

## SUMMARY OF THE 24TH MEETING OF THE CITES ANIMALS COMMITTEE: 20-24 APRIL 2009

The 24th meeting of the Animals Committee (AC24) of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) convened from 20-24 April 2009, in Geneva, Switzerland. AC24 discussed 22 agenda items on a wide range of topics, including: the review of significant trade (RST) in Appendix II species; the periodic review of animal species, such as *Lynx* spp., included in the CITES appendices; sharks and stingrays; sturgeons and paddlefish; the report of the International Expert Workshop on Non-Detriment Findings (NDFs); and proposals to amend the Appendices for possible consideration at the 15th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP15).

At its last meeting prior to CoP15 in 2010, AC Chair Thomas Althaus maintained his reputation for moving the AC efficiently through its work in addressing a wide variety of issues. The AC heard reports from intersessional working groups, which have been making progress since the AC's last meeting in April 2008, and issued recommendations on issues including: sharks and stingrays, NDFs, sea cucumber fisheries, the RST, and periodic review of the appendices.

### A BRIEF HISTORY OF CITES

CITES was established as a response to growing concerns that over-exploitation of wildlife through international trade was contributing to the rapid decline of many species of plants and animals around the world. The Convention was signed in Washington, DC, US, on 3 March 1973, and entered into force on 1 July 1975. There are currently 175 parties to the Convention.

The aim of CITES is to ensure that international trade of wild animal and plant species does not threaten their survival. CITES parties regulate wildlife trade through controls and regulations on species listed in three appendices. Appendix I lists species endangered due to international trade, permitting such trade only in exceptional circumstances. Appendix II species are those that may become endangered if their trade is not regulated, thus requiring controls aimed at preventing unsustainable use, maintaining ecosystems and preventing species from entering

Appendix I. Appendix III species are those subject to domestic regulation by a party requesting the cooperation of other parties to control international trade in that species. In order to list a species in Appendix I or II, a party must submit a proposal for approval by the CoP, supported by scientific and technical data on population and trade trends. The proposal must be adopted by a two-thirds majority of parties present and voting. As the trade impact on a species increases or decreases, the CoP decides whether or not it should be transferred or removed from the appendices.

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There are approximately 5,000 fauna species and 29,000 flora species protected under the three CITES appendices. Parties regulate the international trade of CITES species through a system of permits and certificates that are required before specimens are imported, exported or introduced from the sea. Each party is required to adopt national legislation and to designate two national authorities, namely, a Management Authority responsible for issuing permits and certificates based on the advice of the second national body, the Scientific Authority. These national authorities also assist with CITES enforcement through cooperation with customs, police and other appropriate agencies. Parties maintain trade records that are forwarded annually to the CITES Secretariat, thus enabling the compilation of statistical information on the global volume of international trade in appendix-listed species. The operational bodies of CITES include the Standing Committee (SC) and two scientific committees: the Plants Committee (PC) and the Animals Committee (AC).

**CONFERENCES OF THE PARTIES:** The first CoP was held in Bern, Switzerland, in November 1976, and subsequent CoPs have been held every two to three years. The CoP meets to, *inter alia*: review progress in the conservation of species included in the appendices; discuss and adopt proposals to amend the lists of species in Appendices I and II; consider recommendations and proposals from parties, the Secretariat, the SC and the scientific committees; and recommend measures to improve the effectiveness of the Convention and the functioning of the Secretariat. The CoP also periodically reviews the list of resolutions and decisions, as well as the species listed in the appendices.

**PC16:** The 16th meeting of the CITES Plants Committee convened from 3-8 July 2006, in Lima, Peru. The PC discussed a wide range of topics, including: the RST in Appendix II species; the periodic review of plant species included in the CITES appendices; annotations to plant, medicinal plant and orchid listings; bigleaf mahogany; and proposals to amend the annotations for tree species.

**PC16/AC22 JOINT SESSION:** A joint session of the AC and PC was held from 7-8 July 2006, in Lima, Peru. It addressed issues of common interest to both committees, including: proposed amendments to the rules of procedure; the review of the scientific committees; the RST in Madagascar; transport of live specimens; and the Addis Ababa Principles and Guidelines for the Sustainable Use of Biodiversity adopted by the Convention on Biological Diversity.

**AC22:** The 22nd meeting of the CITES Animals Committee convened from 7-13 July 2006, in Lima, Peru. The AC discussed 28 agenda items and adopted six recommendations to be presented at CoP14 on issues including: the RST in Appendix II species; production systems for specimens of CITES-listed species; transport of live specimens; sea cucumbers; conservation and management of sharks; and the periodic review of animal species included in the Convention's appendices.

**CITES CoP14:** The 14th CITES Conference of the Parties convened from 3-15 June 2007, in The Hague, the Netherlands. The meeting considered 70 agenda items and 37 proposals to amend the CITES appendices. CoP14 adopted resolutions and decisions directed to parties, the Secretariat and Convention's committees, on a wide range of topics including: the CITES

Strategic Vision 2008-2013; a guide to compliance with the Convention; management of annual export quotas; and species trade and conservation issues, including Asian big cats, sharks and sturgeons. Regarding species listings, CoP14 decided to list: slenderhorned and Cuvier's gazelles and slow loris on Appendix I; Brazil wood, sawfish and eel on Appendix II; and to amend the annotation on African elephants to allow a one-off sale of ivory from Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe with a nine-year resting period for further ivory trade.

**PC17:** The 17th meeting of the CITES Plants Committee convened from 15-19 April 2008, in Geneva, Switzerland. The PC discussed 24 agenda items on a wide range of topics, including: the RST in Appendix II species; the periodic review of plant species included in the CITES appendices; timber issues; strategic planning; NDFs; transport of live plants; and the definitions of hybrids and cultivars under the Convention.

**PC17/AC23 JOINT SESSION:** The joint session of the PC and AC convened on 19 April 2008, in Geneva, Switzerland. The PC/AC addressed issues of common interest to both committees, including: the revision of the terms of reference of the scientific committees; cooperation with advisory bodies of other biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements; the RST in specimens of Appendix II species; an international expert workshop on NDFs; and transport of live animals and plants.

**AC23:** The 23rd meeting of the CITES Animals Committee convened from 19-23 April 2008, in Geneva, Switzerland. The AC addressed 21 agenda items, including: the RST in Appendix II species; conservation and management of sharks; the periodic review of animal species included in the Convention's appendices; and a proposal to transfer the Mexican population of *Crocodylus moreletii* from Appendix I to Appendix II.

**PC18:** The 18th meeting of the CITES Plants Committee convened from 17-21 March 2009, in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The PC addressed 22 agenda items, including: the RST in Appendix II species; the periodic review of plant species included in the CITES appendices; timber issues; strategic planning; the report of the International Expert Workshop on NDFs; and annotations.

## REPORT OF THE MEETING

On Monday, 20 April 2009, David Morgan, on behalf of CITES Secretary-General Willem Wijnstekers, opened the 24th meeting of the Animals Committee (AC24). Stressing the need to "turn talk into action" by formulating concrete proposals for consideration by the 15th Conference of the Parties (CoP15), tentatively scheduled for Doha, Qatar in 2010, he urged participants to be practical in this exercise by considering the challenges faced by customs officials and others who implement CITES on the ground.

AC Chair Thomas Althaus (Switzerland) welcomed participants, lamenting that the AC did not meet back-to-back or jointly with the CITES Plants Committee (PC), which took place in March 2009 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. He said that back-to-back and joint meetings of the AC and PC allow for stimulating discussions and streamlining of the CITES scientific committees' work on issues such as cooperation with other international instruments, evaluation of the review of significant trade (RST), and the International Expert Workshop on Non-Detriment Findings (NDFs).

AC Chair Althaus then highlighted the AC's challenging work programme for the week, expressing confidence that the AC would be able to meet its goals. Stressing that AC members must base their opinions on sound scientific information and leave subjective views out as much as "humanly possible," he underscored some aspects of the AC's working method including that: the AC is a meeting of ten members elected to represent their regions in their "personal capacities;" and that while working groups (WGs) may be established to allow more in-depth discussion than is possible in plenary, the AC is not necessarily required to adopt WG recommendations. He thanked the Secretariat for its hard work and noted that Nobuo Ishii (Japan) would be serving as the Asia representative at AC24. He explained that the wolf was chosen as the logo for the meeting because of recent evidence suggesting that wolves are naturally recolonizing parts of Switzerland from Italy and France.

The AC then adopted: the rules of procedure (AC24 Doc.2), with minor amendments by North America representative Rodrigo A. Medellín (Mexico) and Europe representative Carlo Ibero Solana (Spain); the agenda (AC24 Doc.3.1) with an amendment proposed by Africa representative Khaled Zahzah (Tunisia), to include consideration of *Balearica regulorum* (Grey crowned crane) and *B. pavonina* (Black crowned crane) under the Committee's discussion of selection of species following CoP14 (AC24 Doc.7.4); and the working programme (AC24 Doc.3.2), with minor amendments by the Secretariat and AC Chair Althaus. The AC also adopted the list of observers (AC24 Doc.4).

### **RST IN SPECIMENS OF APPENDIX II SPECIES**

**EVALUATION AND OVERVIEW OF THE RST:** On Monday in plenary, the Secretariat introduced the document on the evaluation of the RST (AC24 Doc.7.1), highlighting the terms of reference (ToRs) and suggested *modus operandi* contained in the document. AC Chair Althaus suggested that he chair a WG on RST to identify case studies and consider the *modus operandi* contained in the document.

The Secretariat then presented the report on the overview of the species-based RST (AC24 Doc.7.2), highlighting some of the recent Standing Committee (SC) recommendations on this issue, and updating participants on some of the ongoing reviews. The United Kingdom (UK) noted that the Secretariat should review the annual export quotas of Grey parrot (*Psittacus erithacus*) from Guinea and Cameroon, and ensure that until the AC recommendations are complied with, the quotas are consistent with SC55's recommendation for a zero export quota. The Secretariat noted that the matter would be referred to the WG on RST.

The WG on RST met throughout the week. During the brief Tuesday afternoon plenary session, RST WG Chair Althaus requested that the AC expand the WG's mandate to include discussion of trade in Tridacnidae species (Giant clams) from the Solomon Islands based on new information received from the UK indicating trade in wild specimens in contravention to the information provided by the Solomon Islands to AC21 that resulted in the removal of the species from the RST. The AC agreed.

