



**THE ELEVENTH CONFERENCE OF THE
PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON
INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED
SPECIES OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA:
10-20 APRIL 2000**

The eleventh Conference of the Parties (COP-11) to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) begins today at UNEP Headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, and will continue through Thursday, 20 April 2000. COP-11 will consider 61 agenda items including: a strategic plan for the Convention through 2005; 62 proposals to amend Appendices I and II species; and various trade control and conservation issues concerning specific species.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF CITES

During the 1960s, countries became increasingly aware that over-exploitation of wildlife through international trade was contributing to the rapid decline of many species of plants and animals around the globe. In 1963, the World Conservation Union (IUCN) began drafting an international convention to regulate the export, transit and import of rare or threatened wildlife species. The international commitment for a convention was established in June 1972 at the UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm, Sweden, which recommended the immediate preparation of an international convention to deal with these issues. The same year, IUCN, the United States and Kenya produced a unified working paper, which became the basis for convention negotiations. The final negotiations were held from 12 February to 2 March 1973 in Washington, DC. Issues that proved difficult to resolve included: defining "species" for the purpose of the convention; applying the convention to endangered species taken from the marine environment not included in a State's territory; and determining the scope of the appendices that formed the basis of the convention. CITES was adopted 2 March 1973 and entered into force on 1 July 1975. There are currently 151 Parties to the Convention.

CITES conservation goals are to: monitor and stop commercial international trade in endangered species; maintain those species' under international commercial exploitation in an ecological balance; and assist countries towards a sustainable use through international trade. The mechanisms by which CITES Parties regulate wildlife trade is through controls and regulations on species listed in three Appendices. Appendix I lists species endangered due to international trade. Exchange of them is permitted only in exceptional circumstances. Appendix II species require strictly

regulated trade based on quotas and/or permits to prevent their unsustainable use; and controls aimed at maintaining ecosystems and preventing species from becoming eligible for Appendix I. Appendix III species are subject to regulation by a Party who requires the cooperation of other Parties to control their international trade. To list a species, a Party provides a proposal for COP approval containing scientific and biological data on population and trade trends. The proposal must be supported by a two-thirds majority of Parties present and voting at a COP, not including abstentions. CITES only lists species whose populations are obviously impacted by trade. At present, there are 890 species of flora and fauna species in Appendix I; 29,111 in Appendix II, and 241 in Appendix III. Flora species outnumber fauna by approximately seven to one. As the trade impact on a species increases or decreases, the COP decides whether or not the species should be shifted between or removed from Appendices.

CITES regulates international trade through a system of permits and certificates that are required before specimens enter or leave a country. Each Party must adopt national legislation to provide official designation of a Management Authority responsible for issuing these permits and certificates based on the advice of a designated Scientific Authority. Parties maintain trade records which are forwarded to the CITES Secretariat annually, the sum of which enable it to compile statistical information on the world volume of trade in Appendix species. These two designated national authorities also assist with CITES enforcement through cooperation with customs, police, or appropriate agencies.

The operational bodies of CITES include the COP and its Standing Committee, as well as several scientific advisory committees - the Animals Committee, the Plants Committee, the Nomenclature Committee and the Identification Manual Committee. Located in Geneva, the CITES Secretariat interprets Convention provisions, and services the CITES Parties and Committees. To date, the COP has met ten times.

COP-10: The tenth session of the COP (COP-10) convened in Harare, Zimbabwe, from 9-20 June 1997. COP-10 considered trade controls on more than 100 species, moving nine species from Appendix II to Appendix I, and dropping 18 species from Appendix I to Appendix II. COP-10 adopted a resolution on traditional medicine, recognizing it as an issue in its own right and recommending elimination of illegal use of endangered species in medicine. Resolutions on a new definition of "bred in captivity," the sale of products derived from Appendix I species at international airports, and revision of the process for the transport of live animals were also adopted.

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The long-standing debate on the conservation and trade of the African Elephant continued at COP-10. The three proponents of trade in African Elephant ivory, Zimbabwe, Namibia and Botswana, submitted individual proposals to move their populations from Appendix I to Appendix II. Each proposal included precautionary measures such as limiting ivory sales to Japan, marking all tusks in accordance with CITES regulations, and restricting trade only to registered raw tusks of a certifiable national origin and natural mortality. A compromise vote allowed Zimbabwe, Namibia and Botswana to transfer their populations from Appendix I to Appendix II and permitted the sale of an "experimental quota," with the proceeds going to African Elephant conservation efforts. COP-10 adopted a consensus resolution calling for the establishment of a comprehensive, international monitoring system, to assess African Elephant poaching trends.

