UN environment programme CMS

SSAP Angelshark Mediterranean Working Group

WORKING GROUP ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SINGLE SPECIES ACTION PLAN FOR THE ANGELSHARK IN THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA

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2ND MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SINGLE SPECIES ACTION PLAN FOR THE ANGELSHARK IN THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA (ANGELSHARK MED WG2)
Bonn, Germany, 3 December 2026
Agenda Item 5

ADVICE FOR SPATIAL MANAGEMENT OF ANGEL SHARKS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA

(Prepared by the Secretariat)

Summary

1. This document provides an update on the agreed actions and recommendations on area-based management for Angelsharks in the Mediterranean Sea, since the first meeting of the Working Group (Angelshark WG1) in 2025. Furthermore, it summarises the decisions that were taken at the 15th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP15), 23-29 March, in Campo Grande, Brazil, relevant to area-based management of sharks and rays, including Angelsharks.

2. Complementing this document, the Angel Shark Project will give a presentation to the Angelshark Med WG under agenda item 5, introducing its updated analysis of the status of Angelsharks in the Mediterranean.

Background and Mandate

3. The Single Species Action Plan for the Angelshark, *Squatina squatina* in the Mediterranean Sea (SSAP Angelshark Med) was adopted by CMS Parties at COP14 in February 2024, Samarkand, Uzbekistan (Decision 14.101). Objective 2 of the SSAP Angelshark Med requests the "identification of sites and habitats of Angelshark in the Mediterranean Sea with the result to identify former, current and potential Critical Angel Shark Areas (CASAs) and ascertain the status of Angelshark in these areas".

4. A spatial advice document was prepared by the Angel Shark Project and submitted to Angelshark WG1), in 2025 (UNEP/CMS/AngelsharkWG2/Inf.4). The advice document aimed to contribute to the implementation of actions 2.1 on data collection and 2.5 on the role of the current Marine Protected Area network, agreed under Objective 2 of the SSAP Angelshark Med.

5. The Angel Shark Project presented spatial advice using habitat models and mapping of Critical Angel Shark Areas (CASAs), showing that **more than 90% such areas lack effective MPA coverage**. A recommendation was discussed to **increase MPA coverage of these areas to at least 10%,** supported by an interactive map tool for spatial planning. The Secretariat circulated the spatial advice document including its recommendations to the Working Group for further comments, before consolidating a final version to be submitted to COP15.

6. At **COP15**, the spatial advice document was submitted as an information document and referred to in documents UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.25.3.1 on *Priorities for Area-based Conservation of Marine Migratory Species* and UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.25.6.3/Rev.1 on *Sharks and Rays*. Parties agreed under Decision 15.116 the following:

When taking and implementing relevant decisions in the regional cooperation frameworks, consider and apply the recommendations on area-based management of the Angelshark in the Mediterranean provided in UNEP/CMS/COP15/Inf.25.6.3f and in line with UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.25.3.1 on Priorities for Area-based Conservation of Marine Migratory Species;

7. In addition, Parties adopted Decisions regarding priorities for area-based conservation of Marine Migratory species under **Resolutions 15.3** and **12.52-15.56**, recognizing Important Shark and Ray Areas (ISRAs) for identifying and conserving important habitats. COP15 adopted the following Decisions on this issue:

15.52** **Decision directed to Parties

*Parties are requested to make use, as appropriate, of the identified Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs), **Important Shark and Ray Areas (ISRAs),**Important Marine Turtle Areas (IMTAs), Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs) and Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) **when identifying habitat at risk or designing threat mitigation measures, assessing environmental impacts, and when designating marine protected areas, or generally for marine spatial planning purposes, including through National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs).***

15.53** **Decision directed to Parties

*Parties that are also members of **Regional Fishery Bodies (RFBs)** are requested to encourage those bodies: a) **to make existing fisheries and observer data available and/or support with analysis of these data for the purpose of ISRA,** IMMA, IMTA, and KBA delineation, and to increase efforts to undertake additional research on the habitats of relevant species, including reproductive areas (e.g., nursery or mating grounds); b) **to collaborate closely with CMS and relevant CMS daughter agreements to ensure that ISRA**, IMMA, IMTA, and KBA **identification and conservation measures are appropriately reflected into fisheries research and management frameworks.***

