



**GENERAL FISHERIES COMMISSION
FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN
COMMISSION GÉNÉRALE DES PÊCHES
POUR LA MÉDITERRANÉE**



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MR JOHN E. SCANLON
CITES

Re: Proposal to amend CITES Appendices I and II for 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES, March 2013

Dear Mr Scanlon,

With reference to your letter DHM/Elk/CoP16 of 16 November 2012, I am pleased to provide herewith relevant information available at the GFCM about the marine species included in the proposals to amend CITES Appendices submitted to the 16th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES.

Of the species proposed to be listed, only the hammerhead sharks (*Sphyrna lewini*, *S. mokarran*, *S. zygaena*) and the porbeagle shark (*Lamna nasus*) are known to occur in the Mediterranean and/or Black Seas, however they are only rarely reported in commercial fisheries. Hammerhead sharks are generally rare in the area, being *S. zygaena* the more commonly reported species. Some observations of the capture of juvenile *S. zygaena* suggest that the species may reproduce in the Mediterranean Sea. There are reports of occasional catches of scalloped hammerhead, *S. lewini*, in tuna-traps in the Mediterranean. The occurrence of *L. nasus* in the Mediterranean Sea is irregular. The species is taken as bycatch in longline fisheries targeting swordfish, being sporadically reported in the Tyrrhenian, Ligurian and Adriatic Seas.

After consultation with our member countries regarding these species, Spain reported that from 2007 to now there was one record of *L. nasus* caught by the Spanish longline fleet in the Mediterranean. There are no recent records of *Sphyrna* spp. caught by this fleet in the area. According to data reported to FAO, catches of *L. nasus* in the GFCM area have been sporadic, oscillating, without a trend, from 0 to 5 tonnes between 1950 to 2010. There are no reported catches of the other species in the area.

Mr John Scanlon
Secretary General
CITES
Geneva

Due to their infrequent occurrence and lack of economic importance in the Mediterranean fisheries, the stocks of these species are not regularly assessed. The Secretariat, however, notes that a study by Ferretti et al. (2008) indicated that *S. zygaena* and *L. nasus* have experienced marked long term declines in the Mediterranean Sea. Also, in a recent IUCN assessment of the status of the chondrichthyan species in the Mediterranean, *L. nasus* was classified as critically endangered and *S. zygaena* as vulnerable. These assessments raise justified concerns about the conservation of these species.

In this regard, some conservation measures have been adopted by GFCM which are of relevance to these species, such as Recommendation GFCM 2005/03 concerning the conservation of sharks caught in association with tuna fisheries. With the adoption of this recommendation, the finning (retention of fins and discard of the body carcass) of sharks caught as bycatch in tuna fisheries became prohibited in the GFCM Area. The finning prohibition was implemented by adopting a 5% fin-to-body weight ratio of sharks onboard, up to the first point of landing. In 2011 GFCM adopted the Recommendation GFCM/35/2011/7 on Hammerhead sharks (family Sphyrnidae) caught in association with tuna fisheries. Member countries were requested to prohibit retaining onboard, transshipping, landing, storing, selling, or offering for sale any part or whole carcass of hammerhead sharks of the family Sphyrnidae (except for the *Sphyrna tiburo*). It also requested vessels to promptly release unharmed, to the extent practicable, hammerhead sharks incidentally caught in fishing operations.

Finally, in 2012 GFCM adopted Recommendation GFCM/36/2012/3 on fisheries management measures for conservation of sharks, skates and rays in GFCM area. The recommendation expands the prohibition of shark finning to all GFCM fisheries and provides special protection of any elasmobranch species listed in Annex II of the SPA/BD protocol of the Barcelona Convention, such as *L. nasus*. According to the recommendation, the species cannot be retained on board, transhipped, landed, transferred, stored, sold or displayed or offered for sale. Also, individuals incidentally caught must be released unharmed and alive to the extent possible. The full text of the above mentioned recommendations are available at www.gfcm.org. We strongly believe that the full implementation of these recommendations by GFCM member countries will help mitigate some of the current threats to the conservation of these species in the Mediterranean Sea.

We remain at your disposal should you require any other information.

Best regards,

Abdellah Srour
Executive Secretary
General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean