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Gandhinagar, India, 17 - 22 February 2020  
Agenda Item 26.2

**AQUATIC WILD MEAT**

*(Prepared by the Secretariat, the Scientific Council and its Aquatic Wild Meat Working Group)*

Summary:

This document reports on progress in implementation of Decisions 12.44 to 12.46 *Aquatic Wild Meat*.

It includes the report presented to the 4<sup>th</sup> Sessional Committee of the Scientific Committee (ScC-SC4) in UNEP/CMS/ScC-SC4/Doc.10.2.4, as well as the draft decisions recommended for adoption by ScC-SC4 (Annex 1).

It is accompanied by two further annexes posted separately:

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| Annex 2 | Harvest of CMS Appendix I-Listed Sharks and Rays as Aquatic Wild Meat.              |
| Annex 3 | Determining the Extent of Interplay between Bycatch and Aquatic Wild Meat Harvests. |

## AQUATIC WILD MEAT

### Background

1. At its 12<sup>th</sup> meeting (COP12, Manila, 2017), the Conference of the Parties adopted Decisions 12.44 to 12.46 on Aquatic Wild Meat. Decision 12.44 was directed to the Secretariat, Decision 12.45 was directed to the Scientific Council and Decision 12.46 was directed to the Aquatic Wild Meat Working Group of the Scientific Council, as follows:

#### **12.44 Directed to the Secretariat**

*The Secretariat should:*

- a) *Subject to the availability of resources, approach the Collaborative Partnership on Sustainable Wildlife Management (CPW) to request a detailed discussion about the assessment and management of aquatic wild meat in order to prioritize work on this issue and ensure that work will complement that already occurring under other organizations and bodies, and to seek agreement to broaden the definition of bushmeat to formally encompass aquatic wild meat;*
- b) *With the assistance of the Working Group, prepare contributions to the development of the Abidjan Convention Action Plan to Combat Trade, Direct Consumption, Illegal Logging, and Other Uses of Endangered, Threatened or Protected Coastal and Marine Species.*

#### **12.45 Directed to the Scientific Council**

*The Scientific Council should:*

- a) *Invite participation of Councillors and external experts, including from across the CMS Family, into the thematic Working Group dealing with aquatic wild meat, to ensure that all affected CMS-listed species are considered;*
- b) *Report on the activities of the Working Group to each meeting of the Conference of the Parties.*

#### **12.46 Directed to the Aquatic Wild Meat Working Group**

*The Aquatic Wild Meat Working Group should undertake the following tasks:*

- a) *Establish an online repository of papers and other information (knowledge base) on aquatic wild meat to support CMS Parties to reach Targets 2, 5, 6, 11, 13 and 14 of the CMS Strategic Plan for Migratory Species 2015-2023;*
- b) *Serve as an expert resource that CMS Parties, the Scientific Council and the Secretariat can avail themselves of, if they wish to contribute to the bushmeat/wild meat discussions within the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the International Whaling Commission (IWC) and the CPW, or when international coordination and cooperation is required;*
- c) *Collect and present information about seabird harvests, for consideration by Parties at the 13th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CMS;*
- d) *Facilitate a discussion about the possibility of adding CMS Appendix I-listed sharks and rays to the scope of the Working Group, and form a recommendation for consideration by the Scientific Council;*
- e) *Share information with IWC and, subject to funding availability, participate in future Small Cetacean Sub-committee meetings with a focus on aquatic wild meat;*

- f) Assist the Secretariat in preparing contributions to the development of the Abidjan Convention Action Plan to Combat Trade, Direct Consumption, Illegal Logging, and Other Uses of Endangered, Threatened or Protected Coastal and Marine Species;
- g) Develop an action plan for supporting Range State Parties, to reduce the impact of aquatic wild meat harvests, for consideration by the Scientific Council; and
- h) Report on its activities to each meeting of the Scientific Council.

