

SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL COMMENTS

(arising from ScC-SC8)

**PROPOSAL FOR THE INCLUSION OF THE PELAGIC THRESHER (*ALOPIAS PELAGICUS*),
THE BIGEYE THRESHER (*ALOPIAS SUPERCILIOSUS*), AND THE COMMON THRESHER
(*ALOPIAS VULPINUS*) ON APPENDIX I OF THE CONVENTION**
UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.30.2.12

(ScC-SC8 Agenda item 13.2.12)

GENERAL COMMENTS ON THE DOCUMENT

The COP-appointed Councilor for Marine Fish made an intervention on behalf of the Advisory Committee (AC) of the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Sharks (Sharks MOU), noting the extensive review of all shark and ray listing proposals submitted to COP15, undertaken by the AC.

The Advisory Committee reviewed the three thresher sharks. All three species are migratory, widely distributed, and susceptible to pelagic longline and gillnet fisheries. However, the AC's conclusions differed for each species due to the nature of the available datasets and the consistency of population trends across regions.

The AC concluded that only *Alopias pelagicus* meets the criteria for Appendix I-listing, while *A. superciliosus* and *A. vulpinus* do not.

The COP-appointed Councillor highlighted that a recurring difficulty in interpreting the available datasets for all three *Alopias* species was that they have historically been very difficult to distinguish in the field, particularly in regions with limited observer coverage. She reiterated that the species are under immense pressure and data deficient. She recommended listing all species on Appendix I as one group that is declining.

The Sessional Committee's discussion focused on significant data limitations and uncertainty regarding historical datasets, species misidentification, and incomplete geographic coverage. The Sessional Committee highlighted concerns about heavy fishing pressure and high biological vulnerability and stressed that the lack of precise data should trigger a precautionary approach rather than delay action. There was broad support for treating the three thresher shark species collectively, given their similarity, and frequent misidentification.

The Sessional Committee recommended that in future any listing proposal be accompanied by a clearly defined Concerted Action, outlining immediate and practical measures to address conservation and management needs.

The prevailing view of the Sessional Committee was that the available evidence of declines, combined with ongoing data deficiencies, justified precautionary action and strengthened international cooperation.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO COP15

The Scientific Council recommends adopting the proposal for the inclusion of the pelagic thresher shark (*Alopias pelagicus*), the bigeye thresher shark (*Alopias superciliosus*), and the common thresher shark (*Alopias vulpinus*) on Appendix I of the Convention.