

Decision IG.19/15

"Adoption of the revised implementation timetable of the "Action Plan for the conservation of Cartilaginous Fish (chondrichthyans) in the Mediterranean "

The 16th Meeting of the Contracting Parties,

Recalling Article 11 of the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean hereinafter referred to as the "Protocol", on national measures for the protection and conservation of species,

Recalling Article 12 of the Protocol, on cooperative measures for the protection and conservation of species, and in particular its paragraph 3 on the formulation and implementation of action plans for their conservation and recovery,

Considering the "Action Plan for the conservation of Cartilaginous Fish (Chondrichthyans) in the Mediterranean" adopted by the Contracting Parties in Catania, December 2003, and more particularly its section C.7 concerning the Regional coordinating structure in the Chapter on Implementation measures,

Noting the work accomplished by the Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas (SPA/RAC) in close collaboration with the Contracting Parties, in evaluating the implementation of this Action Plan and proposing a new timetable for its implementation,

Decides to adopt the revised implementation timetable of the "Action Plan for the conservation of Cartilaginous Fish (Chondrichthyans) in the Mediterranean", as contained in Annexe to this Decision;

Requests the Contracting Parties to take the necessary measures for the implementation of the updated Action Plan within the time limits set out in its updated timetable, and report on their implementation according to the cycle and format of the MAP reporting system;

Requests to SPA/RAC to assist the Parties in the implementation of this new calendar.

Annex

**Action Plan for the Conservation of Cartilaginous Fish (Chondrichthyans) in the Mediterranean:
Updated implementation timetable 2010–2013**

| Action | Deadline | By whom |
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| Tools | | |
| 1. Establish directory of national, regional and international experts on chondrichthyan fish taxonomy, biology, stock assessment, conservation and management, supported by an external panel of experts. | 1 year after adoption | RAC/SPA, advised by IUCN Shark Specialist Group, ICES & ICCAT Shark Working Groups |
| 2. Develop, print and distribute regional and national field identification guides and sheets, highlighting diagnostic characteristics, for improved monitoring of elasmobranch fisheries and landings by government bodies and fishermen. Priority areas: i) Southern and eastern Mediterranean (in Arabic, French, Spanish); ii) Adriatic, Aegean, Ionian (in Croatian, Albanian, Italian, Greek, Turkish); iii) Northwestern Mediterranean (French, Spanish). | 1 year after adoption (basic ID sheets) 2–3 years (more detailed guides) | GFCM/FAO National scientific and management bodies Regional cooperation agencies |
| 3. Promote use of existing standard monitoring protocols and forms (RAC/SPA, FAO) for landings, discards and observations of threatened species. | Immediate & continuous | National scientific and management bodies, |
| 4. Develop protocols and programmes for improved compilation and analysis of data, for contribution to regional stock assessment initiatives. | 1 year after adoption | Regional cooperation agencies, |
| 5. Formalise/reinforce synchronous submission of catch, bycatch and discard data to both scientific and management bodies, and annually to the GFCM. | Immediate & continuous | GFCM and FAO |
| 6. Add further information on elasmobranch bycatch to national reports to GFCM, for incorporation in GFCM database, as recommended by GFCM workshop on bycatch (Rome, 2008) | 1 year after adoption | Contracting Parties, GFCM |
| 7. Undertake information campaigns, improve the provision of materials for publication, and disseminate more widely existing RAC/SPA, FAO and other products (e.g. the RAC/SPA <i>Guidelines for reducing the presence of sensitive species in by-catch</i>). These activities should target managers, researchers and the general public. | 2 years after adoption | AP Partners, Associates and donor agencies |
| 8. Develop guidelines and/or a code of conduct for the management of shark and ray fishing. These will promote catch and release, describe protocols for handling catches in order to minimise stress and improve survival, and encourage reporting of such catches. | 1 year after adoption | RAC/SPA, GFCM Scientific Committee |
| 9. Promote a shift in focus of shark and ray sport/recreational fishing towards catch and release, contributions to research activities (for example through engagement in tag and release programmes), and improved reporting of catches. | 2 years after adoption | Contracting Parties |
| Legal processes | | |
| 10. Establish strict legal protection for threatened and endangered species listed in Annex II through appropriate national laws and regulations. | As soon as possible | Contracting Parties |
| 11. Establish and promote national, sub-regional and regional plans or strategies for the conservation, recovery and/or management, as appropriate, of species listed in Annexes II and III. | 4 year after adoption | Contracting Parties, RAC/SPA, GFCM |
| 12. Support GFCM finning prohibition by enacting national regulations for the prohibition of finning at sea, transport, landing and transhipment of fins without corresponding carcass, by all vessels in national and international waters. | As soon as possible | Contracting Parties |
| 13. Protect critical habitats for chondrichthyan fishes, as soon as they are identified. | Continuous | Contracting Parties, MEAs, |