On Friday, RST WG Chair Althaus presented the WG's report. The AC agreed with many of the WG's recommendations on the evaluation and overview of the species-based RST with minor amendments. On Tridacnidae species, the Secretariat said that the AC should not request more information from the Solomon Islands on the matter, as recommended by the WG report, but rather make a recommendation on whether or not to include the species in the RST. The alternate representative for the European Union (EU), supported by the EU, said that the species should be included in the RST, to which the AC agreed.

**Recommendation:** The AC recommends (AC24 WG1 Doc.1), *inter alia*, to:

- include Madagascar as a country case study in the evaluation of the RST;
- support the Secretariat's *modus operandi* on the evaluation; and
- include Giant clams in the RST.

### **SPECIES SELECTED FOLLOWING COP13 and COP14:**

On Monday, in plenary, the Secretariat introduced the document on species selected for the RST following CoP13 (AC24 Doc.7.3), highlighting the status of Madagascar's *Mantella* spp. (Golden frogs) and noting that information on previous and proposed quotas is described in the document. He noted that the AC was requested to revise IUCN's preliminary categorizations for this species and, in doing so, either eliminate them from the RST or formulate relevant recommendations. AC Chair Althaus proposed, and the AC agreed, that this matter be deferred to the WG on RST.

The Secretariat then introduced the document on species selected for the RST following CoP14 (AC24 Doc.7.4 Rev.1), inviting the AC to consider replies received from affected parties and eliminate species where it appears that Article IV (Regulation of Trade in Specimens of Species Included in Appendix II) has been properly implemented. He noted a lack of responses from some countries regarding the species contained in the annex of the document and the AC agreed to retain such species in the RST and to further discuss the document in the WG on RST.

The WG on RST met throughout the week. On Friday, WG Chair Althaus presented the WG's report. The AC agreed with many of the WG's recommendations on species selected following CoP13 and CoP14 with some amendments including to remove Zimbabwe's *Heosemys annandalii* (Yellow-headed temple turtle) from the RST based on information submitted to the AC. The AC agreed.

**Recommendation:** The AC recommends (AC24 WG1 Doc.1), *inter alia*, to:

- retain Hippopotamus from Ethiopia, Burkina Faso, and others in the RST;
- include *Hippocampus kelloggi* (Kellog's sea horse), *H. spinosissimus* (Hedgehog seahorse), and *H. kuda* (Estuary seahorse) in the RST; and
- include the two species of African cranes in the RST.

### **SCIENTIFIC INFORMATION FROM THE RANGE**

**STATES OF HUSO HUSO:** On Monday in plenary, the Secretariat introduced the document on scientific information from the range states of *Huso huso* (Beluga) (AC24 Doc.7.5), and AC Chair Althaus suggested that the issue be further discussed by the WG on RST. North America and Europe said the species

should be included in the RST, with Europe underscoring that the countries of origin have been given sufficient opportunity to produce relevant information about the species. AC Chair Althaus noted his reluctance to postpone the issue further. The Russian Federation suggested that the AC postpone discussions on the matter until the Commission on Aquatic Bioresources of the Caspian Sea holds its next meeting in June 2009. AC Chair Althaus said that his country could raise this point in the WG on RST.

The WG on RST met throughout the week. On Friday, WG Chair Althaus presented the WG's report (AC24 WG1 Doc.1). The AC adopted the WG's recommendation in this issue without amendment.

**Recommendation:** The AC recommends (AC24 WG1 Doc.1) to include *Huso huso* in the RST.

#### ACTIVITIES WITH REGARD TO THE POPULATION OF TURSIOPS ADUNCUS OF THE SOLOMON ISLANDS:

On Monday in plenary, Oceania representative Rod Hay (New Zealand) introduced the document on scientific information on the Solomon Islands' population of *Tursiops aduncus* (Bottlenose dolphins) (AC24 Doc.7.6). He recalled Israel's decision to withdraw its proposal to include the species in the RST at AC23 subject to the Solomon Islands' participation in the IUCN and NDFs workshops that took place during the intersessional period. Noting that both workshops emphasized the need for better population data on the species, he underscored that the Solomon Islands' scientific authority does not accept the findings of either workshop and said that there may be disagreement between the Solomon Islands' Management and Scientific Authorities on this issue. He highlighted that, despite the current annual export quota of 100 specimens, the Solomon Islands has only exported 74 specimens in the past decade. He underscored, supported by IUCN, that this issue should be discussed by the WG on RST.

Noting the quality and volume of information coming out of the two intersessional workshops, alternate representative for Europe Colman O'Criodain (Ireland) suggested that the WG on RST consider making recommendations on quotas and management measures. Supported by Humane Society International, WWF suggested the AC "fast-track" the issue and recommended a zero export quota pending more detailed population data for the species. The Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society suggested that the Solomon Islands impose a moratorium on capture and export of the species. The Secretariat noted that the AC cannot circumvent their CoP mandate and AC Chair Althaus underscored that participants should not conflate "fast-tracking" with identifying "urgent cases." The EU emphasized the importance of countries of origin participating in the initial stages of the RST process. He noted that the Solomon Islands has discredited one of its two representatives following the workshop and underscored that due to the sensitive nature of the issue, the AC not take any "procedural shortcuts." Japan suggested that the issue not be discussed further and that Solomon Islands be requested to provide more detailed information to the AC. AC Chair Althaus deferred discussions to the WG on RST.

