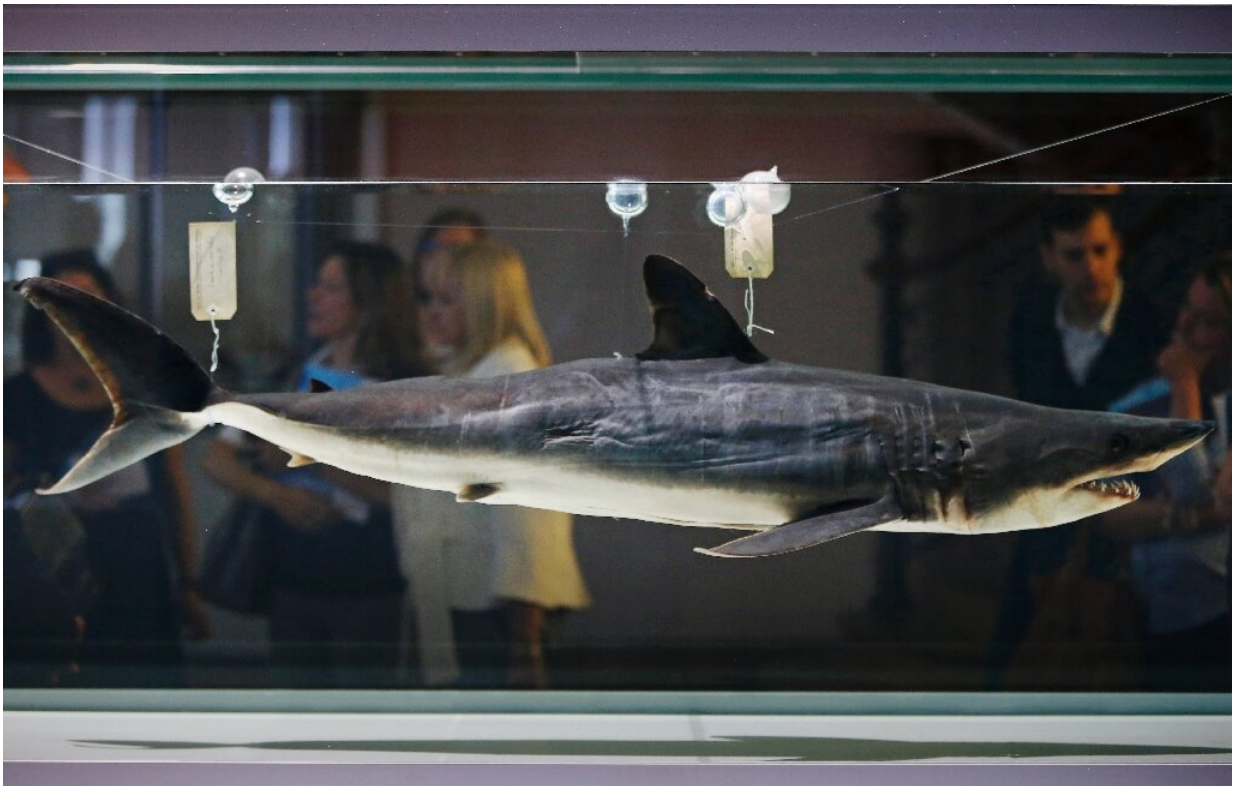


CITES votes to protect endangered mako sharks

August 25 2019, by Laure Fillon



Mako sharks are often targeted for their fins which are used in shark fin soup

A proposal to strengthen protection for mako sharks, hunted for their meat and fins, was adopted Sunday by 102 countries at the CITES global wildlife trade summit.

Makos, the fastest shark species, have practically disappeared from the Mediterranean and their numbers have plunged in the Atlantic, Northern Pacific and Indian Oceans.

Mexico presented a proposal to list mako sharks under Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), meaning that they cannot be traded unless it can be shown that their fishing will not threaten their chances for survival.

Mako sharks are often targeted for their fins—used in shark fin soup—a status dish in Asian countries, notably China, which is often served at weddings.

"Fishing is the main threat being faced by sharks," said a delegate from the European Union, which backed the proposal.

"We need much stronger measures" than national initiatives to prevent overfishing, he said during a heated debate in Geneva.

Countries opposing the measure such as Japan and China argue that there is insufficient scientific data to show that mako sharks are declining as a result of their trade. Forty nations voted against the measure.



Dried fish and shark fin on sale in a Hong Kong shop

'Global momentum'

Delegates from more than 180 countries gathered in Geneva for 12 days also voted for the inclusion of a total of 18 species of rays and sharks in Appendix II.

"There is a real global momentum to save these species. There is now hope for these 18 depleted species of sharks and rays," said Megan O'Toole of the International Fund for the Protection of Animals (IFAW).

"There is now hope for these species," added Luke Warwick from the Wildlife Conservation Society.

The vote must still be finalised at the plenary session at the end, when all appendix change proposals passed in committee are officially adopted.



The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) said in March that 17 species of rays and sharks face extinction

For the first time three species of sea cucumber—also sought after by consumers in Asia—were also listed in Appendix II, with a 12-month deadline for implementation.

The move was hailed by WWF's Colman O Criodain, who said the sea cucumbers, which are threatened by overfishing, play a crucial role in the health of ecosystems.

CITES can impose sanctions on countries which do not adhere to its rules. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) said in March that 17 species of rays and sharks face extinction.

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