

Outcomes of the South Asian Regional CITES Shark and Ray Implementation Workshop

5th and 6th March, 2018

Colombo, Sri Lanka

Hosted by the Sri Lanka Ministry of Sustainable Development and Wildlife and the Department of Wildlife Conservation, with support from Blue Resources Trust and The Pew Charitable Trusts



Government representatives from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka were in attendance. Other participants included representatives from the CITES Secretariat, scientists, and NGOs.

The following are outcomes of this workshop:

Participants recognize the population declines and vulnerability of shark and ray species, including those listed on Appendix II of CITES, suggesting further action must be taken.

It is in every country's domestic interest, even those that are landlocked, to ensure sustainability of shark populations by reducing mortality for ecotourism, fisher livelihoods, and the health of the ocean.

- Despite national bans on certain species of sharks in some countries, bycatch may still occur and must be addressed.
- Participants thank the Government of the Maldives for offering their expertise and support with regard to ecotourism as a sustainable alternative.

Many participants have already made significant progress in the implementation of the new CITES shark listings, and all are committed to further work to ensure that the implementation of the listings are successful.

- Different approaches to domestic implementation have emerged, including prohibiting the catch and trade of all sharks and rays within their waters, prohibiting retention or export of some or all CITES listed species, development of positive NDFs with conditions that include consideration of quotas and other management measures.
- There was agreement that communication and information exchange between multiple national departments is essential for effective implementation.
- For those countries that aren't exporting shark products, it is helpful to report "0" quota as part of their national reporting to the CITES Secretariat to inform importing countries that there should not be any international trade from these export countries.
- As part of the NDF process, development of an action plan for domestic measures is valuable.
- Participants are encouraged to submit their NDFs to the CITES Secretariat to provide other countries with examples of how they are done.
- There is insufficient focus on artisanal fisheries at present, misrepresenting the true scale of Indian Ocean fisheries. This was supported by the CITES Marine Species Officer present, as NDFs should take into account all sources of mortality.
- The representative from the CITES Secretariat emphasized that the national legislation project (NLP) provides assistance to support the legislative efforts of Parties and help ensure that revised legislation meet the CITES minimum requirements for being placed in Category 1 under the NLP. Additionally, some resources have been allocated by the CITES Secretariat for cooperation with the FAO legal team, which could include national legal assistance.

Recognizing that many sharks are migratory, even if they are protected or managed in one country, they leave those country boundaries and are vulnerable to being overexploited. As a result, it was stressed that the region needs to be working together to improve coordination and cooperation to help protect and sustainably manage the shared stocks.

- A regional NDF or regional management action plan is one possibility to be considered, and the CITES Animals Committee presents an opportunity for exploring this option.
- There is need for regional cooperation given the migratory status of many species, as listed on CMS, which should be pursued through existing platforms such as BOBP, BOBLME, SACEP, and SAWEN. A regional Shark-POA should be worked toward given that several NPOAs have already been developed.

- The need for stock assessments of sharks and rays within EEZs, and throughout the Indian Ocean particularly for shared stocks, is critical to better manage the species.
 - It was noted that NGO's and universities are often collecting such data and should be included in discussions and collaborations with the respective government departments.
- Participants requested a regional implementation workshop for Customs officials to exchange information and knowledge on wildlife trade in the region.

Participants agreed that the most frequently traded products of the CITES listed shark and ray species - dorsal and pectoral fins of the sharks, and the gill plates of the manta and mobula rays - can be identified using visual techniques as a key step in the enforcement process. A visual shark fin ID guide and posters are available at www.identifyingsharkfins.org and at <https://www.blueresources.org/id-guides>.

Participants encourage scientists to develop easy to use forensic methods to rapidly confirm species identification for enforcement purposes.

Participants, including those from landlocked states who are potential transit nations, requested additional national capacity building related to enforcement and identification training. A focus on transit and transshipments was recommended.

Contacts:

Participants and all CITES Parties can approach:

- ❖ Debra Abercrombie (debra.abercrombie@gmail.com) to discuss further assistance with **visual and genetic shark identification**.
- ❖ Isabel Ender (isabel@mantatrust.org) for **manta ray and mobula ray identification**.
- ❖ Sarah Fowler (fowler.sarah.123@gmail.com) for **questions about NDFs**.
- ❖ KerriLynn Miller, The Pew Charitable Trusts (kmliller@pewtrusts.org), and Daniel Fernando, Blue Resources Trust (daniel@blueresources.org), can **help facilitate discussions** if needed.