



COMMISSION
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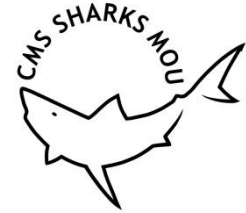
Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals – Whale Sharks

WCPFC9-2012-OP11
3 December 2012
1340hrs



Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

Secretariat provided by the United Nations Environment Programme



Statements of Fact: CMS, WCPFC & Whale Sharks

The Secretariat of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) is interested in the discussions at the annual meeting of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) December 3-7, 2012 in the Philippines with respect to protecting whale sharks (*Rhincodon typus*) from bycatch mortality associated with purse seine nets (**WCPFC9-2012-DP12**).

Australia, a CMS Party and Signatory to the CMS Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the Conservation of Migratory Sharks, has proposed, *inter alia*, banning the intentional setting of purse seines around whale sharks that sometimes occurs as fishermen pursue the tuna that can aggregate under this large shark.

The whale shark is one of seven species of sharks listed on the CMS Appendices and covered by the CMS Shark MoU.

Signatories to the CMS Sharks MOU that are members or cooperating non-members of the WCPFC include Australia, European Union, Nauru, Palau, Philippines, Tuvalu, United States of America, Vanuatu, and Senegal. Furthermore, the Cook Islands, France, New Zealand, Panama, and Ecuador are Parties to the Convention.

The new Conservation Plan adopted in September 2012 by the Signatories to the CMS Shark MoU calls attention to the threat of bycatch to CMS listed sharks and urges the following:

“To the extent practicable, develop and/or use selective gear, devices, and techniques to ensure that the take of sharks in fisheries is sustainable and appropriately managed and that mortality of non-utilized catches is minimized to the greatest extent possible.”

The proposal from Australia -- to prohibit the deliberate setting of purse seine nets around whale sharks, to mitigate the impact of inadvertent encirclement, and to report interactions to appropriate authorities -- is therefore in line with the CMS Shark MoU and Conservation Plan.