

# Sharks and the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES, The Hague, Netherlands, 03-15 June 2007

A TRAFFIC and WWF briefing document  
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At CoP14, there will be proposals to include all species of the family Pristidae (sawfishes) in Appendix I of CITES, and to include two other shark species, Spiny Dogfish and Porbeagle, in Appendix II of CITES. Three other agenda items relate to sharks.

All seven species of sawfishes are Critically Endangered, whilst there is ample evidence directed fisheries have caused over-exploitation of both Spiny Dogfish and Porbeagle in significant parts of their range.



Spiny Dogfish: a CITES Appendix-II listing is clearly justified according to *Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP13) Annex 2a Criteria A and B*.

## Introduction

It is widely recognized that shark species<sup>1</sup> are vulnerable to overfishing because they grow slowly, are late to mature and produce relatively few young. Concern for the status of shark stocks has been growing since the early 1990s. The list of shark species included in the *IUCN Red List of Threatened Species* continues to grow. Of the 556 shark species assessed globally by the IUCN, nearly 20% are considered Critically Endangered, Endangered or Vulnerable<sup>2</sup>.

TRAFFIC and WWF note that the most recent data from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) suggest that reported shark catch peaked at 883 000 t in 2003 but declined to around 773 000 t in 2005<sup>3</sup>. It is unclear whether the decline in catch reflects reduced abundance, the impact of management measures, changes to reporting, or some combination of these factors.

The Parties to CITES, together with members of FAO and the United Nations General Assembly, have called for increased monitoring, research, data collection, and management of shark stocks. The Parties to CITES also recognize the conservation threat that international trade poses to sharks, as testified to by various resolutions to try and address this:

- *Resolution Conf. 9.17; Res. Conf. 12.6; Decisions 10.48, 10.73, 10.74, 10.93, 10.126, 11.94 and 11.151;*
- *Decision 13.42*, directed to CITES Parties, to address poor implementation of the International Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks (IPOA-Sharks), to address the lack of species-specific data collection and reporting on shark catch and trade, and to address the lack of capacity for management of shark fisheries;
- *Decision 13.43*, directed to the Animals Committee, to identify implementation issues associated with CITES-listed sharks, to identify instances where trade is having an adverse impact on sharks, and to identify trade-related measures to improve conservation and management of sharks that have been adopted and implemented by Parties.

## The Animals Committee report on sharks to the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES (CoP14)

The Animals Committee report on sharks to CoP14 (document *CoP14 Doc. 59.1*), referring to implementation of *Decision 13.43* and other work, includes recommendations concerning the conservation and management of sharks directed at CITES Parties, the Animals Committee, the CITES Secretariat and FAO. TRAFFIC and WWF support the recommendations, considering that their implementation will facilitate more informed discussion of proposals to list marine species in general, and sharks in particular, and improve the effectiveness of current listings. In the spirit of the Memorandum of Understanding between FAO and the CITES Secretariat, **TRAFFIC and WWF encourage close cooperation between CITES and FAO** in the implementation of these recommendations, taking advantage of the mandate to CITES authorities to monitor and regulate international trade to complement and strengthen the management objectives of fisheries authorities. Such collaboration will ensure that the expertise and mandates of the organizations involved can be used to maximize their contribution to fisheries management and shark species conservation. **TRAFFIC and WWF encourage the Parties at CoP14 to adopt a Decision or Resolution, as appropriate, based on the Animals Committee recommendations**, paying particular attention to the following.

- The major shark-fishing catching countries and territories (see **Table 1**), which together catch around 80% of the world's reported landings of sharks, should improve, in consultation with FAO, their species-specific monitoring and reporting of catch, by-catch, discards, market and international trade data, and report on progress to the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> meetings of the Animals Committee (AC23 and AC24).
  - ▶ In line with the CITES Secretariat's suggestion (see document *CoP14 Doc 59.1*), **Tables 1–3** specify the major shark-catching and -trading entities, based on the latest available FAO catch and trade data.
  - ▶ Analyses by TRAFFIC<sup>4</sup> indicate that there are a number of anomalies in the catch data, especially when compared to trade data, and improved reporting may address some of these.
  - ▶ It should be emphasized that the catch data available provide little indication of the species of shark taken, which masks impacts on particularly vulnerable species.



