

CoP17 Prop 44. [Bahamas, Bangladesh, Benin, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Comoros, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Egypt, European Union, Fiji, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Maldives, Mauritania, Palau, Panama, Samoa, Senegal, Seychelles, Sri Lanka and United States of America] Inclusion of all nine species in the genus *Mobula* (Mobula or Devil Rays) in Appendix II

Mobula species are widely distributed in tropical and temperate seas worldwide. All have very low productivity and are taken in artisanal and large-scale fisheries, both as directed and secondary catch for domestic meat consumption and the international trade in gill plates, which are used for medicinal purposes in Asia. The most important products in trade are the plates of *Mobula japonica* and *M. tarapacana*. There is very little numerical population information although there is an estimate for *M. mobular* of ca. 15,000 individuals in the north-western Mediterranean and south-central Adriatic combined. Population declines—some very steep—have generally been inferred from declining catches despite increased fishing effort in several locations. Given the exceptionally low productivity of these species and evidence of declining catches it is possible that at least some species meet the criteria for inclusion in Appendix II in Annex 2a of Res. Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP16).

In trade, the plates of similar size are often grouped together. As plates vary in size within an individual depending on which plate they are and between species and age groups, it is most likely the plates are traded in packaging combining plates from numerous species. Large gill plates of *M. japonica* resemble smaller plates of Appendix-II listed *Manta* species. This species appears to meet the criteria in Annex 2b of Res. Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP16) (lookalike criteria). There is general similarity between gill plates of different *Mobula* species although some gill plates are bi-coloured and some are not. If any *Mobula* in either category (bi-coloured or black) were to be listed under the criteria in Annex 2a, the others in that category would meet the criteria in Annex 2b (lookalike criteria).

The IATTC prohibits the retention of *Mobula* species with an exemption for developing States, small-scale and artisanal fisheries for domestic consumption only. Some of the tuna RFMOs require reporting of catches of Mobulids. Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) are required to totally protect *Mobula* species as they are included on Appendix I and II of CMS and Annex I of the CMS MOU on the conservation of migratory sharks. However, the effectiveness and measurable conservation benefit of this ban is unclear, as the species are potentially still caught in fisheries for which they are a secondary catch and are most likely to suffer high mortality rates.

An Appendix II listing for the species should 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.

In addition, the listing of *Mobula* species would resolve problems identified by the Animals Committee with *Mobula* lookalike issues with the Appendix II listed *Manta* species. There would also be an additional benefit where the listing of *Mobula* will assist with better catch information and less confusion as to which species are recorded as catch when using that information for the determination of non-detriment findings.

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