



**COMMISSION
THIRTEENTH REGULAR SESSION**
Denarau Island, Fiji
5 – 9 December, 2016

**PROPOSAL FOR A CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT MEASURE FOR
MOBULA AND MANTA RAYS CAUGHT IN ASSOCIATION WITH FISHERIES
MANAGED BY WCPFC**

WCPFC13-2016-DP06_rev2
9th December 2016

Proposal from the European Union

European Union
PROPOSAL FOR A CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT MEASURE FOR
MOBULA AND MANTA RAYS CAUGHT IN ASSOCIATION WITH FISHERIES
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- a. *Who is required to implement the proposal?*
This proposal applies to all CCMs.
- b. *Which CCMs would this proposal impact and in what way(s) and what proportion?*
CCMs that have flagged vessels that accidentally catch Mantas and Mobula and that do not already implement similar measures, will have to ensure a change in fishing and handling practices on-board these vessels.
- c. *Are there linkages with other proposals or instruments in other regional fisheries management organizations or international organizations that reduce the burden of implementation?*
IATTC has adopted a similar measure in 2015.
- d. *Does the proposal affect development opportunities for SIDS?*
On the opposite, this CMM should have positive impacts on the coastal states that have put emphasis on the conservation of sharks and rays through the establishment of sanctuaries for sharks conservation, the development of touristic and pedagogic activities related to the protection of biodiversity and in particular sharks etc.
- e. *Does the proposal affect SIDS domestic access to resources and development aspirations?*
Similar as above (d).
- f. *What resources, including financial and human capacity, are needed by SIDS to implement the proposal?*
Not applicable: no resources are required for SIDS to implement this CMM.
- g. *What mitigation measures are included in the proposal?*
Not applicable: no mitigation measures are required.
- h. *What assistance mechanisms and associated timeframe, including training and financial support, are included in the proposal to avoid a disproportionate burden on SIDS?*
None as the measure will not create a disproportionate burden.

EUROPEAN UNION

PROPOSAL FOR A CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT MEASURE FOR MOBULA AND MANTA RAYS CAUGHT IN ASSOCIATION WITH FISHERIES MANAGED BY WCPFC

The Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC):

In accordance with the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean;

RECOGNIZING the ecological and cultural significance of sharks and rays in the western and central Pacific Ocean (WCPO);

CONSIDERING that the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) International Plan of Action for Sharks calls on States to cooperate through regional fisheries organizations to ensure the sustainability of shark and stocks;

RECOGNIZING the need to improve the collection of species-specific data on catch, catch rates, discards, and trade as a basis for improving the conservation and management of shark stocks;

CONSIDERING that *Manta* and *Mobula* rays, are extremely vulnerable to overfishing as they take a long time to reach sexual maturity, have long gestation periods, and often give birth to only a few pups;

NOTING that *Manta* and *Mobula* rays are caught as bycatch when fishing for tuna in WCPFC fisheries, as presented at the SC12 (SC12-EB-WP-08), and that safe release methods for these animals do exist;

FURTHER NOTING that some CCMs have already prohibited the retention of *Mantas* and *Mobula* rays by their fleets, due to ecological and conservation concerns;

ADOPTS the following measures in accordance with Article 10 of the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (Convention):

~~1. CCMs shall prohibit their flagged vessels from setting a purse seine net on a school of tuna associated with *Manta* or *Mobula* rays in the WCPFC Convention Area, if the animal is sighted prior to commencement of the set.~~

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~~2. CCMs shall prohibit retaining onboard, transshipping, landing, storing, selling, or offering for sale any part or whole carcass of *Manta* and *Mobula* rays caught in the WCPFC Convention area.~~

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3. 2. CCMs shall require vessels flying their flag to promptly release unharmed, to the extent practicable, *Manta* and *Mobula* rays as soon as they are seen in the net, on the hook, or on the deck, and do it in a manner that will result in the least possible harm to the individuals captured, following the guidance detailed in Annex 1 to this CMM.

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~~4.~~ 4. CCMs shall record, through observer programs ~~or other means~~, the number of discards and releases of *Manta* and *Mobula* rays with indication of species (to the best extent possible), length, sex, status (dead or alive) and location caught ~~and report it in the Annual report to WCPFC.~~

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~~5.~~ 5. *Manta* and *Mobula* rays shall be considered WCPFC key shark species for assessment and thus listed under the Shark Research Plan, noting that data gaps may preclude a traditional stock assessment approach.

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6. The WCPFC Scientific Committee shall review this CMM at its 2017 meeting and propose a revision of ROP minimum standards data fields and of Annex 1, where appropriate.

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Annex 1 – Live release guidance

1. Prohibit the gaffing of rays.
2. Prohibit the lifting of rays by the gill slits or spiracles.
3. Prohibit the punching of holes through the bodies of rays (*e.g.* to pass a cable through for lifting the ray).
4. Rays too large to be lifted safely by hand should be, to the extent possible, brailed out of the net using methods such as those recommended in document WCPFC-SC8-2012/EB-IP-12 (Poisson *et al.* 2012, Good practices to reduce the mortality of sharks and rays caught incidentally by the tropical tuna purse seiners).
5. Large rays that cannot be released safely before being landed on deck, should be returned to the water as soon as possible, preferably utilizing a ramp from the deck connecting to an opening on the side of the boat, or if no such ramp is available, lowered with a sling or net.