Credit: Elizabeth Hayes

Often only a shark's fins are retained, the remainder is discarded overboard at sea. To monitor trade in sharks, a method to identify fins at species level is necessary.



Credit: Colin Simpfendorfer

The extraordinary toothed rostrum (nose) of sawfishes is sometimes traded as a curiosity item.

- The major shark-fishing Parties, in collaboration where appropriate with Regional Fisheries Bodies (RFBs) and with the FAO, should review or develop IPOA-Sharks implementation programmes and report on progress to AC23 and AC24.
  - ▶ TRAFFIC and WWF note that the latest available information from FAO<sup>5</sup> shows that only half of its members have conducted a Shark Assessment to determine whether a National Plan of Action (NPOA) is required and only one-third of these (i.e. less than 20% of FAO members) has developed and implemented an NPOA.
  - ▶ Further, TRAFFIC and WWF note that the FAO has found that, even where IPOAs have been developed, the actions they specify have often not been implemented.<sup>6</sup>
  - ▶ TRAFFIC and WWF believe that members of RFBs are well placed to make a significant contribution to the conservation and management of oceanic shark species, by requiring their members to collect and provide verified shark catch data, through the adoption of measures to preclude the development of new target shark fisheries, and by requiring mitigation of shark by-catch.
  - ▶ TRAFFIC and WWF note that no RFBs have implemented regional plans of action for sharks and that shark conservation and management measures in place in these bodies relate almost solely to shark “finning” and that those measures are, in any case, flawed<sup>7</sup>, as they will not necessarily reduce the incentive to target sharks, to retain fins from otherwise discarded sharks, or reduce the overall mortality of sharks.
- The major shark importers/exporters (see **Tables 2 and 3**) should adopt a standardized set of commodity codes for shark products in order to differentiate between species and product types.
  - ▶ The current lack of species- and product-specific trade codes impedes analysis of the impact of trade on shark species and of implementation issues associated with CITES listings of such species. It is critical that the major traders in shark products introduce Customs codes that facilitate trade analysis, meaningful assessment of CITES implementation issues and, where required, effective implementation of CITES listings.
- An analysis should be undertaken of catches, production, markets, catch-reporting arrangements, trade codes and import data for major shark-fishing and -trading Parties and other entities, including regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs).
  - ▶ This will enable a range of questions to be answered that have arisen from analysis of the data currently available (see <sup>4</sup>).
- The Parties should continue to support the valuable work of the Animals Committee, as specified in *Resolution Conf. 12.6*, in identifying non-listed species<sup>8</sup> in trade that are in need of conservation attention and recommending to Parties the nature of interventions required.
- In order to improve the capacity of countries to make non-detriment findings for marine species, including sharks, and taking into account the outputs from the Non-Detriment Findings Workshop planned to be held in Mexico in late 2007:
  - ▶ A joint (CITES/FAO) workshop should be held to provide guidance on the development of non-detriment findings for listed, commercially-harvested shark species, including shared, migratory, straddling and high seas stocks.
  - ▶ CITES *Notification 2005/004* on implementation of listings should be updated and re-issued, focusing on obtaining more case studies on the development of non-detriment findings and identification tools and manuals for marine fish, especially shark species.

A number of additional conservation measures for sharks have been proposed in document *CoP14 Doc. 59.2*. TRAFFIC and WWF believe that these proposals have merit and that they are consistent with many of the recommendations of the Animals Committee. They should be considered in conjunction with the Animals Committee recommendations to ensure there is no duplication or excessive reporting burden.

