

**RANGE STATE MEETING ON THE  
SINGLE SPECIES ACTION PLAN FOR THE ANGELSHARK  
IN THE MEDITERRANEAN**

*Online, 5-6 July 2022*

**REPORT OF THE MEETING**

**Opening of the Meeting**

1. The CMS Secretariat, welcomed participants to the Range State Meeting on the [Single Species Action Plan \(SSAP\) for the Angelshark in the Mediterranean](#) and thanked the Principality of Monaco for its support. This meeting was a collaboration between CMS, the Sharks Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and a culmination of a long process spearheaded by the Principality of Monaco. 41 people participated in the meeting, including from five Range States and the EU as well as experts and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).
2. The Secretariat mentioned that the Angelshark (*Squatina squatina*), a critically endangered species, was listed on CMS in Appendices I and II which meant that taking was prohibited. It further stressed that the SSAP aimed to address the urgency of the status of the Angelshark and would only be successful with strong collaboration between Range States, experts and NGOs working in the region. The Secretariat thanked those who had already submitted comments on the SSAP and said the meeting provided an opportunity to refine and finalise the plan. There was also a need to decide on how to manage the implementation of the plan going forward and the Secretariat had laid out a [Draft Governance Structure to support the implementation of the SSAP \(CMS/Angelshark/SSAP/Doc.4\)](#) and a [Draft Reporting Template \(CMS/Angelshark-SSAP/Doc.4/Addendum\)](#) for the participants' consideration.
3. The Secretariat informed the meeting that it was expecting a small voluntary financial contribution for initial activities identified as a priority under the SSAP, which would need to be completed in 2022, thus encouraged the identification of some possible ideas for projects.
4. The Secretariat then explained that because there was no appointed Chair at that stage, the CMS Secretariat was willing to act as Chair, which was accepted by the meeting.

**Agenda Item 1: Agenda**

5. The Secretariat outlined the agenda for the meeting and asked whether there were any amendments to the [Provisional Annotated Agenda and Schedule \(CMS/Angelshark-SSAP/Doc.1\)](#). There were no interventions, so the agenda was adopted as presented.

**Agenda Item 2: Introduction to the Process**

6. The Secretariat provided a background to the mandates and timeline for the SSAP process which was contained in the document [Development of a SSAP for the Angelshark in the Mediterranean Region \(CMS/Angelshark-SSAP/Doc.2\)](#).

7. On the initiative of the Principality of Monaco, the Angelshark was listed on CMS Appendices I and II at COP12. CMS Parties had also approved [Concerted Action 12.5 \(Rev.COP13\)](#) for the species which was extended at COP13 to trigger immediate action by Parties.
8. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Signatories to the Sharks MOU (Sharks MOS3) had listed the species in Annex 1 and endorsed the abovementioned CA.
9. The Secretariat explained that members of the Sharks MOU Advisory Committee (Sharks MOU AC) had taken a leading role in the development of the SSAP.
10. In 2019, a Workshop took place in Tunisia, hosted by The Shark Trust and the National Institute of Marine Sciences and Technologies, Tunisia, bringing together members of the Angel Shark Conservation Network (ASCN) along with local and global experts to create the [Mediterranean Angel Sharks Regional Action Plan](#) (MedRAP). This included an annex with activities to be undertaken by governments which was the basis for the development of the SSAP.
11. At CMS COP13, the MedRAP was included in the extension of the CA 12.5 (Rev.COP13) as Activity 2.3 to develop a regional action plan under CMS to guide Range States. In 2021/22, the Secretariat started to draft the SSAP through several workshops and a written consultation with Range States on the draft, which resulted in the draft SSAP to be discussed at this meeting and to be presented to CMS COP14 for adoption.
12. The Secretariat emphasised that conservation activities were urgent, so there was a need to start preparing for the implementation of the SSAP. The Secretariat urged Range States to take ownership, and to drive activities and coordination. The Secretariat offered to assist Range States in this process and expressed hope for sustainable funding for activities and provision of staff capacity by governments, to be discussed under Agenda item 4. In addition, it stressed that the SSAP should be a living document and that monitoring was a key component to ensure that activities were being implemented properly.

### **Agenda Item 3: Single Species Action Plan**

13. The Secretariat outlined the action requested from the meeting, namely to review the draft SSAP and general comments provided in the [Addendum to the SSAP](#) (CMS/Angelshark-SSAP/Doc.3/Addendum) with the aim of agreeing on a final draft to be submitted to CMS COP14 for formal adoption. Furthermore, the meeting was requested to review and discuss the draft Governance Structure (including the draft Reporting Template), and to agree on a final version and on the next steps to take to prepare for the implementation of the SSAP.
14. The Secretariat then introduced the draft SSAP document and noted that the Addendum contained comments received from the EU and Malta. Other comments were contained in tracked changes in the draft itself.
15. The structure of the SSAP followed other CMS SSAPs with sections on:
  1. Biological Assessment
  2. Threats
  3. Policies and Legislation Relevant for Management
  4. Framework for Action with goals, objective, actions and results. The specific activities were in Tables 8-11.