15.54** **Decision directed to Parties, IGOs & NGOs

*Parties, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations are encouraged to actively **engage** with and **provide financial and technical support** to IUCN Commissions and the KBA Partnership for the process of identifying IMMAs, ISRAs, IMTAs, and KBAs globally.*

15.55** **Decision directed to Scientific Council

*The Scientific Council is requested to, subject to the availability of resources: a) develop a report about **improving the long-term effectiveness of protected areas dedicated to marine migratory species** in the face of climate change, and make recommendations to Parties; b) collaborate with IUCN Commissions and the KBA Partnership to include data on CMS-listed species in the identification of IMMAs, ISRAs, IMTAs, and KBAs.*

15.56 Decision directed to Secretariat

The Secretariat shall: a) inform Parties of newly identified IMMAs, ISRAs and IMTAs, and the relevant CMS-listed species; b) reach out to other relevant regional and international organizations to bring to their attention the value of identifying IMMAs, ISRAs, IMTAs, and KBAs for conservation planning; c) continue to liaise with IUCN Commissions to promote the value of IMMAs, ISRAs, IMTAs, and KBAs for the conservation of CMS-listed species, and continue to engage in the Blue Corridors for Turtles partnership; d) continue to engage in the process around the BBNJ Agreement, including attending upcoming meetings.

Status of Angel Sharks in the Mediterranean

8. As described in information document UNEP/CMS/Angelshark WG2/Inf.4, a total of **5 ISRAs**, **2 candidate ISRA (cISRA)** and **3 Areas of Interest (AoI)** have been identified for the **three angel shark species** in the Mediterranean and 8 ISRAs were delineated including angel sharks as Supporting Species. **Only 2% of the identified ISRAs fall within a Marine Protected Area (MPA) with a fully or partially implemented management plan.** Based on the contemporary presence, key habitats, area-based management measures and gaps, the following countries have been identified as priority areas (or Range States) for research, biodiversity management and conservation for angel sharks in the Mediterranean Sea: **Croatia, Cyprus, France (Corsica), Greece, Italy, Libya, Malta, Tunisia,** and **Türkiye.**

9. Since Angelshark WG1 in 2025, more information has become available, including new designated MPAs and new angel shark sightings. Therefore, the Angel Shark Project is currently updating the analysis provided in the spatial advice document (UNEP/CMS/Angelshark WG2/Inf.4) and preparing a peer-review scientific publication.

10. Furthermore, an **interactive map** and **folder** with all the layers and data will be available to identify on a fine scale the priority areas for angel sharks (all three species) in each country. During this meeting (Angelshark WG2), a presentation will be given by the Angel Shark Project, showing the latest results and a case study on how the data can be used.

Other CMS Appendix I listed species

11. At CMS COP15, the IUCN SSC Shark Specialist Group presented the *Ocean Travellers: Safeguarding Critical Habitats for Migratory Sharks and Rays* report (UNEP/CMS/COP15/Inf.25.3.1b), which provides a first global overview of ISRAs identified for sharks and rays listed under CMS and the Sharks MOU, including the Angelshark as a case study. The report offers recommendations for CMS Parties to consider.

12. For the purpose of Angelshark WG2, an overview of CMS Appendix I-listed species that are present in the Mediterranean was developed and the number of ISRAs identified for each species in the Mediterranean (see Table 1). Several of these ISRAs and important habitats overlap with Angelshark ISRAs. Measures applied and agreed for Angelsharks may therefore also benefit other Appendix I-listed species. In this respect, the Angelshark Med WG could consider expanding the spatial analysis prepared for angelsharks and overlaying it with other available ISRA layers, to identify priority hotspots that may benefit other species as well.

This may also be relevant for EU Member States with several species included in Annex III of the Nature Restoration Regulation, including the Angelshark (see Table 1).