### CoP14 proposals to amend the CITES Appendices for shark species

CoP14 will consider proposals to include Porbeagle *Lamna nasus* and Spiny Dogfish *Squalus acanthias* in Appendix II of CITES and sawfishes *Pristidae* in Appendix I. **TRAFFIC and WWF support these proposals.**

There is a substantial amount of material available that considers the merits of these proposals and implementation issues associated with inclusion of these shark species in the CITES Appendices. This material includes reports commissioned by the proponents<sup>9</sup>, the report of the FAO Expert Advisory Panel (document *CoP14 Doc. 68 Annex 3*), and the provisional assessments by the Secretariat (included in document *CoP14 Doc. 68*). IUCN and TRAFFIC have also analysed the proposals (see document *CoP 14 Inf. 13*). In summary, TRAFFIC and WWF recommend that Parties:

#### • Accept the proposal to include all species of *Pristidae* in Appendix I of CITES

The seven species of sawfish are classified as Critically Endangered in the *2006 IUCN Red List of Threatened Species*. Any increased mortality could have a negative impact on their populations and cause further range reduction. The species are affected by both directed and non-directed fisheries, and international trade is likely to be contributing to their poor conservation status. Products in trade include the toothed rostrum (nose) as a curiosity, fins and meat. For implementation purposes, there is a need to identify fins at species level when traded.

*TRAFFIC and WWF note that the FAO Expert Advisory Panel has concluded that the available evidence supports the inclusion of all species of *Pristidae* in CITES Appendix I.*

• **Accept the proposal to include Porbeagle in Appendix II of CITES**

This temperate water shark is widely distributed and its life history makes it highly vulnerable to over-exploitation. It has suffered from stock declines as a result of long-term harvesting for international trade and it continues to be traded internationally. Directed fisheries for the highly-prized meat have resulted in over-exploitation of stocks and the species continues to be caught as incidental catch, with both meat and fins retained for trade. There are instances of dramatic localized depletions that would meet the criteria for an Appendix-I listing. For implementation purposes, there is a need to identify fins at species level when traded.

The FAO Expert Advisory Panel concluded that the evidence did not support an Appendix-II listing of Porbeagle. On review of the Panel's report, it appears that it placed more emphasis on differences in the management arrangements in place for various stocks than on considering whether the conservation of the species as a whole would benefit from a listing (as per *Resolution Conf 9.24 (rev CoP13)*). In particular, TRAFFIC and WWF consider that FAO's reliance on the voluntary implementation of NPOAs for sharks to address the poor management of Porbeagle is overly optimistic given FAO's own assessment that implementation of the IPOA has been unsatisfactory.

*TRAFFIC and WWF consider that Porbeagle meets the criteria for inclusion in Appendix II of CITES and that CITES has an important role to play in conservation of Porbeagle. TRAFFIC and WWF urge the Parties to support the proposal.*

• **Accept the proposal to include Spiny Dogfish in Appendix II of CITES**

This widely distributed temperate water shark is also highly vulnerable to over-exploitation owing to its life history characteristics. The species is traded for its high-value meat and substantial species-specific trade information is available. Fisheries directed at this species have caused serious depletion of stocks. Spiny Dogfish aggregates according to sex and age and this has resulted in targeting of the larger females. Consequently, heavily targeted stocks are male-biased with reduced production of young. International trade also occurs in fins and other products. CITES-listing is clearly justified according to criteria for inclusion in Appendix II in *Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP13) Annex 2a Criteria A and B*. For implementation purposes, there is a need to identify fins at species level when traded.

The FAO Expert Advisory Panel concluded that the evidence did not support an Appendix-II listing of Spiny Dogfish. On review of the Panel's report, it appears that it gave more weight to populations of the species as a whole and that it may not have appreciated the trend for serial depletion of Spiny Dogfish stocks globally and the potential role that a CITES listing may play in preventing an extension of this trend. Experience suggests that there is little chance that implementation of NPOAs will do so.