#### Activities Implementing Decision 12.44

2. The CPW is currently continuing its work on terrestrial wild meat. The opportunity to expand its remit to incorporate aquatic wild meat has not yet arisen. This action should be carried forward for the next intersessional period. Members of the Aquatic Wildmeat Working Group convened under the Scientific Council could also be instructed to share relevant information with the CPW.
3. A report by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) to its COP14 [Towards A Sustainable, Participatory And Inclusive Wild Meat Sector](#) in 2018, makes reference to CMS COP12 documents on terrestrial and avian wild meat, but not to similar documents on aquatic wild meat. It does refer to the work of the Scientific Council at its 1<sup>st</sup> Sessional Committee in 2016, where the issue of aquatic wild meat was raised for the first time in any of the global biodiversity conventions. More outreach to CBD and the CPW on this issue is required. Therefore, paragraph a) of the Decision should be renewed for action in the next intersessional period. Members of the Aquatic Wildmeat Working Group convened under the Scientific Council could also be instructed to share relevant information with the CPW.
4. With respect to paragraph b) of Decision 12.44, the CMS Secretariat has liaised closely with the Abidjan Convention Secretariat, the Abidjan Aquatic Wildlife Partnership and with the West Africa Biodiversity and Climate Change (WA-BiCC) project, funded by the US Government.
5. The CMS Secretariat is implementing part of a BirdLife International project entitled *Minimising Bycatch of seabirds and sea turtles in West African Industrial Fisheries*. This work overlaps significantly with the CMS aquatic wildmeat workstream. The consultant implementing this project for CMS works closely with the Abidjan Convention, and has attended meetings of the Abidjan Aquatic Wildlife Partnership. Additional collaboration between the CMS and Abidjan Secretariats would be useful to ensure synergies in implementation of work on this subject.
6. During the 18<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (COP18, Geneva, 2019), the CMS Secretariat took part in a side event on aquatic wildmeat in the West African region, with participants from the organizations mentioned in the two paragraphs above. A further meeting in the margins of that COP was organized to discuss further cooperation between the relevant stakeholders.

#### Implementation of Decision 12.45

7. All Scientific Councillors were invited to join the newly formed Aquatic Wild Meat Working Group in early 2018, and a list of external experts were also approached over the same period. The Working Group currently has a dynamic and participatory group of 33 Councillors and expert members covering all the relevant taxa and many of the important regions. A current list of member names, expertise and regions is maintained in the Working Group online workspace (<https://workspace.cms.int/node/655>). Additional regional experts are still being sought for Asia, the Pacific Islands, and Latin America.

### Implementation of Decision 12.46

8. The Working Group has coordinated a discussion paper about adding CMS Appendix I-listed sharks and ray species to the scope of the Working Group (Decision 12.46 (d)) and a thorough discussion process was undertaken through the online workspace and directly with additional experts through email. This discussion paper, *Harvest of CMS Appendix I-Listed Sharks and Rays as Aquatic Wild Meat* (Annex 2) recommends:
  - a) the incorporation of all Appendix I-listed sharks and ray species into the scope of the Working Group; and
  - b) to instruct the Working Group to develop a criterion for considering whether some Appendix II-listed sharks and rays are within the scope of the Working Group.
9. Members of the Aquatic Wild Meat Working Group have raised the need to better understand the interplay between bycatch and aquatic wild meat harvest (Decision 12.46b). A discussion paper, *Determining the Extent of Interplay Between Bycatch and Aquatic Wild Meat Harvests* (Annex 3), was commissioned under the joint direction of the Aquatic Wild Meat and Bycatch Working Groups which then coordinated a discussion process through the online workspace. Both Working Groups recommend that further analysis is needed of the extent of bycatch transitioning to aquatic wild meat harvest for the Scientific Council to provide clear recommendations to CMS Parties for CMS COP14.
10. A Working Group contribution was submitted to the *CBD Survey on Sustainable Wildlife Management* (Decision 12.46b). The submitted information highlighted the importance for the definition and understanding of wild meat to be broadened to include aquatic (especially marine) species. The harvest of these species has risen dramatically in the past decade, corresponding with coastal fisheries resources rapidly declining. As with terrestrial wild meat, there are serious health risks from butchering and consuming some of these species. The submission also commented on the pressures driving increased harvesting of aquatic wild meat, including overfishing by distant water fleets, land grabbing and the displacement of communities, as was articulated in documentation provided to CMS COP12 that underpinned Resolution 12.15: *Aquatic Wild Meat*. It seems prudent that the Aquatic Wild Meat Working Group seek opportunities for greater engagement with the Collaborative Partnership on Sustainable Wildlife Management (CPW).
11. Expertise has been sought to collect and present information about seabird harvest (Decision 12.46c), but more time is required to complete this task. It is likely that the work will be completed in cooperation with a similar review being conducted for ACAP. The Working Group recommends this direction is continued into the coming triennium.
12. Members of the Working Group participated in the first and third regional workshops of the IWC Small Cetacean Sub-committee *Workshop on Poorly Documented Takes of Small Cetaceans* (2018 and 2019) (Decision 12.46 (b) and (e)). Discussions included:
  - a) a request for expert contributions from the African region;
  - b) collaboration opportunities between the Working Group and IWC Small Cetacean Sub-committee;
  - c) contributions and/or sign-ons to the journal article on aquatic wild meat being prepared by the Working Group, and
  - d) requests for contacts of both seabird and shark experts from the region who may be able to contribute to the expanded focus of the Working Group.

