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The EU proposes greater international protection for sharks and increased transparency within the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)

Today the EU tabled its proposals for the next meeting of the CITES Convention, which will take place in March 2013 in Bangkok.

The European Commission views the CITES Convention as a central instrument for the conservation of biodiversity and the promotion of sustainable international trade.

The EU is proposing to reinforce further the role of this Treaty in **protecting marine species** threatened by international trade, through the inclusion of a new shark species (porbeagle) into CITES Appendix II. Porbeagle is a species very vulnerable to overfishing and subject to considerable pressure from international trade. Its inclusion in CITES Appendix II will ensure that it can only be traded if it has been harvested sustainably. The EU is also co-sponsoring the proposal prepared by Brazil to include three species of hammerhead sharks into CITES Appendix II.

The protection of marine biodiversity is a high priority for the EU. The next CITES meeting will be an opportunity for the international community to make concrete progress in that area.

The EU is also proposing measures to **improve transparency** in the functioning of the CITES Convention.

The EU wishes first to change the current situation where numerous decisions within CITES are taken through secret ballots. This undermines the credibility of the Convention and runs against basic principles of transparency and accountability. Therefore, secret ballots should only be used in exceptional cases and the EU proposes that it can only happen when a majority of the Parties agrees to use this procedure. Currently, it is sufficient that only ten Parties so request.

The EU also suggests to introduce of a "conflict of interest" policy for the CITES scientific committees. Those Committees deliver scientific advices which are the backbone of the CITES Convention. It is therefore essential that there are no doubts pertaining to the independence and integrity of their Members. Contrary to what is in place in other international conventions, there are currently no provisions within CITES designed to address situations of possible conflicts of interest. The EU proposes to fill that gap through the introduction of simple rules which would address that problem, when those Members are elected and during their mandates.

The European Commission believes that all those proposals will help strengthening the effectiveness, transparency and legitimacy of the CITES Convention, and with it the efforts of the international community to address global environmental challenges. The EU will be consulting with CITES Parties in the coming weeks to ensure a successful meeting in March 2013.

Background information

The EU proposals for the CITES meeting of the Conference of the Parties, as well as other information on the EU wildlife trade policy, are available under the following link: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/cites/news_en.htm

The CITES Convention has 176 parties and regulates international trade in some 30 000 endangered species of wild fauna and flora. CITES Conferences of the Parties (CoP) are held every three years and the next meeting will take place in Bangkok in March 2013. Proposals for this meeting need to be submitted by 4th October 2012. The EU will form its position on all issues on the agenda of the CITES CoP through a Council Decision which should be adopted early 2013.

More information on the CITES Convention is available under the following link: <http://www.cites.org/>