



**CONVENTION ON
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Agenda Item 25.6

**SINGLE SPECIES ACTION PLAN
FOR THE NORTHEAST ATLANTIC AND MEDITERRANEAN SUB-POPULATION OF THE
TOPE SHARK (*Galeorhinus galeus*)**

(Prepared by the European Union)

Summary:

The European Union has submitted this document which presents a draft Single Species Action Plan for the Northeast Atlantic and Mediterranean Sub-Population of the Tope Shark (*Galeorhinus galeus*) and contains a proposed Resolution and Decisions for the adoption of the SSAP.

SINGLE SPECIES ACTION PLAN FOR THE NORTHEAST ATLANTIC AND MEDITERRANEAN SUB-POPULATION OF THE TOPE SHARK (*Galeorhinus galeus*)

Background

1. The tope shark (*Galeorhinus galeus*) is a slow-growing, and highly migratory elasmobranch, growing up to 2 m in length, listed as Critically Endangered according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) *Red List of Threatened Species* in most of its global range, including the Northeast Atlantic and Mediterranean subpopulations. Globally, the species has experienced severe population declines due to overfishing, bycatch, habitat degradation, and insufficient management. The tope shark was listed on CMS Appendix II at COP13 in 2020 and added to Annex 1 of the Sharks MOU in 2023.
2. In most parts of their distribution range, tope have been targeted in demand for liver-oil, meat and fins with gillnets and longlines and are also a common bycatch in trawl and other fisheries. Most of the stocks are shared between range states and are depleted to varying degrees, with serious levels of depletion in some areas.
3. While some regional protections exist (e.g., GFCM recommendations and national measures in the UK), enforcement and implementation remain inconsistent, and a comprehensive international conservation approach is urgently needed.
4. To address these issues, a draft Single Species Action Plan for tope in the Northeast Atlantic and Mediterranean (SSAP Tope Shark NEA/Med) was developed, attached as Annex 2 to this document. This plan outlines coordinated actions to support recovery, promote international cooperation, and address key threats through science-based management, protection of essential habitats, and improved data collection.
5. The SSAP was developed through expert input, literature review, consultation with Range States, and consideration of existing conservation frameworks. It includes a threat and barrier analysis, as well as measurable recovery criteria to guide implementation.
6. The SSAP Tope Shark NEA/Med includes information on biology, threats and existing legislation for the Tope shark, as well as a comprehensive framework for action. Activities were developed based on five main objectives:
 - Implement fisheries management measures based on scientific advice;
 - Identify and protect essential life-stage habitats;
 - Improve scientific knowledge through targeted studies;
 - Enhance international collaboration;
 - Secure long-term funding for implementation.
7. These objectives align with CMS and Sharks MOU mandates and reflect a collaborative, multi-sectoral approach, emphasizing the importance of Range State cooperation and coordination with relevant bodies such as ICES, GFCM, and national authorities.
8. The SSAP provides an action-oriented roadmap with clearly defined priorities and timelines, designed to be adaptive and regularly reviewed to respond to new data and shifting environmental conditions.

Consultation process

9. Table 1 provides an overview of the consultation process for the development of the SSAP.

July 2024	Agreement in EU CMS Working Group on development of SSAP
October 2024	Kick off meeting in Thessaloniki
December 2024	1st virtual expert meeting
January 2025	Introductory webinar for Range State
February 2025	2nd virtual expert meeting
May 2025	1st Range State meeting
June 2025	In-person expert meeting in Plymouth
July 2025	2nd Range State meeting
August 2025	Final review round by experts and Range States

Discussion and analysis

10. Comprehensive international conservation action is needed to improve the conservation status of the species, due to the population decline and the lack of enforcement and implementation of existing regulation for the protection of tope shark populations in the Northeast Atlantic and Mediterranean. CMS plays an important role in conserving the species and its habitats by promoting coordinated conservation efforts among Range States. The SSAP Tope Shark NEA/Med was developed to provide guidance to Range States in the Northeast Atlantic and Mediterranean region on high priority activities to improve the conservation status of the species.
11. It is critical that, following its adoption, steps are taken to implement the actions set out in the SSAP, which are reflected in the draft Resolution contained in Annex 1 and the draft Decisions contained in Annex 3. The Secretariat is expected to continue assisting Range States with and monitor the implementation of the SSAP subject to the availability of resources.

Recommended actions

12. The Conference of the Parties is recommended to:
- a) adopt the draft Resolution contained in Annex 1 of this document, including the Action Plan that will be annexed to the Resolution (here presented as Annex 2); and
 - b) adopt the draft Decisions contained in Annex 3 of this document.

DRAFT RESOLUTION

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Noting that the Tope Shark (*Galeorhinus galeus*) was listed on CMS Appendix II in 2020 and in Annex 1 of the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Sharks in 2023,

Alarmed by an estimated 88% global population reduction over three generations and the classification of the Northeast Atlantic and Mediterranean subpopulations as Critically Endangered by the IUCN,

Recognizing the species' slow growth, late maturity, slow reproduction cycle and philopatric behaviour, which heighten its vulnerability to overexploitation and habitat loss,

Deeply concerned that the species is persistently threatened by commercial and recreational fisheries and continued degradation of essential coastal habitats such as nursery and pupping grounds due to coastal development, pollution, and climate change,

Acknowledging the lack of species-specific catch limits, the inadequacy of data for stock assessments, persistent IUU fishing as well as mislabeling in both commercial and recreational sectors,

Emphasizing the importance of protecting critical life-stage habitats and reducing human-induced threats to ensure population recovery,

Recognizing that a multi-pronged approach is required that simultaneously addresses knowledge, resources, capacity and legal gaps that hinder effective conservation of the species, while, at the same time, implementing and enforcing existing laws and regulations that can mitigate threats to the species,

Recognizing that implementation of effective conservation and management strategies requires enhanced regional and international cooperation among Range States and relevant fisheries bodies,

Noting the links between the Single Species Action Plan and the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Sharks (Sharks MOU),

Further noting the high relevance of several work areas of the CMS to the conservation of the Tope Shark, especially concerning bycatch, marine pollution and habitat conservation,

Affirming the need to address the catches of the species in close collaboration with the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) and the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna (ICCAT).

