

**Relevant notes from the Convention on
2023 International Trade of Endangered Species (CITES) Standing Committee Meeting**
ICCAT Secretariat

The Secretariat attended the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species (CITES) Standing Committee Meeting in Geneva, 6-10 November 2023. The main reason motivating this attendance was to explore options to improve the efficiency of obtaining permits for CITES-listed species. This has been a difficult issue for the SCRS, specifically regarding the collection of shark samples for ICCAT scientific studies, since the CITES Appendix II listing of the entire *Carcharhinidae* family of sharks that comes into effect in 25 November 2023 (as well as the existing Appendix II listing of porbeagle shark and shortfin mako sharks), all the major ICCAT sharks, and many of the minor sharks captured in ICCAT fisheries will be listed on a CITES Appendix.

However, it is not just a problem for science. In addition to samples, all landings from the high seas will require a CITES Introduction From the Sea (IFS) permit. This creates significant bureaucratic impediments to the science and management of these and other CITES-listed species.

Motivated by the 2022 Conference of the Parties' inclusion in Appendix II of the family of *Carcharhinidae* (54 additional species), the family of *Sphyrnidae* (six additional species), the family of *Rhinobatidae* (37 species) and the genus *Potamotrygon* (seven species), the CITES [Animals Committee](#) established a Subcommittee on Sharks and Rays. Its mandate explicitly includes engagement with RFMOs and any capacity building which might support their role in the making of legal acquisition findings (LAFs) and related assessments. Its complete mandate and membership can be found in [this document](#).

One of the most important items arose at the Standing Committee was Agenda [item 47](#). Of relevance to ICCAT was the drafting and review of CITES [SC77 Doc. 47](#). The document outlines a variety of issues that are relevant to all ICCAT parties (many of whom are also CITES parties) for IFS mandated under [CITES Res 14.6 and its Annex](#). IFS permits will be required for landing all ICCAT major sharks, and many minor ICCAT sharks in November 2023. The document describes a number of relevant resources that ICCAT Parties dealing in CITES listed sharks may wish to review including: [the Study and Guide on Implementing CITES through national fisheries frameworks, developed jointly by FAO and the CITES Secretariat](#), and a set of frequently asked questions related to parties' obligations under CITES that are listed at the end of this document. These questions and answers are relevant to ICCAT Parties that may wish to import CITES-listed sharks from the sea.

There is other important information regarding sampling permits for CITES-listed species. [CITES already has a scientific exchange exemption and simplified procedures guidelines](#). These simplified guidelines allow registered scientific organizations (museums, government labs) to have a more simplified process for importing samples from the sea and between countries. Parties having difficulties obtaining permits for samples should review this document.

While there are simplified procedures for obtaining sampling permits, CITES is working on improving efficiency further. Particularly relevant to sampling is CITES' [Report of the Animals Committee \(SC77 Doc. 67.2\)](#). First, decision 19.226 d (page 3) of this document explicitly requests that the CITES Subcommittee on Sharks and Rays (see above), in consultation with its Animals Committee, discuss challenges related to transport of biological samples for research and data collection purposes in the context of fisheries management. This includes discussing the context of the provisions on introduction from the sea in the Resolution Conf 14.6 (Rev. CoP16) and making recommendations to CITES CoP20 (SC77 Doc. 67.2 – p. 6). ICCAT's Bycatch Coordinator now sits on that that Subcommittee on Sharks and Rays and can contribute to that discussion. To highlight the difficulties and suggested solutions in obtaining permits for Introductions from the Sea, ICCAT Parties wishing to address these problems would benefit greatly by compiling their challenges (and successes) in transporting samples or research and data collection purposes and submit these to both the ICCAT Secretariat and to respective representatives at CITES so that these issues can be brought to fore in the CITES Subcommittee on Sharks and Rays.

There is a second CITES forum that is relevant to scientific sampling. CITES also has a Subcommittee on the [Rapid Movement of Wildlife Diagnostic Samples and of Musical Instruments](#). The Secretariat (through the ICCAT Bycatch Coordinator) will monitor the activities of this Subcommittee if need be.

Oceanic whitetip shark was the source of a great deal of discussion. The Maldives presented document [67.1 Evidence of Continued Non-Compliant Trade in Appendix I listed Shark Species \(*Carcharhinus longimanus*\)](#). The document shows that there are clear discrepancies between the trade records and CITES database in this species, showing that there appears to be a significant ongoing illegal and unreported trade in this species.

There is one more CITES-related development that matters for ICCAT shark fisheries. CITES is running a workshop on [Non-detriment findings for specimens of Appendix II species taken from areas beyond national jurisdiction and Aquatic species listed in the CITES Appendices](#) (see item 5), the 26 February 2024 to the 1 March 2024 at a location to be determined. The participation of ICCAT at this workshop is important because it might be possible to obtain a regional non-detriment finding for blue shark (now listed in CITES Appendix II) for ICCAT waters. The bycatch Coordinator will maintain contact with CITES about this workshop.

Finally, it is worth noting that ICCAT and CITES already agreed to [Guidelines For Cooperation Between The International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas \(ICCAT\) and the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species Of Wild Fauna And Flora \(CITES\)](#). Given the prominence of CITES in ICCAT fisheries, it would be beneficial to dedicate additional attention to the relationship between CITES and ICCAT.