The WG on RST met throughout the week. On Friday, WG Chair Althaus presented the WG's report. AC24 participants discussed: whether or not the AC could include the species in the RST on the basis of the export quota, or if such a determination

must be made on the basis of actual trade; and if the AC could make recommendations to the Solomon Islands regarding the reduction of its export quota from 100 to 10 specimens as recommended in the WG report, or if this was a matter for CITES parties. After informal consultations, the WG presented a revised recommendation, which the AC adopted without amendment.

**Recommendation:** The AC recommends (AC24 WG1 Doc.1) that *T. aduncus* be included in the RST and that the Secretariat draft a letter to the Solomon Islands, *inter alia*, notifying them of the AC's recommendation that it use a more conservative export quota and reassuring them that inclusion of the species in the RST was not a punitive measure.

#### DEVELOPMENT OF THE SIGNIFICANT TRADE

**ONLINE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM:** On Thursday in plenary, the Secretariat introduced the document on the development of the significant trade online management system (AC24 Doc.7.7), noting that the Secretariat had concluded a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the United Nations Environment Programme-World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) to develop the system. UNEP-WCMC highlighted that the system would track progress and deadlines through all stages of the RST process. The AC noted the report.

#### RANCHING

On Monday in plenary, intersessional WG Co-Chair Chris Schürmann (the Netherlands) presented the document on review of source code 'R' (AC24 Doc.8.1). He noted the WG prepared a questionnaire on the issue that was sent to 27 countries, of which 13 responded, and suggested the WG further discuss if more information should be collected. Schürmann said it is becoming clear that source code "R" had been used erroneously, underscoring that the questionnaire indicated that source code "R" was used for export of several species where the country had no ranching operations. He highlighted the importance of the WG to propose: a definition of ranching; deletion of source code "R" completely for "ranching" specimens to be exported as wild when accompanied by a proper NDF; the use of source code "R" only for crocodylian and sea turtle species transferred from Appendix I to Appendix II; and the use of source code "R" for Appendix II animal species. AC Chair Althaus proposed, and the AC agreed, to establish a WG on Ranching to be co-chaired by Marcel Calvar Agrelo (Uruguay), Jose Alberto Alvarez Lemus (Cuba) and Chris Schürmann.

The Secretariat presented the document on the revision of Res.Conf. 11.16 (Rev.CoP14) (Ranching and trade in ranching specimens of species transferred from Appendix I to Appendix II) (AC24 Doc.8.2). He reminded participants of Decision 14.53, which directs the Secretariat, in consultation with AC, to examine and review the resolution in order to clarify recommendations in the document for CoP15. He highlighted that the conditions required for the transfer of a species from Appendix I to Appendix II for ranching are much stricter than those required for wild species. The Secretariat noted there is little reason or incentive for a party to request to transfer a species from Appendix I to Appendix II for ranching purposes. He said that such a situation is perverse, because the requirements for ranching will ensure that any ranching programme successfully used to transfer a species from

Appendix I to Appendix II will actually be beneficial to the wild population through reintroduction or in other ways. AC Chair Althaus proposed, and the AC agreed, that this issue be dealt by the WG on Ranching.

On Thursday afternoon, in plenary, WG Co-Chair Chris Schürmann presented the WG's report and recommendations, noting they were agreed by majority. He added that participants suggested incorporating core elements of the down-listing populations, ranched or not, in Res.Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP14) (Criteria for amendment of Appendices I and II). In plenary, Europe, North America, IWMC and many others opposed any unintentional change in this resolution.

On Friday morning in plenary, the US suggested a separate resolution on the matter referring to Res.Conf. 9.24 (Rev.CoP14). The AC agreed to the WG's recommendations, as amended.

**Recommendation:** The AC recommends (AC24 WG2 Doc.1), *inter alia*:

- not deleting source code "R" completely;
- using source code "R" for Appendix II species and down-listed populations under Res.Conf. 11.16 and its predecessors;
- defining ranching as: "the rearing in a controlled environment of specimens which have been taken as eggs or juveniles from the wild where they would have a very low probability of surviving to adulthood."
- all approaches for the down-listing of populations from Appendix I to Appendix II, whether for ranching or not, should be done under provisions of Res.Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP14)(Criteria for amendment of Appendices I and II); and
- the Secretariat to assess, in consultation with the AC, implications of the approach suggested for populations previously down-listed for ranching under Res.Conf. 11.16 (Ranching and trade in ranched specimens of species transferred from Appendix I to Appendix II) and its predecessors.