*The Conference of the Parties to the
Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals*

1. *Adopts* the Single Species Action Plan for the Northeast Atlantic and Mediterranean sub-population of the Tope shark (*Galeorhinus galeus*) (SSAP Tope shark NEA/Med) contained in Annex 1, with the overall aim of enabling the subpopulation to recover to levels commensurate with its biological potential.
2. *Urges* Parties and *invites* non-Party Range States to implement the relevant provisions of the SSAP Tope shark NEA/Med, particularly those of high and essential priority;
3. *Calls on* Range States to take immediate steps, where not already in place, to:
 - Implement fisheries management strategies based on the best available scientific advice;
 - Regulate recreational catches and report associated mortality;
 - Grant protection to essential habitats and include tope shark in relevant marine conservation legislation;
 - Enforce existing prohibitions on landings and improve compliance with regional conventions; and
 - Consider extending catch prohibitions where they do not exist.
4. *Further Calls on* Range States to strive for active collaboration between stakeholders to maximize the effective use of resources and expertise, and to facilitate regional collaboration between stakeholders in different Range States to ensure that knowledge and experience gained in one country can be used to most effectively implement conservation action in another, especially in countries where cross-border populations are suspected to occur;
5. *Requests* Parties and non-Parties and relevant donors to mobilize financial resources and to implement the activities outlined in the SSAP Tope shark NEA/Med.
6. *Calls on* Party and non-Party Range States to provide technical support to the implementation of the SSAP Tope shark NEA/Med, to integrate tope shark conservation into national marine restoration and research agendas and to invest in long-term ecological studies, tagging programmes, stock assessments, and market monitoring, with emphasis on reducing misidentification and mislabeling;
7. *Invites* other relevant intergovernmental organisations, in particular ICES, GFCM and ICCAT to consider the provisions of the SSAP Tope shark NEA/Med when planning activities within their mandates to support its implementation, as appropriate;
8. *Instructs* the Secretariat to bring the SSAP Tope shark NEA/Med to the attention of all Range States and relevant intergovernmental organizations and to assist with and monitor its implementation, subject to the availability of resources.
9. *Invites* the expert network that has been established for the development of the SSAP Tope shark NEA/Med to continue in an advisory role for its implementation; and
10. *Instructs* the CMS Secretariat to bring the SSAP Tope shark NEA/Med to the attention of all Range States and relevant intergovernmental organizations and to assist with and monitor the implementation of the SSAP subject to the availability of resources.

ANNEX 2

**SINGLE SPECIES ACTION PLAN
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NB: The Single Species Action Plan for the Northeast Atlantic and Mediterranean Sub-Population of the Tope Shark (*Galeorhinus galeus*) is presented as a separate file [here](#).

ANNEX 3**DRAFT DECISIONS****SINGLE SPECIES ACTION PLAN
FOR THE NORTHEAST ATLANTIC AND MEDITERRANEAN SUB-POPULATION OF THE
TOPE SHARK (*Galeorhinus galeus*)*****Directed to Parties***

15.AA Parties that are Range States to the species are requested to:

- a) undertake, those actions of the Single Species Action Plan for the for the Northeast Atlantic and Mediterranean Sub-Population of the tope shark (SSAP Tope shark NEA/Med) specified for immediate and short-term implementation and for delivery within three years as a matter of priority;
- b) continue ongoing and medium-term activities, and start implementation of long-term activities within five years;
- c) establish a governance structure, including a Working Group of Range States, to support and monitor implementation and to facilitate cooperation and communication among Range States;
- d) provide a brief report on the implementation of the SSAP Tope shark NEA/Med in time for the last meeting of the Sessional Committee before the 16th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP16) using a template provided by the Secretariat;
- e) encourage non-Party Range States to engage with Party Range States in the implementation of activities outlined in the SSAP Tope shark NEA/Med.

Directed to non-Party Range States

15.BB Non-Party Range States are encouraged to engage with Party Range States in the implementation of activities outlined in the SSAP Tope shark NEA/Med.

Directed to intergovernmental organizations

15.CC Intergovernmental organizations, in particular the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Sharks and its Advisory Committee, and the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) are encouraged to engage with the implementation of activities outlined in the SSAP Tope shark NEA/Med.

Directed to the Scientific Council

15.DD The Scientific Council is requested to review the summary of information provided by Range States on the implementation of the SSAP Tope shark NEA/Med and make recommendations on the further implementation of the SSAP Tope shark NEA/Med to COP16.

Directed to the Secretariat

15.EE The Secretariat shall, subject to the availability of resources:

- a) encourage non-Party Range States to contribute to the implementation of the SSAP Tope shark NEA/Med;
- b) develop and disseminate to Range States a simple reporting form, to enable assessment of progress in the implementation of the SSAP Tope shark NEA/Med to facilitate reporting in advance of COP16 and prepare a summary for review by the Scientific Council and for consideration by COP16; and
- c) assist Range States in the establishment of a governance structure and monitoring system and provide a platform for communication upon request and subject to the availability of resources.