



**CONVENTION ON  
MIGRATORY  
SPECIES**

UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.32.3.6

26 May 2023

Original: English

14<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES  
Samarkand, Uzbekistan, 12 – 17 February 2024  
Agenda Item 32.3

**MALDIVES PROPOSAL FOR A CONCERTED ACTION FOR  
THE OCEANIC WHITETIP SHARK (*Carcharhinus longimanus*)  
ALREADY LISTED ON APPENDIX I OF THE CONVENTION\***

Summary:

The government of the Maldives has submitted the attached proposal\* for a Concerted Action for the Oceanic Whitetip Shark (*Carcharhinus longimanus*) in accordance with the process elaborated in Resolution 12.28 (Rev.COP13).

\*The geographical designations employed in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the CMS Secretariat (or the United Nations Environment Programme) concerning the legal status of any country, territory, or area, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The responsibility for the contents of the document rests exclusively with its author.

**MALDIVES PROPOSAL FOR A CONCERTED ACTION FOR  
THE OCEANIC WHITETIP SHARK (*Carcharhinus longimanus*)  
ALREADY LISTED ON APPENDIX I OF THE CONVENTION\***

**(i). Proponent**

Maldives

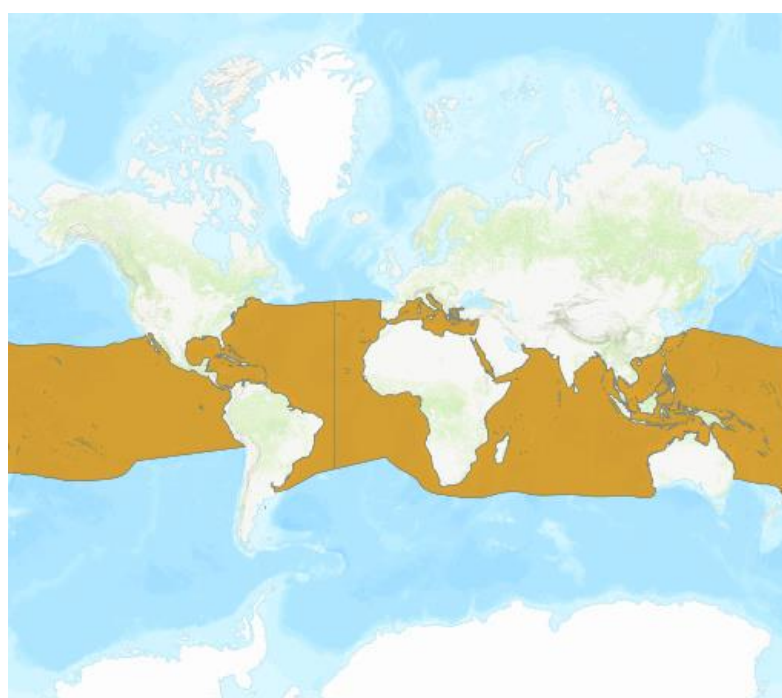
**(ii). Target species, lower taxon or population, or group of taxa with needs in common**

Class: Chondrichthyes  
Subclass: Elasmobranchii  
Order: Carcharhiniformes  
Family: Carcharhinidae  
Species: *Carcharhinus longimanus*.  
Listed on CMS Appendix I (2020)

**(iii). Geographical range**

Formerly one of the world's most abundant pelagic sharks, oceanic whitetip sharks have a circumglobal distribution stretching from tropical to warm-temperate oceanic waters where, irrespective of location, they commonly encounter fleets regulated by the major tuna Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (tRFMOs; Quiroz et al. 2019).

Shortly before CITES Parties decided to include the OWT in Appendix II (2013), it had become the only shark species protected by all tRFMOs, which prohibited its retention, transshipment, and landing. These measures reflect global understanding of its dire conservation status and the urgent need for management action. Subsequently (in 2020 at CoP 13) the species was listed on CMS Appendix I.



