

**RESOLUTION CONF. 9.17 OF THE CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN  
ENDANGERED SPECIES (CITES) ON STATUS OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN SHARK  
SPECIES. BACKGROUND AND PLANS FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

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The United States recommended that international trade in sharks be placed on the agenda for discussion at the Ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), in November 1994. The topic was proposed because of concern about a recent increase in international trade in shark parts and products, particularly in fins for the food market. These fisheries and their trade are largely unregulated and undocumented. Gauging the effect of this trade on shark populations is further limited by a lack of knowledge of the life history and population status of sharks.

There is no international organization or body currently responsible for the management of shark species. However, CITES is the international treaty responsible for international trade in wildlife, including marine fish. Because of this responsibility, the US believes that CITES provides an ideal forum for the discussion regarding this trade.

After lengthy discussions over several days at the CITES meeting, a resolution was developed by a working group, offered by the Government of Panama and adopted by consensus. The resolution has two parts. First, it calls for the Animals Committee of CITES to review all information concerning the biological status of sharks and the effects of international trade on them in order to submit a discussion paper to the Tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. Second, it requests that the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations and other international fisheries management organizations to establish programs to further collect and assemble biological and trade data on shark species, and submit information on these topics to the 11th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

Implementation of Conf. 9.17 was discussed at the 12th Meeting of the Animals Committee in September 1995, in Guatemala. During a working group meeting on sharks, it was decided that the CITES Secretariat should issue a notification requesting that Contracting Parties submit to the Secretariat all available information concerning the trade and biological status of sharks, including historical catch and trade data on shark fisheries. The Animals Committee asked that this information be forwarded to the governments of Panama and the United States for analysis and report. Panama offered to host an expert consultation of governments, with FAO and other international organizations, such

as IUCN and TRAFFIC, participating by invitation. It was determined that the data collection effort and expert consultation would occur concurrently.

The notification was sent to the Parties in November 1995. The United States has received the responses from the Secretariat and is currently compiling them, along with other information, into a draft discussion paper. This draft will be completed by April 1, 1996. The United States has proposed to the Chair of the Animals Committee a plan for dissemination of the discussion paper to shark scientists for their review and comments. We welcome any suggestions of the ICCAT SCRS Sub-Committee on By-catches for shark scientists to participate in the review. In addition, the United States has been requested to investigate ways to coordinate our efforts, and those of other CITES Parties and NGOs who have plans to prepare papers for submission to the Animals Committee, which will meet in September 1996. TRAFFIC International is preparing a report addressing international trade in sharks and shark products. The Shark Specialists Group of the World Conservation Union (IUCN) is developing an Action Plan which will be a compendium of available information about the nature of shark fisheries and around the world, including species caught, methods of fishing, trends in shark fisheries and conservation measures.

The US plan provides for the draft discussion paper to be reviewed by the Shark Specialists Group and others during the Second World Fisheries Congress in Brisbane, Australia. Using comments from that meeting and from the Animals Committee members, the discussion paper can be updated in time to submit it to the Chair of the Animals Committee in advance of the September 1996 meeting for the Committee's consideration and disposition. In addition, the paper may be reviewed by the experts group mentioned above, if such a meeting is called. The United States has no additional information about the experts consultation at this time. It has not yet been announced by Panama or the CITES Secretariat.

The United States believes that the participation of international fisheries organizations, such as the International Convention on the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas, is crucial in providing information to implement Conf. 9.17. For this reason, we welcome any available information that ICCAT can contribute to the discussion paper and commends the SCRS Sub-Committee on By-catches in developing better methods of collecting and analyzing data on shark bycatch.

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