

CoP17 Prop 43. [Bahamas, Bangladesh, Benin, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Comoros, Dominican Republic, Egypt, European Union, Fiji, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Maldives, Mauritania, Palau, Panama, Samoa, Senegal, Seychelles, Sri Lanka and Ukraine] Inclusion of *Alopias superciliosus*, *A. vulpinus* and *A. pelagicus* (Bigeye Thresher, Common Thresher and Pelagic Thresher shark) in Appendix II

These three thresher sharks are widespread oceanic species harvested in large numbers, particularly as secondary catch in longline fisheries for their fins and meat. There are no overall population estimates for any. Much fisheries information is recorded only to genus level, making determination of species-specific trends particularly problematic. Where population declines have been identified, these are invariably ascribed to fishing pressure.

The Bigeye Thresher has extremely low productivity. There are indications of historic declines in the Northwest Atlantic and reported catch rates in the South Atlantic are low. In the Western and Central Pacific, where the species occur widely, there are indications from 2003 onward of decline in threshers in general, which may be accelerating; however, information from the extensive Hawaiian longline fishery indicated stability of the Bigeye Thresher population in the region it covers. Unreported catch of threshers in the Indian Ocean is believed may be many times that of reported catch, which has increased, but there are no reliable information on stock assessments or analyses of changes in CPUE.

The Common Thresher has low productivity. There are indications of extremely marked declines in the Mediterranean and of historic declines in the Northwest Atlantic. In the Northeast Pacific, Common Threshers underwent a decline in the 1980s and 1990s but populations appear to have recovered because of improved management.

The Pelagic Thresher has very low productivity. It is known to be taken in large numbers in the Eastern Pacific and in the Indian Ocean and Western and Central Pacific but there is very little species-specific information on stocks or changes in CPUE.

Overall, data are insufficient to determine if levels of decline in these species would satisfy the criteria for inclusion in Appendix II in Annex 2a of Res. Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP16). However, given their low productivity (particularly Bigeye Thresher) and the intensity of fishing pressure in much of their ranges, it is likely fisheries in many areas are unsustainable. In others, thresher stocks may be relatively stable but some populations are very likely to be at significantly lower than historic levels. If any of the species were listed in Appendix II on these grounds, the others in the genus would meet the criteria in Annex 2b.

While some countries and Regional Fisheries Management Organizations have established regulations on the catch or finning of sharks, including banning retention of thresher shark species, the effectiveness and measurable conservation benefit of these measures is unclear. In RFMOs and countries which have banned the retention of Thresher Sharks, the species are still caught and suffer high mortality rates—as high as 50%.

Inclusion in Appendix II would be in the best interest of these species because it would provide a much-needed platform for international co-operation to address unsustainable trade. It would also result in improved monitoring and reporting of catches in trade, which would support the ability to make assessments of stock status and resultant management action to ensure the harvest is sustainable where it is legal.

ACCEPT