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'INTRODUCTION FROM THE SEA'

Issues surrounding the term “introduction from the sea” (IFS) urgently need to be resolved at the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP16) in March 2013 in Bangkok, so countries will have a common understanding of what is required when CITES-listed species are taken on the high seas. The term introduction from the sea—in the text of the Convention on International Trade in

Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora—covers the procedures that countries need to follow when a CITES-listed species is “taken in the marine environment not under the jurisdiction of any State.”

Parties are required to implement the Convention for CITES-listed specimens that are taken outside the jurisdiction of any State, regardless of decisions or resolutions of the CoP that interpret this provision or provide guidance. However, the Parties have decided to work to find a common understanding of how this provision should be implemented and to improve understanding, consistency, and compliance.

An official IFS working group has been meeting since the last CoP to resolve questions of interpretation related to introduction from the sea. Several issues were resolved by the Parties at CoP15 and before; the remaining issue centers on which country is required to issue the CITES permits or certificates—the port State (where the vessel docks and lands its catch), or the flag State (where the vessel is registered).



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More than 3,500 shark fins dry in Taiwan PC. They represent only a tiny percentage of the 30 million to 73 million sharks killed every year to supply the global shark fin industry.

Significant progress has been made toward finding a solution to this long-standing discussion, which will go to CoP16 in Bangkok for a final decision. In summary, the proposed solution provides:

- If a vessel fishing beyond national jurisdiction lands its catch on its own shores, then that country is responsible for issuing documentation and complying with all IFS requirements. If the fishing vessel's flag State and the port State are different, then the former would issue a CITES export permit. The State that receives the species caught on the high seas will treat it as an import.
- The only remaining complication concerns vessels that are chartered by one State and flagged to another; that issue is still under debate.

The IFS working group was collaborative, and accepted a compromise that when there is a signed agreement between the States, pursuant to a Regional Fisheries



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Management Organization, and it has been submitted to the CITES Secretariat, then the chartering State, and not the flag State, can be responsible. This draft resolution will now be submitted to the CoP for adoption and is likely to receive support from the majority of CITES Parties.

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