



Partnership Dialogue 4 - Making fisheries sustainable

Input by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)

a) Status and trends

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) has a long history of regulating trade in aquatic species listed in its Appendixes, which include for example all cetaceans, marine turtles, European eels, sturgeons, sea horses, queen conch, clams and corals.

Since the past two meetings of the Conference of the Parties, in [2013](#) and [2016](#), CITES Parties have started to use the Convention to regulate trade in marine species that are caught as target or as non-target in global commercial fisheries, in particular sharks and rays.

The Convention regulates species impacted by international trade to avoid overexploitation and the corresponding loss of environmental and social values by putting in place a regulatory framework requiring assurances of sustainability and controls of legality, underpinned by strong compliance mechanisms.

Most commercially exploited marine fish listed under CITES are included in Appendix II, which allows for commercial international trade to take place, provided that it is covered by permits that ensure sustainability, legality and traceability.

This legally binding mechanism is applied by 183 Parties to the Convention. As such, CITES plays a specialized role in advancing the implementation of SDG 14.4, as a trade measure complementing the work of other organizations to improve fisheries management, for example that of the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and Regional Fisheries Management Organizations and Agreements (RFMO/As.)

b) Challenges and opportunities

As a complimentary instrument under the overarching international legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources provided by UNCLOS, CITES can work in a mutually supportive manner with other binding and non-binding agreements, e.g. through its effective compliance mechanisms.

These compliance mechanisms include a well-developed process for reviewing reported international trade by the scientific committees of CITES (one for animals and one for plants) to identify and correct instances where Parties appear to allow the export of certain species at levels which may be unsustainable or detrimental for the survival of that species in the wild. This review can result in species- and country specific recommendations for

improved trade management, and sanctions in instances where Parties ignore this advice. This process, for example, reviewed the trade in queen conch twice, in the 90s and again in the mid-2000s, resulting in a fishery proceeding on much more sustainable footing, which is good for the species, the local fisher folk, and the people who like to eat the meat.

While CITES provisions are generally complementary to fisheries management measures where they exist, their effective implementation may nevertheless present challenges. This is why the CITES Secretariat, with the support of the European Union and in collaboration with FAO and RFMOs, conducted a wide range of capacity building activities since 2013 to assist developing countries in meeting CITES provisions concerning trade in sharks and other CITES-listed marine species. These activities have for example been recognized in the UN General Assembly resolution on Sustainable Fisheries.

c) Existing partnerships

- *Are many existing partnerships covering the theme of the dialogue? Are there identified gaps in coverage?*
- *Who are the main actors involved in existing partnerships?*
- *Do we know how well existing partnerships are performing? What have been success factors? What are the main challenges identified with existing partnerships?*
- *Have successful partnerships on the theme been narrowly focused in scope, or more holistic, encompassing several related areas?*

For any proposals to add marine species to the CITES Appendices, the Convention stipulates that inter-governmental bodies with a mandate relating to those species need to be consulted. Building on this requirement, CITES has established special cooperation and partnerships agreements through Resolutions or Memoranda of Understanding with: the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO); the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), the International Union on the Conservation of Nature (IUCN); International Whaling Commission, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

On capacity building activities, research and fisheries management issues, CITES has partnered closely with FAO and RFMO/A, as summarized in several factsheets for CITES CoP17, including on [Cooperation between FAO and CITES](#) and on [Partnerships for better management of CITES-listed marine species](#), and which have been recognized in the UN General Assembly resolution on Sustainable Fisheries. This work was generously supported by the European Union and the Federal Government of Germany.

CITES provisions allow also integration of regional approaches for the management of migratory and straddling fish stocks, for example CITES authorities can base their sustainability assessment – known as a non-detriment finding or NDF - on RFMO/As data and findings.

CITES also collaborates with other Biodiversity-related Multilateral Environmental Agreements on joint issues of interest, including for example a joint work programme with the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CMS) that includes work on marine species, and coordination of programme activities with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

As a legally binding international trade measure, CITES also maintains a close relationship with WTO. There has never been a trade dispute under WTO directly challenging a CITES trade-related measure or decision. The background and reasons for this mutually supportive relationship have been set out in some detail in the joint CITES-WTO publication '[Enhancing Cooperation for Sustainable Development](#)'.

[ICCWC](#) (the International Consortium on Combatting Wildlife Crime) presents another partnership through which CITES provides coordinated support to national and regional enforcement efforts by Parties.

d) Possible areas for new partnerships

- *Given challenges, opportunities and gaps, how could new partnerships help with implementation?*
- *What actors would need to be involved for new partnerships to succeed?*
- *What would be critical success factors?*

In recent years, a large number of capacity needs have been identified by CITES Parties involved in the commercial trade in CITES-listed marine species, including:

- assistance with domestic legislation and coordination
- improved capacity to assess the sustainability of fisheries (i.e. make non-detriment findings), including:
 - collection, sharing and usage of species-level fisheries, stocks and market data and monitoring
 - methods to reduce by catch and identify best-practice examples
 - taking small scale fishing activities into account in management
- improved capacity for species identification, including tools and advanced methods
- better understanding of markets and chain of custody

Building on these experiences and the feedback from Parties, the CITES Secretariat seeks to address these needs and scale up practical activities that assist in the implementation of CITES provisions for commercially-exploited aquatic species.

Through joint capacity building activities with other organisations, e.g. FAO and RFMO/As, the advantages of closer coordination and synergizing between regional and international organisations have also become apparent.

The CITES Secretariat remains committed to work in close collaboration with FAO and RFMO/As, supported by the European Union.

Successful implementation of CITES provisions will be measurable through existing CITES reporting systems, e.g. the CITES trade database, and verified through the Review of Significant Trade Process. It will also translate into progress on the implementation of SDG14.4 through Indicator 14.4.1, Proportion of fish stocks within biologically sustainable levels, for stocks of species that are listed under the CITES.

e) Guiding questions for the dialogue