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Contact: Hugh Vickery (DOI), 202-208-6416

Craig Rieben (FWS), 703-358-2225

Christine Eustis (FWS – Doha), 703-343-3939

United States Disappointed in Lack of Protections for Sharks

Fail to Pass at CITES, Hopeful for Future Efforts to Conserve Species

DOHA, Qatar – Assistant Secretary of the Interior Tom Strickland today said he was disappointed that the parties to the Convention on Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) did not vote to protect shark species that have been depleted by overharvest but expressed hope that a foundation has been laid to protect the species in the future.

“This is a significant setback for these marine species, but we view it as only a temporary setback. We will redouble our efforts with other countries around the world to fight for the protection of marine species imperiled by international trade,” said Strickland, who headed the U.S. delegation to CITES’ 15th Conference of Parties, which ended today.

The Parties to CITES completed their work by reconsidering a number of important species proposals during the final plenary session.

The United States asked the parties to re-open debate on the listing of three shark species including the scalloped hammerhead (*Sphyrna lewini*), great hammerhead (*Sphyrna mokarran*), and smooth hammerhead (*Sphyrna zygaena*) because the proposal was only five votes short of adoption in Committee I.

The United States had amended the proposal to remove two other species of sharks and delay implementation for 24 months. The amended proposal was supported by the majority of parties, but did not have the two-thirds necessary for adoption.

During the brief discussion following the decision to reopen debate on the U.S. hammerhead shark proposal, Saudi Arabia, Australia and Colombia spoke in support of the U.S. proposal, and Japan, China and Grenada spoke in opposition. Grenada also called for a secret ballot which was granted after the required approval by ten Parties. The final vote was 76 in support, 53 opposed and 14 abstentions. The parties also voted to overturn the listing of the Porbeagle shark (*Lamna nasus*) on Appendix II, a proposal

adopted in Committee I earlier in the week.

The Parties also voted to reopen debate on the amended proposals on African elephant (*Loxodonta Africana*) submitted by Tanzania and Zambia. Both of those proposals were not adopted after debate. Egypt reopened debate on its amended downlisting proposal for the Egyptian population of the Nile crocodile (*Crocodylus niloticus*) and it was adopted by consensus.

CITES is an international agreement initiated in 1973 and signed by more than 175 countries regulating global trade in imperiled wild animals and plants including their parts and products. A Conference of the Parties is held every 2-3 years to review, discuss, and negotiate changes in the management and control of trade in the various wildlife species covered by the agreement.

The Parties decided to hold the next meeting of the Conference of the Parties in Thailand.

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