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**Integrating Legal Protections for  
Sharks and Rays into Western  
and Central Pacific Fisheries  
Commission Regulation**  
*Executive Summary*

## Executive Summary

Many species of migratory sharks and rays have become endangered due to overfishing and excessive bycatch in industrial fisheries. In the Western and Central Pacific Ocean, several international agreements—including the Convention for the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPFC Convention), the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), the Convention on Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) and the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Sharks (Sharks MOU)—address conservation, management, and/or trade of sharks and rays. Many of the members of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) are Parties to CITES or the CMS or Signatories to the Sharks MOU.

To improve coordination of the implementation of these agreements for the better management and conservation of sharks, this report makes the following recommendations:

- When determining legality of sharks caught in areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ) under CITES, Parties should consider compliance with the following WCPFC measures:
  - the shark conservation measure, including a prohibition on retaining certain species; requirement to land sharks with fins attached, discussed in detail on page 27-28 of the report; limits on long-line gear, and operation of purse-seine vessels; requirement to record catch and bycatch by species; and a requirement that WCPFC member states develop national fishery management plans with quotas on total catch for shark fisheries;
  - requirements that address the registration and legality of fishing vessels;
  - CMS requirements;
  - catch records requirements;
  - transshipment records; and
  - port state requirements.
- Improve WCPFC measures related to traceability and documentation at transshipment and landing to help ensure accurate identification of individual species, maintaining identity of separate catches, and legality of catch from the ABNJ.
- When CITES Parties make non-detriment findings (NDFs) about migratory sharks that are caught in the ABNJ, they should consider regional data and assessments of the shark populations, including those of the WCPFC. WCPFC determinations of total allowable catch or effort could contribute to NDFs. The WCPFC could also contribute to making NDF findings where appropriate.
- Consistent with CMS and the conservation goals of the Sharks MOU, Parties and Signatories should work for the following conservation measures within the WCPFC:
  - prohibit take of CMS Appendix I species that include basking sharks and white sharks;

- adopt conservation measures that allow recovery of species that have significantly declined under existing measures, especially oceanic whitetip and silky sharks;
- adopt scientifically based precautionary quotas or effort limitations for all listed sharks that take into account bycatch and fishery-related mortality; mandate gear modification and bycatch avoidance in accordance with scientific research;
- ensure that all members implement the fins-attached rule for landing, and evaluate enforcement and adequacy of alternatives; and
- institute time and area-based fishery closures on an adaptive management basis for species vulnerable to fishery-related mortality for which area use is known.