Table 1. Overview of CMS Appendix 1 listed species in the Mediterranean

CMS Appendix I Species	Entire population listed on CMS Appendix I	Only Mediterranean population listed on CMS Appendix I	Included in Annex III EU Nature Restoration Regulation	Included in Annex I[1] EU REGULATION (EU) 2019/1241	Number of ISRAs identified in the Mediterranean
Angelshark		x	x	x	4
Blackchin Guitarfish		x	x	x	11
Common Guitarfish		x	x	x	4
Duckbill Eagle Ray		x			7
Lusitanian Cownose Ray		x			3
Common Thresher Shark	x				1
Spinetail Devil Ray	x		x	x	7
Great White Shark	x				2
Sand Tiger Shark	x				0

Recommendations and actions for Angelsharks in the Mediterranean

13. In addition to the recommendations listed in the spatial advice document (UNEP/CMS/AngelsharkWG2/Inf.4) and the decisions taken at COP15 (UNEP/CMS/AngelsharkWG2/Inf.1), the following points shall be taken into consideration by the Angelshark Med WG (*Note that some of these actions and recommendations have been taken over and updated from the spatial advice document and COP15 decisions)*:

    a) Use the layers and results from the advice document (UNEP/CMS/Angelshark WG2/Inf.4) and the updated analysis being currently undertaken by the Angel Shark Project, to identify priority areas within the country to designate, expand or incorporate into new or existing MPAs, to increase the coverage of key areas from 2% to the recommended minimum of 10% (Action already endorsed at Angelshark WG1 and COP15);

    b) Consider using the ISRA layers for other CMS Appendix I-listed species in the Mediterranean to identify priority areas within their territory to designate, expand or

[1] PROHIBITED SPECIES: Species for which there is a prohibition to fish for, retain on board, tranship, land, store, sell, display or offer for sale, as referred to in Article 10(2)

incorporate into new or existing MPAs, and to focus priority conservation measures that benefit not only Angelsharks but also other threatened species listed on CMS Appendix I (New recommendation supporting Appendix I listings and other CMS mandates);

c) If management plans are being updated, align and define measures according the to the priorities of the SSAP Angelshark Med, in key areas for Angelsharks identified in document (UNEP/CMS/Angelshark WG2/Inf.4) and the updated analysis being currently undertaken by the Angel Shark Project (Action already endorsed at Angelshark WG1 and COP15);

d) Subject to the availability of resources, develop a report on improving the long-term effectiveness of protected areas that overlap with Angelshark ISRAs and CASAs, to be submitted for discussion at the next Angelshark Med WG meeting and to inform the preparation of recommendations for CMS COP16 (New action, contributing to COP15 decision to 15.55).

e) For EU Members States that have Angelsharks in their waters, use the layers and results from the advice document (UNEP/CMS/Angelshark WG2/Inf.4) and incorporate measures in priority areas in the draft national restoration plans that will have to be submitted in 2027 to ensure that *S. squatina* will be considered in the plans as it is listed in the EU regulation for Nature Restoration 2024/1991/EC (Annex III) (Action already endorsed at Angelshark WG1 and COP15);

f) Subject to the availability of resources, develop and frequently update of a separate advice document on the legal status of Angelsharks in EU and non-EU countries to better understand and evaluate the legal obligations, enforcement mechanisms and gaps (Action already endorsed at Angelshark WG1 and COP15);

g) Exploring possible synergies and collaboration opportunities with the Barcelona Convention to support the implementation of the UNEP MAP Regional Action Plan for Cartilaginous species (Action already endorsed at Angelshark WG1 and COP15);

h) Range States that are also members of Regional Fishery Bodies (RFBs) are requested to encourage those bodies: a) to make existing fisheries and observer data on Angelsharks available and/or support with analysis of these data for the purpose of the SSAP Angelshark Med and the ISRA process**,** and to increase efforts to undertake additional research on Angelshark habitats, including reproductive areas (e.g., nursery or mating grounds); b) to collaborate closely with CMS and the Sharks MOU to ensure that Angelshark ISRAs are appropriately reflected into fisheries research and management frameworks (New recommendation, adapted from and contributing to COP15 Decision 15.53);

i) Prepare an advice document on priority actions for the spatial management of Angelsharks, to be submitted to the Sharks MOU Advisory Committee and to the fifth Meeting of the Signatories (MOS5) in 2027;

j) Given the similar appearance, overlapping habitats and identification difficulties of the three Critically Endangered angel sharks in the Mediterranean, efforts should be made to apply all measures and actions to all three species, bearing in mind that only *S. squatina* is listed on CMS and the Sharks MOU (New recommendation).

Action requested:

The Angelshark Med WG is requested to:

a) Note the updates on the spatial advice and provide comments, as necessary;

b) Review the guidance provided and agree on next steps, actions and recommendations to the Sessional Committee before COP16.