#### PERIODIC REVIEW OF ANIMAL SPECIES

**INCLUDED IN THE CITES APPENDICES:** On Monday in plenary, Carlos Ibero Solana (Spain), Chair of the intersessional WG on periodic review, presented the document on the periodic review of species selected before CoP13 (AC24 Doc.10.1). Noting that the WG invited parties to conduct reviews of *Cephalophus silvicultor* (Yellow-backed duiker), *Mirounga leonine* (Southern elephant seal) and *Pteropus macrotis* (Large-eared flying fox), he highlighted the WG's recommendations to delete the above species from the Periodic Review and to discuss the review of *Callithrix jacchus* (White ear-tufted marmoset) submitted by Brazil. He also noted that the US review of *Crocodylus lacertinus* (Crocodile tegu) was not completed before this meeting. AC Chair Althaus underscored the importance of the periodic review process.

Intersessional WG Chair Solana then presented a document on the periodic review of species selected between CoP12 and CoP15 (AC24 Doc.10.2), highlighting the need to review select taxa in the birds and amphibians groups. He also noted the WG's recommendations to discuss the reviews of *Ambystoma dumerilii* (Achoque) and *Andrias japonicus* (Japanese giant salamander), submitted by Mexico and Japan respectively, and suggested the AC recommend, as the PC did, a budget line for periodic review

to streamline the process. AC Chair Althaus proposed, and the AC agreed, to form a WG on Periodic Review, chaired by Solana, to address this issue.

The US then introduced the document on the periodic review of Felidae (AC24 Doc.10.3), which reports the outcomes of the meeting on *Lynx* spp. organized by the US and the European Commission (EC) held in Brussels, Belgium, on 29 October 2008. She highlighted that poaching of *Lynx lynx* (Eurasian bobcat) is mostly for predator control and domestic animal protection, and said that more information was needed from other range states, including the Russian Federation, who were not present at the meeting in Brussels. North America noted a study carried out on *Lynx rufus* (Bobcat) in Mexico, and the three US regional associations of fish and wildlife agencies suggested an Appendix III listing for *Lynx* spp., which was opposed by Humane Society International. AC Chair Althaus recalled that the AC invited parties to conduct reviews for select species of Felidae, noting that no parties have followed-up on that yet.

The WG on Periodic Review met on Tuesday. On Friday, in plenary, WG Chair Solana presented the WG's report and the AC agreed to the WG's recommendations on the matter with minor amendments.

**Recommendation:** The AC recommends (AC24 WG3 Doc.1), *inter alia*, that the AC:

- urge the US to complete the review of *Crocodylus lacertinus* (Crocodile tegu);
- accept Japan's recommendation to maintain *Andrias japonicus* (Japanese giant salamander) in Appendix I;
- urge, *inter alia*, Mexico and the US to complete the review of *Panthera onca* (Jaguar) and *Lynx* spp., respectively; and
- not support the PC18 proposal to introduce a new budget line for the Periodic Review at this time but may consider the issue in future.

#### STURGEONS AND PADDLEFISH

On Monday in plenary, the Secretariat summarized its intersessional activities related to the conservation and trade in sturgeons and paddlefish (AC24 Doc.12.1). Saying that activities fall into the categories of export quotas, trade controls, capacity building and the evaluation of the assessment and monitoring methodologies for shared stocks, he highlighted the EU's recent contribution of US\$30,000 for monitoring methodologies and asked the AC for direction on how to spend the funds.

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) then summarized the results of the CITES-FAO Technical Workshop on Stock Assessment and Total Allowable Catch (TAC) Methodologies that took place in Rome, from 11-13 November 2008 (AC24 Doc.12.2). He summarized the workshop's recommendations including that: the Commission on Aquatic Bioresources of the Caspian Sea continue improving the methodology by reviewing a methodology that includes all relevant data and calculates stock status and biological reference points; a full technical description of the methods is produced; and two technical workshops for specialists be organized with FAO support on survey estimation methods and the application of modern methods for stock assessment and TAC estimation for sturgeon of the Caspian Sea. AC Chair Althaus proposed, and the AC agreed, to establish a WG on Sturgeons, chaired by

Nobuo Ishii (Japan), to review the workshop recommendations and consider how to use the US\$30,000 donated by the EU for monitoring methodologies.

The WG on Sturgeons and Paddlefish met throughout the week. On Thursday in plenary, WG Chair Ishii reported on the WG's progress. The AC adopted the WG's recommendations without amendments.

**Recommendation:** The AC recommends (AC24 WG4 Doc.1), *inter alia*, that the AC:

- endorse the conclusions and recommendations of the FAO and CITES Technical Workshop on Stock Assessment and TAC Methodologies;
- request the SC urge range states to consider all recommendations of the Workshop when working with the Commission on Aquatic Bioresources of the Caspian Sea in improving the sturgeon stock assessment and TAC determination methodology;
- request the SC ask the range states to provide a report to CoP15 on progress made in improving the existing sturgeon stock assessment and TAC determination methodology; and
- request the Secretariat use available funds towards achievement of the above recommendations.

### CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF SHARKS AND STINGRAYS

On Monday in plenary, John Carlson (US), Chair of the intersessional WG on Sharks, presented the document on activities concerning shark species of concern (AC24 Doc.14.1). He reported on the intersessional WG's progress and recommended AC24 establish a WG to further discuss the issue. The AC agreed and established a WG on Sharks and Stingrays, chaired by Rod Hay (New Zealand) to further discuss the issue.

