

## Barcelona Convention: Annex II protection for threatened sharks & rays

- Ten species of threatened sharks and rays will now be strictly protected in the Mediterranean Sea, under the Barcelona Convention. Specifically, they will be listed under Annex II (List of Endangered and Threatened Species) of the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity (SPA/BD).
- The best available data show that these species – including hammerhead sharks, shortfin makos, and tope – have undergone severe population declines (> 99%) and/or vanished from parts of the Mediterranean where they were once common (see **Table 1**, overleaf).
- All ten species were previously listed under Annex III, which requires exploitation to be regulated – yet they remained threatened by overfishing and required stronger protection.
- At the 17<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, in February 2012, the inclusion of the ten species under Annex II was approved by non-European Contracting Parties. The European Union was granted an extension of 180 days in which to determine its position.
- On 10 July, 2012, European Member States voted in favour of listing all ten proposed species under Annex II.

### Mediterranean Sea: The most dangerous place in the world for sharks & rays

- The Mediterranean Sea is the region of highest risk in the world for elasmobranchs (sharks and rays), with 40% of species considered threatened, compared with 17% globally.<sup>1</sup>
- Elasmobranchs grow slowly, mature late, and have low reproductive potential. As a result, they are highly vulnerable to overfishing and habitat loss, and populations are slow to recover once depleted.
- Some threatened Mediterranean sharks and rays have undergone serious declines in abundance, biomass, and/or area of distribution. Overfishing is the greatest recognised cause of these declines – whether through target fisheries or by-catch – and continues to threaten these vulnerable fishes. Habitat loss and degradation are additional threats for some species.
- Fishing for some sharks and rays has been prohibited by the EU (e.g., porbeagles), Spain (hammerhead and thresher sharks) and Israel (all elasmobranchs), but most shark fisheries are unmanaged.



**Table 1. Ten species of threatened sharks and rays that will now be strictly protected under Annex II of the SPA/BD Protocol.** Source: Proposals prepared by the RAC/SPA, Oceana, and other elasmobranch experts.

Scientific name	Common name	Red List Status, Mediterranean	Conservation status	Threats
<i>Galeorhinus galeus</i>	Tope	Vulnerable	Once common in coastal waters, now a rare by-catch  Severe population decline: >99.97% over 25 years	Overfishing (bycatch) Habitat degradation
<i>Isurus oxyrinchus</i>	Shortfin mako	Critically Endangered	Once common, now virtually disappeared from some areas  Severe population decline: >99.99% over 106-135 yrs	Overfishing (any catches are likely unsustainable)
<i>Lamna nasus</i>	Porbeagle	Critically Endangered	Now scarce where once common, and virtually disappeared from Mediterranean records  Severe population decline: >99.99% over 106-135 years	Overfishing (any catches are likely unsustainable)
<i>Leucoraja circularis</i>	Sandy skate	Critically Endangered	Substantial reduction in area of occurrence, with local extinctions  Significant population decline over 50 years  Rare in many parts of its range	Overfishing (bycatch)
<i>Leucoraja melitensis</i>	Maltese skate	Critically Endangered	Absent or rare from areas where once common  Considered under imminent extinction threat	Overfishing (bycatch, especially in trawls)
<i>Rhinobatos cemiculus</i> <i>R. rhinobatos</i>	Blackchin guitarfish Common guitarfish	Endangered	Severe declines in abundance and area of occupancy  Once common, now virtually extirpated from northern Mediterranean	Overfishing Degradation of shallow inshore habitats
<i>Sphyrna lewini</i> <i>S. mokarran</i> <i>S. zygaena</i>	Scalloped hammerhead Great hammerhead Smooth hammerhead	Endangered ( <i>S. lewini</i> , <i>S. mokarran</i> ) Vulnerable ( <i>S. zygaena</i> )	Rapid declines in catches  Severe population decline: > 99.99% over 107-178 yrs	Overfishing (with high post-capture mortality) and high commercial value of fins

<sup>i</sup> Abdul Malak, D. *et al.* (2011). *Overview of the Conservation Status of the Marine Fishes of the Mediterranean Sea*. Gland, Switzerland and Malaga, Spain: IUCN. vii + 61pp.