- Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Workshop on Sharks Listed in Appendix II of CITES - Preparing for Implementation, Recife, December 2013
- CITES Oceania Regional Workshop: Implementation of CoP16 Shark and Ray Appendix-II Listings, Wollongong, December 2013
- Fourteenth meeting of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) subcommittee on fisheries trade (COFI-FT), Bergen, February 2014
- Central American regional workshop on Non-Detriment Findings, Guatemala City, March 2014
- Thirty-first session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI), Rome, June 2014

Discussions are also underway to provide possible support to the sub-regional workshop for Bay of Bengal countries, to be held in India in August 2014, and to a Central and South America and the Caribbean regional workshop, to be held in Colombia.

Summary reports of these meetings, as well as minutes of the RFMO meetings attended by CITES and FAO staff, will be on the sharks Web Portal of the CITES Website as they become available. (<http://cites.org/eng/prog/shark/summary-outcomes.php>).

Further regional and national activities are scheduled to take place when the CITES-FAO regional capacity assessment consultations are finalized. The Secretariat's technical presentations at the regional workshops in San Salvador, Bangkok, Recife and Wollongong (see list of meetings under Output 1B) also contributed to gaining a better understanding of the NDF requirements by participating countries.

## Visibility-related activities

Visibility is a major part of this project, since reaching out to the regional/national fisheries authorities and bringing them together with the CITES authorities is vital for the success of implementing the CITES-listing of sharks and manta rays.

A sharks web portal (<http://cites.org/eng/prog/shark>) was developed as part of the project and is dedicated to provide Parties and other stakeholders with pertinent technical and administrative information on the implementation of the CITES-listings of sharks and manta rays. Several activities related to CITES-listed sharks had been initiated on the ground prior to CoP16, and many more were launched after CoP16. The gateway aims to collect and consolidate such initiatives as much as possible so as to provide Parties with a clear overview of relevant shark activities that are taking place around the world, and highlight a variety of information, identification and capacity building resources that Parties can get access.

Some of the current major features of the sharks Web gateway include:

- Background information on CITES-listed shark species, including CoP Resolutions and Decisions concerning Elasmobranchs; history of CITES-listing of commercially valuable marine species, etc.
- Events calendar: meetings and workshops organized by CITES and FAO, RFMOs, IGOs, governments, NGOs, etc.
- Identification materials: collection of readily available identification materials on sharks and rays, which has also been built into *List of identification materials* available on the CITES Virtual College. FAO initiated the development of further materials.
- Standard CITES-FAO PowerPoint materials: Based on presentations made at the various regional meetings held in 2013, CITES and FAO jointly developed a standard set of PowerPoint presentations. This consists of eight general and technical topics.
- A comprehensive list of RFMO measures on CITES-listed sharks (database to be hosted by FAO)
- Responses to the Notification to the Parties No. 2013/023 on *Request for information on planned and ongoing capacity-building activities on CITES-listed shark species*, issued by the Secretariat in May 2013. The responses are aimed to assist Parties and stakeholders in learning about current projects and initiatives and in developing new projects that build on existing initiatives.
- Other useful links and documents

A brochure entitled a *brief introduction to CITES listing of shark species* was produced in English, French and Spanish. Copies have been disseminated at workshops and meetings attended by CITES and FAO-FI staff listed in the previous section.

## Looking ahead

2014 will see a rush of activities, particularly as 14 September 2014, the delayed date of entry into effect of the CITES Appendix-II listing of sharks and manta rays, comes closer. By May 2014, the regional consultative workshops will be completed and the planning for specific support activities can start based on the feedback from the countries and regions.

The collaborative activities between CITES and FAO on IPOA-sharks and national fisheries legislation is expected start also in mid-2014. CITES's official participation at FAO COFI and the Regional Fishery Bodies Secretariats' Network meeting in June 2014, in the form of high-level interventions, side events and information stands, will raise the visibility of the project among the fisheries agencies and RFMOs/RFBs. Continued engagement with RFMOs will also bring deeper and more strategic involvement in their programme, having laid some groundwork in 2013.

Continued work to develop information resources and tools for capacity-building will also take place in 2014, with particular focus on the making of non-detriment findings, guidance on legal acquisition and introduction from the sea, and addressing enforcement challenges. Further work on consolidating identification materials and analysing gaps in their availability is also planned for 2014.