The Secretariat then presented the document on the regional workshop on South American freshwater stingrays (AC24 Doc.14.2). He noted progress on a number of outcomes, including the need to: study a variety of impacts that are affecting the species; and take a precautionary approach until the next population assessment is available. AC Chair Althaus noted that this issue will be further discussed in the WG on Sharks and Stingrays.

Oceania then presented the document on linkages between international trade in shark fins and meat and illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing (AC24 Doc.14.3). He noted that Australia contracted TRAFFIC to elaborate the paper on IUU fishing for sharks, including the outcomes of the FAO shark fisheries workshop and the NDF Workshop, as requested by AC23. He summarized the paper's conclusions, including that:

- illegal shark fishing is occurring globally, with 'hot spots' in Central and South America and in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean;
- most illegal fishing of sharks is carried out in national waters by both foreign and national vessels;
- illegal foreign fishing of sharks in national waters often derives from neighboring countries and can result from either unauthorized access or breaches of conditions of access;
- most of the identified illegal fishing involves the retention of fins;
- most of the reported instances and estimates of IUU shark fishing do not specify the species of sharks taken; and

- the most frequently mentioned species taken in illegal fishing are hammerhead sharks *Sphyrna* spp. (Hammerhead shark) and *Carcharhinus falciformis* (Silky shark).

AC Chair Althaus deferred further discussion of the issue to the WG on Sharks and Stingrays.

The Secretariat then presented the document on other tasks related to the conservation and management of sharks (AC24 Doc.14.4). He noted that no funds were made available for organizing a capacity-building workshop on the conservation and management of sharks, as agreed at AC23. He said the Secretariat liaised with FAO and took part in the FAO Technical Workshop on the Status, Limitations and Opportunities for Improving the Monitoring of Shark Fisheries and Trade, which was held in Rome, from 3-6 November 2008. The FAO reported on its work on sharks, and the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) noted its second meeting on International Cooperation on Migratory Sharks convened from 6-8 December 2008 at FAO headquarters in Rome. She added that the MoU should definitely apply to the three species of the Basking, Great White and Whale Sharks, and said that the next meeting will take place in the Philippines at a date to be announced in 2009.

On Friday morning, in plenary, WG Chair Hay presented the WG's report and recommendations. He noted that the WG discussed: cooperation with CMS, FAO and regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs), with a view to avoid duplication of work; the IUU shark fishing report; and options regarding activities on shark species of concern. WWF asked to add "other specialists and stakeholders" in the discussion of FAO Guidelines in Responsible Fish Trade. The AC adopted the recommendation with minor amendments.

**Recommendation:** The AC recommends (AC24 WG5 Doc.1), *inter alia*:

- on activities concerning shark species of concern, that parties improve data collection, management and conservation via, *inter alia*, domestic, bilateral and RFMO measures; and possible future actions for the AC may include, where appropriate and if necessary, refinement of the list of species of concern, particularly if additional data become available;
- on the regional workshop on South American freshwater stingrays, that range states: consider implementing or reinforcing national regulations on management and reporting of capture and international trade of freshwater stingrays for all purposes, including commercial fisheries for food and ornamental trade, and standardizing these measures across the region; and be encouraged to consider the listing of endemic and threatened species of freshwater stingrays in CITES Appendix III;
- on linkages between international trade in shark fins and meat, and IUU fishing, that parties continue research to improve understanding of the situation and identify the linkages; that the AC discuss with FAO the elements of FAO Guidelines on Responsible Fish Trade, with the involvement of parties, relevant RFMOs, the fishing industry, the shark product industry, retailers, the IUCN Shark Specialist Group, and other specialists and stakeholders; and
- on other AC tasks related to conservation and management of sharks, that parties that are shark fishing states, but have

not yet implemented a national shark plan, to develop it at the earliest opportunity and take steps to improve research and data collection on both fisheries and trade.

### **SUSTAINABLE USE AND MANAGEMENT OF SEA CUCUMBER FISHERIES**

On Monday in plenary, the Secretariat presented a document on the sustainable use and management of sea cucumber fisheries (AC24 Doc.16). He highlighted CoP14 Decisions 14.98 and 14.99 that, *inter alia*, direct the Secretariat to bring to the attention of the FAO the discussion paper on the biological and trade status of sea cucumbers in the families Holothuriidae and Stichopodidae, and to promote cooperation with the FAO concerning the conservation of such cucumber species. He also noted FAO is finalizing the technical guidelines on sustainable management of sea cucumber fisheries. The AC formed a WG on Sea Cucumber Fisheries, chaired by Nancy Daves (US).

The WG on Sea Cucumber Fisheries met on Thursday. On Friday in plenary, WG Chair Daves presented the WG's report and the AC agreed without amendments.

**Recommendation:** The AC recommends (AC24 WG6 Doc.1), *inter alia*, that the Secretariat prepare a report containing the executive summary of the FAO Technical Paper No.516 on Sea Cucumbers and the "Evaluation of the pros and cons of a CITES listing," contained in the Galapagos case study, and these should serve as the WG's evaluation of the FAO report for submission to CoP15.