**Figure 1: Global distribution of the oceanic whitetip shark (©IUCN Red List)**

**(iv). Summary of Activities**

1. CMS Parties are requested to provide to the CMS Secretariat information on their domestic and regional management measures for the oceanic whitetip shark – clarifying how they meet the objectives of the CMS Appendix I listing.
2. The Secretariat will reach out to all CMS Parties after CoP 14 to remind them of the requested action in point 1, compile responses received, and circulate them to the Parties ahead of the 15<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Parties.
3. The Critically Endangered oceanic whitetip shark is listed on CMS Appendix I, CITES Appendix II and retention of the species is prohibited in every tuna RFMO. Where national protections are not in place for the species, Parties should clarify in their responses to point 1 why that is the case, and consider enacting such measures.

**(v). Activities and expected outcomes**

Oceanic whitetip sharks (OWT) are a highly vulnerable species, taken as bycatch in global pelagic fisheries. Prior to its CMS Appendix I listing in 2020, concerns over the species' continued declining populations (now uplisted to 'Critically Endangered' globally by IUCN) had already resulted in stronger protection for OWT via a range of fisheries management, biodiversity conservation (CITES) measures, at national, regional, and global scales.

However, research on the global shark fin trade at its hub of Hong Kong indicates that the oceanic whitetip remains in the fin trade market at similar levels to that before these multilateral measures were implemented. This research, and the policies in place for the species are summarized in a submission from the Government of the Maldives to the CITES Animals Committee for the bodies June 2023 meeting. The document is summarized in COP14/Inf.32.3.6, and can be found in full here: AC32 Inf.3: <https://cites.org/sites/default/files/documents/E-AC32-Inf-03.pdf>

This research indicates a significant lack of impact to date from this wide range of strong multilateral measures for the species. This makes domestic action via each CMS Party within the species range, along with compliance action via CITES, RFMO's and CMS processes essential to ensure the species is being properly protected. This justifies the need for this Concerted Action, to ensure that CMS Parties are meeting their obligations for this Appendix I listed species.

**(vi). Associated benefits**

This action will reinforce the need for full implementation of the CMS Appendix I listing of this Critically Endangered species.

**(vii). Timeframe**

To be completed by COP15 – with follow up actions identified at that meeting based on the updates received from Parties under action 1 of this Concerted Action.

**(viii). Relationship to other CMS actions**

This Concerted Action would significantly contribute to the implementation of the following mandates established under CMS and the Sharks MOU:

- Resolution 12.22 and Decisions 13.62 to 13.63 on Bycatch
- Resolution 13.3 and Decisions 13.71 to 13.73 on Chondrichthyan Species
- Sharks MOU Programme of Work 2023-2025: Development of a global strategy and regional action plans for pelagic sharks

**(ix). Conservation priority**

High – this species is Critically Endangered and significant gaps remain in affording it the protections it's CMS Appendix I listing mandates.

**(x). Relevance**

See section IX.

**(xi). Absence of better remedies**

The species is managed (via bans on retention) in the tuna RFMO's where it is most often caught (given its pelagic nature) and is also listed on CITES Appendix II.

Unfortunately, the bycatch prohibitions and trade management measures enacted in the early 2010's did not arrest this species' decline, and the most recent IUCN Red List assessment has reassessed the OWT as 'Critically Endangered' globally, citing population declines exceeding 98% in all oceans (IUCN Red List, Rigby et al. 2019). In less than a single generation (20 years, Rigby et al. 2019), the species has been reclassified from 'Vulnerable' to 'Critically Endangered' (Pacoureaux et al. 2021).

As such it was listed on CMS Appendix I in 2020, but action is needed to ensure that all of these multilateral measures work together and result in full protections for the species, and in time population recovery.

**(xii). Readiness and feasibility**

There are engaged NGOs, experts, and community organizations ready to support Range States to develop, fund and implement collaborative work. Recent initiatives at other international fora show that expert networks exist that could support Range States with the implementation of the proposed activities. Furthermore, support will be appreciated from the Sharks MOU and Cooperating Partners, to support the development and implementation of the action plans.

**(xiii). Likelihood of success**

High – the request to clarify domestic legislation should not be burdensome on the Secretariat or Parties.

**(xiv). Magnitude of likely impact**

High if it ensures full implementation of the CMS Appendix I listing for the species.

**(xv). Cost-effectiveness**

Activities are likely low cost.