| Action | Deadline | By whom |
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| Monitoring and data collection | | |
| 14. Promote existing research proposals developed under the RAC/SPA Action Plan (Eastern Adriatic, Balearics, Gulfs of Gabes and Sirta) by adapting them to funding proposals for the consideration of potential funding bodies, partners and Contracting Parties. | 1 year after adoption | RAC/SPA |
| 15. Initiate comprehensive programme/campaign to support data collection efforts in: i) Gulfs of Gabes and Sirta, Levantine basin (areas of highest biodiversity importance for chondrichthyan fishes in the Mediterranean and a high priority for development of precautionary management measures); and ii) Eastern Adriatic (an important region for demersal fisheries and for large rare Mediterranean elasmobranchs). | 2 years after adoption 3 years after adoption | National scientific bodies/institutes, Regional cooperation agencies, GFCM |
| 16. Promote input to the MEDLEM database under the appropriate protocol, to ensure shared access to information on chondrichthyan fishes across the Mediterranean. | Immediate, continuous | Contracting Parties, GFCM |
| 17. Complete and disseminate inventories of critical habitats (mating, spawning and nursery grounds). | 2 years after adoption | Contracting Parties |
| 18. Increase efforts to comply with obligations to collect and submit species-specific data on commercial chondrichthyan fish catch and bycatch to FAO and GFCM, including through increased use of observers on fishing vessels. | Immediate & continuous | Contracting Parties |
| 19. Comply with obligations under existing ICCAT/GFCM Recommendations to collect and submit data on pelagic shark catches. | Immediate | Contracting Parties |
| 20. Improve programmes for the collection of data from coastal fisheries. | Immediate | Contracting Parties |
| 21. Support the participation of relevant experts on the conservation of cartilaginous fishes in RFMO (e.g. ICCAT, GFCM) meetings and workshops, in order to share expertise and improve capacity to undertake data collection, stock assessment and bycatch mitigation. | Immediate | Contracting Parties, RFMO, RAC/SPA |
| Management and assessment procedures | | |
| 22. Review existing sources of data and undertake new studies if necessary to clarify the status of species that are/were not rare in the Mediterranean but are assessed as Data Deficient or Near Threatened, prioritising <i>inter alia</i> : <i>Raja radula</i> and other endemics, <i>Mustelus punctulatus</i> , <i>Carcharhinus</i> spp. and other large sharks. | 2 years after adoption | Contracting Parties, Partners |
| 23. Monitor Critically Endangered, Endangered and endemic species, in particular the species <i>Isurus oxyrinchus</i> , <i>Lamna nasus</i> and <i>Leucoraja melitensis</i> . | Continuous | Contracting Parties |
| 24. Provide to the GFCM an annual description of all national target and/or bycatch chondrichthyan fisheries, in the form of annual Shark Assessment Report. | Every year | Contracting Parties |
| 25. Develop and adopt as a matter of urgency where these do not exist national Shark Plans within the framework of the FAO IPOA-Sharks, incorporating specific regulations for fisheries exploiting chondrichthyans, whether target or bycatch. | 1 year after adoption | Contracting Parties individually and through GFCM |
| 26. Undertake discussions with GFCM with a view to promoting the eventual development of a Regional Shark Plan and associated fisheries management measures and regulations outside territorial waters, to complement and assist with the implementation of activities under the RAC/SPA Action Plan. | 2 years after adoption | Contracting Parties, GFCM |
| 27. Review national and regional Shark Plans every four years. | 4 years after adoption | Contracting Parties, GFCM |
| 28. Implement a programme for the development of stock assessments, by area (Adriatic, Gulf of Gabes, Levantine Sea), and by species. | 2 years after adoption | Contracting Parties, GFCM |