### **INTERNATIONAL EXPERT WORKSHOP ON NDFS**

On Monday in plenary, Mexico introduced the documents summarizing the international expert workshop on NDFS (AC24 Doc.9) and detailing the work of the workshop's five working groups (AC24 Doc.9.1). He said that the Workshop's recommendations could help scientific authorities in their work, underscoring that the recommendations should be taken up on a voluntary basis. He noted that exchange of experience is fundamental to helping CITES authorities maintain their institutional memory. Canada then summarized PC18's recommendations on the matter (AC24 Doc.9 Addendum), including a draft resolution that would, *inter alia*, list guiding principles and methodologies for conducting NDFS. North America said the AC should continue to work with the Workshop's recommendations in order to ensure consistency between the two scientific committees. Asia expressed surprise to see a draft resolution in the Addendum, underscoring the need for much more input from parties and stressing caution on the matter. Europe noted his agreement with Asia "on principle" but underscored the need to adopt a resolution on the issue. The AC formed a WG on NDFS, co-chaired by Richard Bagine (Kenya) and Siti Nuramaliati Prijono (Indonesia), to consider the matter further.

On Tuesday in plenary, Asia noted that he had reviewed the resolution contained in the addendum distributed on Monday more closely. He understood that the workshop report is a useful resource. He said, however, that he still believed that the AC should not hurry to draft a resolution before CoP15. Central and South America and the Caribbean representative Marcel Calvar (Uruguay) agreed, adding that the AC might want to consider a more general approach to the issue. North America said that the concerns raised could be taken on board and addressed in the

WG on NDFS. The alternate representative for Europe said that the resolution should ensure that the material emerging from the workshop is available for parties to use. Oceania said the outcome of the workshop should be made available as guidance, not in a way that would be too "hard nosed" or in a way that limits the sovereign rights of countries. China emphasized that the discussion on this matter was very controversial at PC18, and that AC24 Doc.9.1 (NDF workshop working group reports) was only available after the deadline for submissions for AC24, which is against the rules of procedure. The Secretariat clarified that because PC18 took place after the deadline for submission of documents for AC24, this was the only option available. AC Chair Althaus added this incident to the list of problems due to not holding scientific meetings jointly.

Europe said that 95% of the existing draft resolution is straightforward, not making new demands on parties but helping them to meet existing ones. He urged AC members to review the document in more detail. Humane Society International said the resolution should assist parties who do not have the resources to conduct NDFS through funding, training or other means. IWMC-World Conservation Trust (IWMC) suggested the AC recommend a draft decision asking parties to follow up on the Workshop, rather than recommend the adoption of a resolution.

On Friday in plenary, Co-Chair Bagine presented the results of the WG on NDFS and explained that the rationale behind the proposed draft decisions on NDFS was, *inter alia*, to engage with parties and elaborate on the outcomes of the Workshop on NDFS. The AC adopted the recommendations without amendments. AC Chair Althaus then noted that the inability to engage with the PC on this issue has made the task more difficult. He remarked, however, that the recommendations adopted could turn into an opportunity culminating in the adoption by CoP16 of an instrument addressing NDFS. The Secretariat lamented that the AC backed away from taking a decisive step on this issue, noting that further development will now be delayed for several years.

**Recommendation:** The AC recommends (AC24 WG7 Doc.1), *inter alia*, that:

- parties consider the usefulness of the outputs of the Workshop, particularly those related to the methodologies, tools, information, expertise and other resources needed to formulate NDFS; and
- the AC and PC prepare a discussion paper for consideration at CoP16 with options on how to use the workshop outputs, including, if considered appropriate, a draft resolution on the making of NDFS.

### **TRANSPORT OF LIVE ANIMALS**

On Tuesday in plenary, intersessional WG Chair Andreas Kauffmann (Austria) presented the document on activities of the transport of live animals WG (AC24 Doc.15.1), noting there was no case of high mortality shipments reported to him by any party. He noted his participation in the Animal Transportation Association (AATA) International Conference 2008, and said he will continue to work in close association and attend future meetings of AATA. He noted that the WG also held an informal meeting at the International Air Transport Association (IATA) in Montreal during the Live Animals Regulations meeting. Kauffmann highlighted the WG recommendations include

to: develop a checklist of essential elements that need to be addressed prior to land transport of any taxa; and develop good practices to follow for all types of transport.

The Secretariat presented a document on the National Legislation Project – Analysis of the parties’ legislative provisions and draft legislative guidance (AC24 Doc.15.2). She noted the document provides an analysis of parties’ legislative provisions on the transport of live animals by road, rail and ship contained in materials gathered under the CITES National Legislation Project; and draft legislative guidance for the transport of live specimens. She underscored that the CITES Guidelines served a useful purpose for many years but should be not be used any longer. The US said the CITES guidelines need to be adequately updated and offered assistance on the matter. The AC established a WG on Transport, chaired by Andreas Kaufmann (Austria), to further discuss these issues.

The Secretariat presented the document on the distribution of the current IATA Live Animals Regulations (AC24 Doc.15.3). He informed participants of the distribution of the IATA Regulation via a free CD ROM provided parties asked for it within IATA’s deadline, which is advertised by CITES every year. The AC took note of the report.