*TRAFFIC and WWF consider that Spiny Dogfish meets the criteria for inclusion in Appendix II of CITES and that CITES has an important role to play in its conservation. In the absence of a CITES listing, TRAFFIC and WWF believe that serial depletion of Spiny Dogfish stocks will continue. They urge Parties to support the proposal.*

**Related CoP14 agenda items**

Several other items on the CoP14 agenda are relevant to trade and conservation of sharks. These include:

- Co-operation with other organizations (Agenda Item 18.1)
- Introduction from the Sea (Agenda Item 33)
- Trade measures for Porbeagle and Spiny Dogfish (Item 59.3)

TRAFFIC and WWF are supportive of the establishment of a Fishery Working Group, as proposed by document *CoP14 Doc. 18.1*, to enhance the effectiveness of co-operation between FAO and CITES. TRAFFIC and WWF believe that the terms of reference for the Group should relate to practical issues related to implementation and enforcement of CITES for marine species included in the CITES Appendices and that activities of the Working Group should complement and support the activities of the relevant working groups (e.g. the working groups on sharks, sea cucumbers and sturgeons) of the CITES Animals Committee.

TRAFFIC and WWF believe that resolution of the issues surrounding the Introduction from the Sea provision of the Convention is critical to the overall effectiveness of CITES listings of marine species, noting however that it is relevant to only some marine species and to only some species of sharks. Decisions on further inclusions of marine species in the CITES Appendices should not necessarily, therefore, be affected by the resolution of these issues, particularly given that CITES Parties are moving forward in resolving this issue.

Draft decisions were submitted by Germany (document *CoP14 Doc. 59.3*) asking the Animals Committee to examine trade in Porbeagle and Spiny Dogfish. TRAFFIC and WWF look forward to adoption of the proposals to include the Porbeagle and Spiny Dogfish in Appendix II; when that occurs, these decisions would not be needed. However, important work by the Parties, FAO and RFBs in data gathering and data analysis will need to continue, to ensure effective implementation of these listings, as well as effective NPOA and IPOA implementation.



Credit: Juergen Freund

TRAFFIC considers FAO's reliance on voluntary measures to address poor management of Porbeagle stocks is overly optimistic given FAO's own assessment that voluntary implementation of an international plan of action to manage shark fisheries has been unsatisfactory.



Credit: Canoline Raymakers/TRAFFIC

Fisheries targeting Spiny Dogfish for its high-value meat have caused a serious depletion of stocks, particularly of the larger females, which are specifically sought.



Credit: WWF-Canon/Javier Ordóñez



Credit: WWF-Canon/Wildlife Pictures/Jérôme Mallefet

Whale Shark *Rhincodon typus* (above) and Great White Shark *Carcharodon carcharias*, CITES-listed shark species

## Summary

TRAFFIC and WWF believe that inclusion of Porbeagle, Spiny Dogfish and sawfishes in the CITES Appendices will make a significant contribution to the conservation of these species through the management and regulation of international trade. Implementation of the recommendations of the Animals Committee will lend further support to the effectiveness of these and other shark listings and will ensure that CITES Parties are better informed about the impact of trade on other species of sharks.

It is now seven years since the IPOA-Sharks was adopted. TRAFFIC and WWF note with concern the disappointing progress in its implementation. It is clear that reliance on voluntary instruments, such as the IPOA, to improve conservation of shark species has failed and that there is need for a binding fisheries instrument that requires Parties to implement conservation and management measures for sharks. In the absence of such an agreement, CITES can play a useful complementary role in ensuring sustainability of trade in shark species, as well as sustainable shark populations.

Table 1: Top 20 shark catchers

1990		2003		2005	
Catcher	%	Catcher	%	Catcher	%
Taiwan	10.83	Indonesia	14.09	Indonesia	14.11
Indonesia	10.48	Taiwan	7.87	India	8.04
India	7.33	India	7.38	Taiwan	5.94
Mexico	6.42	Spain	7.19	Mexico	5.06
Pakistan	5.73	USA	4.13	Spain	4.92
USA	4.95	Pakistan	3.88	Argentina	4.81
Japan	4.59	Argentina	3.70	USA	3.88
Portugal	3.80	Mexico	3.60	Japan	3.40
France	3.76	Malaysia	3.26	Thailand	3.26
Brazil	3.53	Japan	2.91	Malaysia	3.25
UK	3.12	Thailand	2.89	Brazil	3.07
Philippines	2.64	France	2.63	Pakistan	2.96
Malaysia	2.48	Sri Lanka	2.49	France	2.76
Argentina	2.39	UK	2.29	New Zealand	2.33
Korea, Rep.of	2.25	New Zealand	2.15	Iran	2.26
Sri Lanka	2.18	Portugal	1.98	Portugal	1.99
Spain	2.03	Iran	1.86	Nigeria	1.80
Peru	1.75	Nigeria	1.77	Yemen	1.69
Norway	1.59	Brazil	1.47	Venezuela	1.46
Thailand	1.57	Korea	1.47	Australia	1.44