13. The development of an online knowledge base as a repository of papers (journal articles, meeting documents etc) and other information related to aquatic wild meat is being explored (Decision 12.46a) to support CMS Parties to reach Targets 2, 5, 6, 11, 13 and 14 of the CMS Strategic Plan for Migratory Species 2015-2023. Its development has been the subject of discussion with several expert bodies who are also seeking to develop a similar resource. It seems prudent to combine this resource across several bodies, if possible, especially as the online knowledgebase on aquatic wild meat will require an investment of time and attention to secure publisher approvals and ensure maintenance of the information to remain current.
14. During the third IWC workshop, discussions about the online knowledge base on aquatic wild meat provided substantial scope for furthering this aim. Several suggestions were put forward that would see the online database housed and maintained by either individuals and/or independent organisations. To ensure complete transparency, non-bias and the longevity of the project, and considering the cross-taxa focus of the Aquatic Wild Meat Working Group, it was agreed that the most sensible solution would be to create an independent online knowledge base under the auspices of CMS. This requires further planning and a funding proposal is being developed. The Working Group recommends this work is continued into the coming triennium, in close collaboration with the IWC Small Cetacean Sub-committee.
15. The Working Group has provided ongoing support directly to the Abidjan Aquatic Wildlife Partnership, initiated to develop an *Action Plan to Combat Trade, Direct Consumption, Illegal Logging, and Other Uses of Endangered, Threatened or Protected Coastal and Marine Species* for the Abidjan Convention (Decision 12.46f). In addition, support by way of presentation preparations were provided for the CMS Secretariat for their participation in the *Abidjan Aquatic Wildlife Partnership Workshop* (23-25 July 2018) where the details of the draft Action Plan were developed. The Working Group recommends that it continues to support the Abidjan Aquatic Wildlife Partnership, in particular where it overlaps with the conservation of CMS-listed species in the western African region.
16. The development of an action plan for supporting Range State Parties has not begun. It is unclear to the Working Group if the intent for Decision 12.46g is to develop one global action plan for all Range State Parties or regional, sub-regional or national action plans for Range State Parties that request assistance. The latter seems more appropriate and more likely to produce action plans with meaningful direction. Members of the Working Group in West Africa have been approached for assistance to develop a sub-regional aquatic wild meat action plan for the Gulf of Guinea, where aquatic wild meat is an acute problem, with serious impacts for local communities and livelihoods. We believe this request for support is complementary to Decision 12.46 g. A preliminary review, *Aquatic Wildmeat in the Coastal Regions of Benin and Togo: A Study of Consumption and Drivers* (UNEP/CMS/COP13/Inf.6), by Working Group member Maximin K. Djondo, describes the levels of aquatic wild meat harvest in Benin and Togo. The Working Group recommends specific direction is given to:
  - a) develop a sub-regional aquatic Wild Meat action plan for the Gulf of Guinea for consideration by Range State Parties in the region; and
  - b) develop regional, sub-regional or national actions plans for Range State Parties that request assistance.
17. The Working Group has progressed the development of an academic journal article highlighting the extent of aquatic wild meat in different regions of the world, as well as the role of CMS and the programme of work for the Aquatic Wild Meat Working Group. This journal article is progressing through a final edit and sign-on process and will be submitted for publication in 2020.