16. Participants then considered the draft SSAP section-by-section for the remainder of Day 1 of the meeting, then reviewed and agreed to the revised document incorporating comments on Day 2.
17. In the **Acknowledgements**, it was agreed to include a text recognising that, while the SSAP was a standalone document, it had drawn from the MedRAP developed by the Shark Trust and that it would be annexed thereto.
18. On **Section 1.2** (Distribution), it was agreed to include a text acknowledging that there were specimens reported in “the Turkish waters in South-Western parts of the Black Sea” as well as changing the legend of the map in Figure 2 accordingly. For Croatia, a text was included to highlight the need to identify and map critical habitats.
19. On **Section 2.2** (Habitat Degradation) it was agreed to add reference to the impact of contaminants such as heavy metals and organic pollutants. Participants also reviewed the Threat Matrix under **Section 2.5**.
20. On **Section 3.2** (Range State status (**Table 5**)), it was agreed to: add to the footnote for the status in Cyprus/Tunisia that evidence had been presented, confirming the status as “Extant;”, and to separate the Greek “other islands” into Ionian Islands and Greek Aegean Sea (with a separate reference to the Turkish Aegean Sea) to clarify the different statuses in these areas; refer to the whole archipelago of the Italian Pelagie islands marine protected area (MPA). Due to there being two recent confirmed sightings in Lebanon, the status was changed to “Extant” in order to reflect the definition of “Extant” in *Lawson et al (2019)*, which was defined as having been recorded within the previous 30 years. The same status change was made for Israel. It was also agreed to include the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) Regional Repository (GFCM-Lex) in Annex IV on Resources (see paragraph 27 below) as a useful reference on status.
21. Participants agreed to move **Table 7** (Legislation) to a separate ‘Living’ Annex III to the SSAP, enabling it to be updated ongoingly. The CMS Secretariat would finalise this Annex bilaterally with individual Range States after the meeting and circulate for information. It was agreed to delete the column on penalties as this was a challenging area with potential for errors.
22. In **Section 3.3**, it was agreed to include a reference in Annex IV on Resources to the GFCM Handbook for Data Collection on Recreational Fisheries, as a resource for reporting sightings.
23. On **Section 4.3** (Species Protection) it was agreed to include reference to GFCM Regulation 44/2021/16, advising Contracting Parties to “adopt additional mitigation measures”, including bycatch mitigation measures for both commercial and recreational fisheries, in order to eliminate the bycatch of *Elasmobranch*, including Angelshark.
24. On **Section 4.8** (National Implementation) it was agreed to include text clarifying that not all aspects of the SSAP would be relevant for all countries and not all actions were mandatory; as such, governments should make their own priorities and “develop their own work plans guided by this SSAP and agreed priorities and according to existing national management measures.”

25. On **Table 8** (Objective 1), it was agreed to move text to a paragraph encouraging the replication of work being done in other areas of the range such as in the Canary Islands. On **Table 9** (Objective 2), it was agreed to include a “Living” Resources Annex IV containing information on and links to the Angel Shark Project modelling tools, methodologies and advisories as resources for governments and others. On **Table 10** (Objective 3), general points were made on the importance of improving scientific data through non-destructive methods as well as the need to streamline reporting. Reference was also made to the Recreational Fisheries Working Group (WGRF) of the GFCM which had established a framework for reporting<sup>1</sup>.
26. On **Table 10** (Objective 3) **Activity 3.2** on recreational fisheries, it was agreed to move paragraph 2.6 to a new 3.1 on adding/expanding scientific observer programmes to follow best practice for a precautionary approach.
27. On **Table 10** (Objective 3) **Activity 3.7** (Population Structure and Connectivity) Malta asked for capacity building and guidance at the national level to incorporate additional analyses of tissue samples, which were not currently included in their data collection framework. On **Activity 3.8** (Life-history studies) the Angel Shark Project noted that they had developed a Dissection Protocol for Angelshark and it was agreed to include this information in Annex IV.
28. It was agreed that **Objective 4** was best discussed under Agenda Item 4 (Governance Structure).
29. The final version of the SSAP as adopted can be accessed on the CMS website [here](#).

#### **Agenda Item 4: Governance Structure**

30. The Secretariat introduced the [draft Governance Structure to support the implementation of the SSAP \(CMS/Angelshark/SSAP/Doc.4\)](#) and the [draft Reporting Template \(CMS/Angelshark-SSAP/Doc.4/Addendum\)](#), noting that the action requested was to review these documents and consider setting up a Steering Group named “SSAP Angelshark Med.”
31. The suggested governance structure had the following key elements:
  - Implementation: undertaken by Range State and coordinated by National Focal Points (NFPs) and National Experts; potentially supported by a National WG (to be decided by governments; Range State national workplans guided by the SSAP;
  - Regional Coordination: through a Chair elected from the NFPs or National Experts;
  - Consultations: with annual meetings to review progress and a triennial meeting to update SSAP activities as well as continuous consultations through a platform provided by the Secretariat;
  - Monitoring and Reporting via: an online reporting template along the lines of the [draft Reporting Template](#) which would be a living document; an annual report on implementation, assessment and recommendations for modifications provided by the Chair; and,
  - Funding: with Parties being responsible for providing funding to undertake measures to implement the SSAP with additional funds potentially provided to developing countries, civil society and scientists supporting implementation.

