

ENDANGERED SHARK AND RAY SPECIES RECEIVE GLOBAL SUPPORT AT CITES CONFERENCE IN GENEVA

Geneva, Switzerland – Since August 17, most of the 183 member nations of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Floras (CITES) have been debating trade regulations for numerous endangered species at their eighteenth Conference of Parties (CoP18). The Geneva-based Save Our Seas Foundation (an organization supporting shark and ray research and conservation projects across the globe) has been in attendance throughout the conference alongside some of its key project leaders.

On Sunday, August 25th, a long-awaited victory was achieved when Committee 1 of CITES approved Appendix II listings for endangered mako sharks (72% Parties voted in favour), all 10 species of wedgefishes (78% in favour), and six species of giant guitarfishes (79%). Well-regarded for its strong benefits, an Appendix II listing is an international ruling aimed at securing legal, sustainable, traceable international trade, and encourages stronger fisheries regulations across the globe.

“Unregulated trade in meat and fins has driven unsustainable global fisheries for mako sharks, and brought giant guitarfishes and wedgefishes to the brink of extinction,” explained Sarah Fowler, Scientific Advisor of Save Our Seas Foundation. “On Sunday, in Geneva, CITES Parties agreed that international trade controls would contribute to protecting these threatened species from further declines. We had an anxious wait for the last Plenary session of the Conference this morning, when the Parties met to confirm the decisions of Committee I. However, with all three listing proposals adopted, we can now move forward with supporting their implementation.”

Sharks and rays are essential for the overall health of our oceans, helping to maintain marine ecosystem balance. The added trade regulations for these species comes at a crucial time. Across their range, they have all been declining at alarming rates, with extinction already taking place in some areas. When shark and ray population disturbances like this take place it can lead to unforeseen consequences, such as the collapse of fisheries.

“The increase in shark and ray Appendix II listings from 29 to 47 at this year’s Conference of Parties demonstrates a stronger willingness from countries to stand up for the many critically endangered fish species,” explained Aurélie Grosperon, Director of Communication of Save Our Seas Foundation. “Since 2017, we’ve been dedicating more of our resources towards research and conservation projects related to shark-like ray species, including sawfish, giant guitarfish and wedgefish, because of their high risk of extinction in the world. We look forward to continuing these efforts in the ongoing global movement to reverse declining shark and ray populations.”

For further information please read Save Our Seas Foundation’s CITES coverage online:

•[The fate of the oceans’ most threatened rays hangs in the balance this week at CITES](#)

•[SOSF project leaders at CITES](#)

•[Why the fuss about wedgefishes and giant guitarfishes this week?](#)

ABOUT SAVE OUR SEAS FOUNDATION

Founded in Geneva, Switzerland in 2003, the Save Our Seas Foundation (SOSF) is a philanthropic organisation aimed at protecting and caring for the world's oceans. Its support for research, conservation and education projects worldwide focuses primarily on endangered species of sharks, rays and skates. Three permanent SOSF research and education centres reinforce its action in The Seychelles, South Africa and the USA.

Over the last 15 years, SOSF has supported some 300 projects worldwide, passionately upholding the founder's plight to protect the population of sharks, rays and skates, whose presence is essential to the health and biological diversity of our seas.

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