Discussion at the 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Sessional Committee of the Scientific Council (ScC-SC4)

18. During ScC-SC4, it was agreed that thinking about issues and risks associated with aquatic wild meat would have to take into account three dimensions: a) the species themselves, b) human health, and c) balancing sustainable livelihoods, especially for poor communities where wild meat is an important source of protein. All these perspectives needed to be considered, especially when thinking about achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Discussion and Analysis

19. As per the discussion above, there is a need for continuing work on these issues. This is reflected in the draft Decisions.

Recommended Actions

20. The Conference of the Parties is recommended to:
- a) note the report on the *Harvest of CMS Appendix I-Listed Sharks and Rays as Aquatic Wild Meat* (Annex 2), submitted by the Aquatic Wild Meat Working Group;
  - b) note the report *Determining the Extent of Interplay between Bycatch and Aquatic Wild Meat Harvests* (Annex 3), submitted by the Aquatic Wild Meat Working Group;
  - c) note the preliminary review *Aquatic Wildmeat in the Coastal Regions of Benin and Togo: A Study of Consumption and Drivers* (UNEP/CMS/COP13/Inf 6);
  - d) note the *Report on Turtle Harvest and Trade in Solomon Islands* (UNEP/CMS/COP13/Inf.30), including the methodology employed for quantifying a regional village level take of turtles;
  - e) adopt the draft Decisions contained in Annex 1 of this document;
  - f) delete Decisions 12.44, 12.45 and 12.46.

**ANNEX 1**

## DRAFT DECISIONS

**AQUATIC WILD MEAT****Directed to the Aquatic Wild Meat Working Group of the Scientific Council**

- 13.AA The Aquatic Wild Meat Working Group of the Scientific Council should, subject to the availability of resources:
- a) work with the Bycatch Working Group to develop analysis of the extent of instances where bycatch transitions to aquatic wild meat harvest and report on this for the Scientific Council to provide clear recommendations to CMS COP14.
  - b) undertake the following tasks over the course of the intersessional period and report to the Scientific Council with clear recommendations for CMS Parties for CMS COP14, ensuring that perspectives of species conservation, human health and sustainable livelihoods are taken into account:
    - i. incorporate CMS Appendix I-Listed Sharks and Rays into all relevant activities of the working group;
    - ii. continue discussions to establish an online knowledge base as a repository of papers (journal articles, meeting documents etc) and other information related to aquatic wild meat;
    - iii. serve as an expert resource for CMS Parties, the Scientific Council and the Secretariat to contribute to the bushmeat/wild meat discussions within the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the International Whaling Commission (IWC) and the Collaborative Partnership on Sustainable Wildlife Management (CPW), or when international coordination and cooperation about aquatic wild meat is required;
    - iv. explore opportunities for greater engagement with the work of the CPW;
    - v. develop a criterion for considering if some Appendix II-listed sharks and rays should be included within the scope of the Working Group;
    - vi. share information with IWC and participate in future Small Cetacean Subcommittee meetings with a focus on aquatic wild meat;
    - vii. provide support to the Abidjan Aquatic Wildlife Partnership, where the development of the Action Plan to Combat Trade, Direct Consumption, Illegal Logging, and Other Uses of Endangered, Threatened or Protected Coastal and Marine Species overlaps with the conservation of CMS-listed species in the western African region;
    - viii. collect and present information about seabird harvests as aquatic wild meat;
    - ix. develop a sub-regional aquatic Wild Meat action plan for the Gulf of Guinea for consideration by Range State Parties in the region; and develop regional, sub-regional or national actions plans for Range State Parties that request assistance.

***Directed to the Secretariat***

13.BB The Secretariat shall:

- a) subject to the availability of resources, continue to liaise with the Collaborative Partnership on Sustainable Wildlife Management (CPW) to promote the inclusion of aquatic wild meat in their work.
- b) with the assistance of the Working Group, work with the Abidjan Convention Secretariat to ensure synergies between the work of both Conventions on Aquatic Wild meat, in the implementation of CMS COP13 and Abidjan Convention COP13 decisions.