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<sup>1</sup> [\(PDF\) Handbook for data collection on recreational fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea \(researchgate.net\)](#)

32. The Secretariat outlined its role including, assisting the Regional Chair, NFPs and National Experts, providing the platform for consultations, assisting with meeting logistics, and assisting with identifying partners for implementation and projects on request. The Secretariat emphasised that its capacity was limited as staff time was already bound to existing agreements, thus strong country ownership and leadership was essential.
33. The Secretariat opened the floor for comments.
34. The EU asked for more detail on the financial costs and any expectation of further funding from Parties to the Sharks MOU. The Secretariat explained that the SSAP sat between the CMS and the Sharks MOU, as such was a stand-alone initiative, and the Sharks MOU Signatories would not be expected to fully fund it. The EU asked if the voluntary funding announced at the beginning of the meeting was sufficient to provide base funding for the SSAP. The Secretariat explained it was earmarked only for conservation activities. The SSAP funding should ideally cover several years to allow for proper planning and implementation of projects. The Secretariat also noted that overall costs for the implementation of the SSAP had not been assessed at that point.
35. The proposed governance structure was largely based on the assumption that governments would take a leading role. The Chair would have to invest approximately three days per month and five days in addition preparing a report and an annual/triannual meeting.
36. Several different options were outlined drawn from existing action plans, including hiring a coordinator, who would be based in an NGO in the region. The Secretariat explained that much of the proposed governance structure was based on existing models within the African Eurasian Waterbirds Agreement (AEWA), and that AEWA had longstanding experience in developing management and action plans, coordinated in different ways depending on the species range and complexity.
37. The EU proposed adding information about the role of the Secretariat, and to clarify that the Sharks MOU budget would not be affected by costs of the implementation of the SSAP Angelshark. The Secretariat said it was possible to include more information, but it was important to consider the forum for agreement on these next steps. For example, the meeting could instruct the Secretariat to develop funding options for circulation or agree to form an Interim Working Group (IWG) to develop the governance structure in more detail and agree on a way forward. The SSAP and Governance structure would be presented to the Sharks MOS with encouragement for Range States to assist in supporting SSAP activities and inviting other States to do the same.
38. In answer to a question as to whether there was a need to wait for the SSAP to be adopted by COP14, the Secretariat clarified that it would be possible to proceed with the implementation of projects for the species even before the SSAP is formally adopted by COP14.
39. It was agreed to establish an IWG. The Terms of Reference to guide the work of the IWG were agreed as:
  - To further refine the document on the Governance Structure (CMS/Angelshark-SSAP/Doc.4), and in particular to elaborate funding options;

- To report back to the Range States, partner organisations, experts and other stakeholders on the revised draft Governance Structure in an online meeting to be organized by the Secretariat. The meeting shall take place soon as possible after CITES COP19 (14 - 25 November 2022);
  - To advise the Secretariat on how to use funds made available for implementation in the remainder of 2022, based on information on existing activities that are underway for Angelshark conservation in the region.
40. The following participants agreed to take part: the EU; WWF Mediterranean; the Shark Trust; and the Angel Shark Project. Membership remained open to other Range States and stakeholders.

#### **Agenda Item 5: Next Steps**

41. The Secretariat would clean up the draft SSAP document and approach individual governments to finalise Table 7 (Annex III) on legislation before circulating the final document as information to the region. The SSAP would then be presented for adoption at CMS COP14 and the Sharks MOS. The IWG would convene as organised by the Secretariat, and it would advise the Secretariat on how to use the available funds for implementation.
42. It was agreed that the timing of the online meeting of the IWG would be arranged via email. The next Range State meeting (a single online session) would be held after the next meeting of the Convention on International Trade in Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) COP19 in late November, 2022.

#### **Agenda Item 6: Any Other Business**

43. The Secretariat announced that the Sharks MOS4 would be a 4-day<sup>2</sup> in-person meeting in the week of 27<sup>th</sup> February and that the Secretariat was looking for a host. Failing that, it would be held in Bonn.

#### **Closure of the Meeting**

44. With the customary thanks the Secretariat closed the meeting.

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<sup>2</sup> Later confirmed as a 3-day meeting, 28 February – 2 March 2023)

**ANNEX**

Range State Meeting on the Single Species Action Plan for the Angelshark in the  
Mediterranean Sea  
5-6 July 2022

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