On the conservation and trade of whales, COP-10 considered five proposals from Japan and Norway to move different stocks of the Grey and Minke Whale species from Appendix I to Appendix II. Parties discussed at length the relationship between CITES and the International Whaling Commission (IWC). Many delegates proposed waiting for IWC's expected new management scheme before adopting the proposals, while others urged that CITES should use its own criteria for listing whale species. None of the proposals reached the required two-thirds majority in order to transfer the whale species from Appendix I to Appendix II.

INTERSESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

MEETINGS OF THE CITES STANDING COMMITTEE: The Standing Committee (SC) met five times during the inter-sessional period. Its 39th session was held subsequent to COP-10 in Harare, Zimbabwe. At its 40th session in London, UK, March 1998, the SC accepted the audit of declared government ivory stocks and endorsed ongoing work by TRAFFIC (the wildlife trade monitoring programme of IUCN and World Wide Fund for Nature) and IUCN to develop their respective Elephant Trade Information System (ETIS) and Monitoring of Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE) system. The SC also agreed on the need for technical missions to assist in the development of strategies to improve control of the tiger trade. During its 41st session convened in Geneva, Switzerland, February 1999, the SC approved the first legal, international commercial sale of ivory. At its 42nd meeting held in Lisbon, Portugal, September/October 1999, the SC noted a Secretariat report verifying compliance with the precautionary undertakings necessary in relation to the one-off sale and shipment of ivory to Japan. It also approved reports of technical missions on tigers in, *inter alia*, India, China, Japan, Cambodia and Indonesia, and agreed that high-level missions should be undertaken in China, India and Japan. The SC held its 43rd meeting in Nairobi, two days prior to COP-11. The SC unanimously agreed on the revised Rules of Procedure, detailing a mediation procedure to resolve complaints by countries, as well as on nominations for officers at COP-11.

NINTH MEETING OF THE PLANTS COMMITTEE: The Plants Committee convened in Darwin, Australia, from 7-11 June 1999 to consider proposals to be forwarded to COP-11 including, *inter alia*, harmonizing annotations to plant species traded for medicinal use, the possible exemption of rainsticks from Appendix II, and Parties' concerns on the trade of Asian Ginseng. Progress reports on trade in medicinal plants and Turkey's bulb trade were reviewed. The Plants Committee also approved a draft resolution on trade in wild-collected plant specimens.

FIFTEENTH MEETING OF THE ANIMALS

COMMITTEE: The Animal Committee convened in Antananarivo, Madagascar, from 5-9 July 1999. The Animals Committee agreed on action points including, *inter alia*, preparation of draft resolutions on sturgeon markings, use of microchips for live animal marking and consideration of crocodile trading to be discussed at COP-11.

OPENING OF THE MEETING

On the eve of COP-11, delegates met in an official opening ceremony. Willem Wijnstekers, CITES Secretary-General, opened the conference by noting that CITES has been one of the international environmental conventions with the most direct impact on species conservation. He added that there is a need for applied synergy with other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), particularly biodiversity-related MEAs, in order to strengthen the Convention's capacity and success. He highlighted the importance of the proposed Strategic Vision through 2005 as a means to ensure that no animal or plant becomes subject to unsustainable exploitation because of international trade. He further noted that the proposal's detailed action plan will be an essential tool for determining the future of CITES. He called for attention to all proposals for amendments, not just the high profile discussions on elephants, whales, sharks and sea turtles.

Robert Hepworth (United Kingdom), Chair of the CITES Standing Committee, remarked that approximately 6 billion human beings are dependent on wildlife for food, fuel, medicine and their livelihoods, but refuted the perceived conflict in meeting both human and wildlife needs. He attributed CITES success to its practical concept of regulating or prohibiting trade, its ability to evolve, and the hard work of governments in implementing the agreement. He called upon the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) to focus on capacity building in developing countries, the sustainable use of bushmeat, and the conservation of sea turtles.

Dr. Klaus Töpfer, Executive Director of UNEP, stressed that CITES has evolved into the most significant wildlife conservation tool. He called for comprehensive consideration of all species proposed for amendments in Appendix I, and urged the COP to focus on, *inter alia*: reduction of illegal trade; enhanced public support and participation; improved financial and administrative basis; conservation through biodiversity; development processes; and protection of property rights. He recalled that causes of biodiversity loss, such as poverty and debt, are common knowledge and suggested that a new form of solidarity be created to protect the global commons. He identified efforts to assess CITES implementation, including in the UNEP Outlook 2000 Report, and suggested COP-11 consider recommendations adopted at the UNEP workshop on enforcement and compliance held in Geneva in 1999. He concluded by stating that yesterday's problems cannot be solved with yesterday's thinking.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

PLENARY: Plenary will convene at 9:00 am to consider strategic and administrative matters on: election of the Chairs and Vice-Chair of the Plenary; adoption of the agenda and work programme; admission of observers; establishment of the credentials committee; and to hear various reports. Kenya's President Moi will address plenary at 10:00 am. Delegates will meet in regional groups during the afternoon.