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## Proposal to list the **Porbeagle in Appendix II** of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)

The European Union and its 27 Member States (EU) have - together with Brazil, Egypt, the Comoros and Croatia - submitted a proposal for consideration at the 16th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 16) to CITES to include the Porbeagle (*Lamna Nasus*) in Appendix II of CITES. Adoption of this proposal requires a two-thirds majority of CITES Parties present and voting at COP 16.

Populations of the species have declined markedly. Atlantic stocks historically and recently declined to significantly less than 30% of baseline, several stock assessment models indicating declines of significantly over 90%. The largely unmanaged Southern Oceans stocks recently declined to some 20–30% of baseline.

### **The Porbeagle and its Status in the Wild**

The Porbeagle is an epilagic top predator in boreal and temperate seas of 2-22 °C. In the Southern Hemisphere it is found in a circumglobal band, in the Northern Hemisphere it is distributed in the North Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean.

The IUCN classifies the Porbeagle as **Vulnerable globally** and as **Critically Endangered** in the northeast Atlantic and the Mediterranean.

## **Threats to the Porbeagle**

Porbeagles are warm-blooded, slow-growing, late maturing (females 13-18 years), have a gestation time of 8-9 months and a small number of young (average 5 pups). They are highly vulnerable to over-exploitation and very slow to recover from depletion.

Therefore, the principal threats to Porbeagle worldwide are unsustainable, and largely undocumented, target fisheries to supply the international shark meat and fin trade, and as a secondary threat long-line catch or bycatch. In the absence of management, adults and juveniles of all age-classes are targeted.

Historically, the Porbeagle has been subject to fishing pressure especially in the Northeast Atlantic. The EU decided to close its fisheries and set a zero quota for Porbeagle in 2010. The depletion of stocks in the Northeast Atlantic could become the blueprint for other areas, because unregulated and unsustainable fishing of Porbeagle stocks is widespread, particularly on the high seas, and because Southern Ocean Porbeagles are even more vulnerable to over-exploitation, being slower growing and later maturing, with higher longevity (females reaching reproductive age at 13-18 years, males at 8-11 years) and living for up to 65 years.

## **The Porbeagle qualifies for a CITES Appendix II listing**

The Porbeagle meets the listing criteria for Appendix II listing under CITES. Stock assessments describe marked historic and recent declines to significantly less than 30% of baseline for the largest Atlantic populations. Exploitation of smaller stocks in Southern Hemisphere oceans is largely unmanaged and unlikely to be sustainable, given the more conservative life history strategy of the species in southern waters.

The species falls into FAO's lowest productivity category of the most vulnerable species: Those with an intrinsic rate of population increase of  $<0.14$  and a generation time of  $>10$  years.

At COP 15, the FAO, IUCN, TRAFFIC and the CITES Secretariat all concluded that the evidence supported the proposal to include all Porbeagle stocks in Appendix II. Many Parties and observers, including Canada, Egypt, New Zealand, Norway and FAO, confirmed during the debate at COP 15 that an Appendix II listing would assist international efforts to conserve sharks by relieving fishing pressure, complementing RFMO measures, and providing important data on management, harvesting and trade.

During COP 15 the Secretariat of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna regional fisheries management organisation (ICCAT) confirmed that there are no Porbeagle catch limits within ICCAT. This situation has not changed since. While some Range States manage this species within their waters, it is still not effectively managed by any of the Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMO) nor, therefore, is any stock managed effectively throughout its range.

## **Effects of Listing the Porbeagle in Appendix II of CITES**

Species that are listed in Appendix II of CITES are not banned from international trade. Local fisheries and domestic consumption are not affected by any CITES listing. Rather, the species can still be traded internationally when accompanied by the appropriate permits.

The purpose of this permitting system is to enable international authorities to regulate the trade in specimens of species in order to avoid uses incompatible with their survival, thereby ensuring the sustainable use of the species for generations to come.

These permits require:

- 1) a scientific finding that the export will not be detrimental to the survival of that species (this may include setting quotas for the maximum allowable catch); and
- 2) a finding that the specimen was legally acquired. For example, Porbeagles caught in EU waters after 2010 would not be considered legally acquired.

If the Porbeagle proposal for inclusion in Appendix II is adopted, it is expected to significantly reduce the fishing pressure on the species, incentivise better reporting of fisheries for the species, underpin international efforts at sustainable fisheries management, while still respecting historic use of the shark and helping to ensure its survival in the future.

## **Implementation Does Not Pose Extraordinary Difficulties**

CITES has a strong track record for regulating international trade in marine species listed in Appendix II, including Sturgeon, Queen Conch and Humphead Wrasse.

The identification of Porbeagle parts and derivatives in trade is no more difficult than the products of other species. Porbeagle meat is nearly always declared as such because of its high value. Generic guides to the identification of shark fins are already available. Rapid and inexpensive DNA tests are available to confirm the identification of Porbeagle for enforcement purposes.