Table 2: Top 10 shark product exporters

1990		2003		2005	
Exporter	%	Exporter	%	Exporter	%
Norway	15.91	Taiwan	20.47	Taiwan	17.75
UK	11.88	Spain	13.36	Spain	12.79
Japan	10.80	Costa Rica	6.7	Japan	5.48
Canada	7.36	Chile	6.29	Panama	5.44
USA	7.19	UK	5.44	UK	5.00
Taiwan	6.11	Japan	4.98	Canada	4.50
Germany	5.96	Canada	4.85	Costa Rica	4.49
New Zealand	4.62	Panama	4.40	Ireland	4.12
Denmark	3.99	New Zealand	4.04	Chile	3.57
Chile	3.83	USA	4.04	Namibia	3.27

Source for Tables 1–3: Lack, M. and Sant, G. (2006). *World Shark Catch, Production and Trade 1990–2003*. TRAFFIC Oceania and Australian Government Department of the Environment and Heritage.

Table 3: Top 10 shark product importers

1990		2003		2005	
Importer	%	Importer	%	Importer	%
Italy	24.38	Spain	15.10	Spain	15.95
France	17.38	Rep. of Korea	14.53	Rep. of Korea	12.39
Germany	8.22	Hong Kong*	11.57	Hong Kong*	10.06
Denmark	8.20	Mexico	10.10	Italy	9.51
Hong Kong*	7.59	Italy	8.81	China	9.03
UK	6.14	China	7.96	Brazil	8.21
USA	5.83	Brazil	5.13	Mexico	7.02
Spain	4.57	France	4.34	France	3.01
Japan	4.29	UK	2.02	Singapore	2.54
Greece	3.46	Singapore	1.92	UK	2.31

\* data for Hong Kong are recorded separately from those for the remainder of China.

<sup>1</sup> Sharks refer to all species of sharks, skates, rays and chimaeras (Class *Chondrichthyes*).

<sup>2</sup> IUCN (2006). Shark Specialist Group Red List Summary Tables 2000–06 (May 2006). Viewed at [www.flmnh.ufl.edu/fish/organizations/ssg/RLsummary2006.pdf](http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/fish/organizations/ssg/RLsummary2006.pdf), 24 May 2007.

<sup>3</sup> FAO Fishstat Plus Capture Production Database, 1950–2005.

<sup>4</sup> Lack, M. and Sant, G. (2006). *World Shark Catch, Production and Trade 1990–2003*. TRAFFIC Oceania and Australian Government Department of the Environment and Heritage.

<sup>5</sup> FAO (2007). Progress in the implementation of the 1995 Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, Related International Plans of Action and Strategy, COFI/2007/2.

<sup>6</sup> FAO (2006). *Report of the FAO Expert Consultation on the Implementation of the FAO International Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks, Rome 6–8 December 2005*. FAO Fisheries Report No. 798. FAO, Rome, Italy.

<sup>7</sup> Lack, M. and Sant, G. (2006). *Confronting Shark Conservation Head On!* TRAFFIC International, Cambridge, UK.

<sup>8</sup> The Animals Committee has currently identified Gulper sharks, *Centrophorus* spp., School/Tope shark, *Galeorhinus galeus*, Requiem sharks, Carcharinidae, guitarfishes or shovelnose rays and /or devil rays Mobulidae.

<sup>9</sup> For example, Lack, M. (2006). *Conservation of Spiny Dogfish Squalus Acanthias: A role for CITES?* TRAFFIC International, Cambridge, UK.

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