The WG on Transport met on Tuesday and Wednesday. On Thursday afternoon in plenary, Transport WG Chair Kaufmann, presented the WG’s report and recommendations. The AC agreed without amendments.

**Recommendation:** The AC recommends (AC24 WG8 Doc.1), *inter alia*, that:

- the Transport WG work intersessionally to proceed with replacing the “CITES Guidelines for transport and preparation for shipment of wild live animals and plants” with new guidelines for non-air transport of live specimens for consideration at CoP16;
- the Secretariat: notify parties to provide to the Transport WG Chair any available legislation, guidelines, codes of conduct and other information on transport standards related to non-air transport; and
- further liaise with IATA and other organizations that deal with transport through, *inter alia*, a MoU.

### NOMENCLATURE MATTERS

On Tuesday, in plenary, Ute Grimm (Germany), specialist on zoological nomenclature, introduced the document on nomenclatural matters (AC24 Doc.13 Rev.1). She highlighted several nomenclatural issues that have arisen for birds and mammals since CoP14. She urged a WG on nomenclature take a pragmatic approach and underscored that CITES should be conservative in using scientific names on documents. She also suggested that a WG consider other issues including some taxa that she became aware of since the preparation of the document.

The Secretariat then introduced the document on the revision and publication of CITES Appendices (AC24 Doc.13.1), highlighting that making changes to the names used in appendices resulted in publication delays and implementation problems for the parties. He proposed, *inter alia*, a recommendation, also endorsed by PC18, that any proposal to the CoP to change a standard nomenclatural reference for CITES species should contain a list of the amendments that would have

to be made to the Appendices if the proposal were adopted. New Zealand supported the proposal but noted that parties may lack expertise and may be interested in mechanisms to overcome that limitation. The AC deferred further discussions on this matter to a WG on nomenclature.

The Secretariat introduced the document on harmonization of nomenclature and taxonomy with other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) (AC24 Doc.13.2). The Secretariat then suggested, *inter alia*, proposing to CoP15, the adoption of the recently published *Encyclopedia of Marine Mammals* as the standard nomenclatural reference for marine mammals in order to harmonize CITES with CMS and the International Whaling Commission (IWC). Japan expressed concern about using the *Encyclopedia of Marine Mammals* because it is not fully in line with the standard reference used by the IWC.

The AC established a WG on Nomenclature, chaired by Ute Grimm to discuss this matter further.

The WG on Nomenclature met throughout the week. On Thursday, in plenary, WG Chair Grimm presented the WG’s report and the AC adopted the WG’s recommendations with minor amendments.

**Recommendation:** The AC recommends (AC24 WG9 Doc.1), *inter alia*, that:

- any proposal to the CoP to change a standard nomenclatural reference for CITES species contain a list of amendments that would have to be made to the Appendices if the proposals were adopted;
- the references for the species listed in the annex to the recommendation be included in Resolution Conference 12.11(Rev. CoP14) (Standard nomenclature); and
- the *Encyclopedia of Marine Mammals* should not be adopted as a standard reference for marine mammals.

### COOPERATION WITH OTHER MULTILATERAL INSTRUMENTS

On Thursday in plenary, the Secretariat and AC Chair Althaus introduced the document on cooperation with other multilateral instruments (AC24 Doc.6). He noted: the meeting of the Chairs of the scientific advisory bodies of biodiversity-related conventions; the 2010 Biodiversity Indicators Partnership; and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES). AC Chair Althaus highlighted the summary prepared by the Chair of the PC on the IPBES (AC24 Doc.6 Annex). Mexico said that IPBES was a useful platform but not a substitute for PC and AC. The AC noted the report.

### UNIVERSAL TAGGING SYSTEM

On Thursday in plenary, Germany introduced the document on the implementation and effectiveness of the universal tagging system in the trade in small crocodylian leather goods (AC24 Doc.11). She highlighted the third annex to the document that discusses the definition of “small crocodylian leather goods,” and asked participants to send any comments directly to the AC representative to the SC working group on the matter. The US noted that as Chair of the SC working group, he would also welcome feedback on the matter. The AC noted the report.



**PROPOSALS FOR POSSIBLE CONSIDERATION AT COP15**

**POSSIBLE DELETION OF ANAS OUSTALETI FROM APPENDIX I:** On Tuesday in plenary, the Secretariat introduced the document requesting that the Depository Government make a proposal to delete *Anas oustaleti* (Mariana mallard) from Appendix I (AC24 Doc.18.1). He noted there had not been any sighting of the species since 1979 and it is considered extinct. The US supported the deletion of the species from Appendix I and Switzerland, as the Depository Government, agreed to submit the proposal to CoP15. The AC agreed.

**PROPOSAL TO RECONCILE THE CITES APPENDICES FOR PUMA CONCOLOR:** On Tuesday in plenary, Canada introduced the document requesting advice from the AC on how to reconcile the CITES Appendices for Puma concolor (Puma) with the standard nomenclatural reference for mammals agreed by CoP14 (AC24 Doc.18.2). She said the standard nomenclatural reference results in the use of the same scientific name for both Appendix I- and II-listed Pumas, which creates confusion when reviewing permit applications and potentially with enforcement. The AC deferred further discussions on the matter to the WG on Nomenclature.

The WG on Nomenclature met throughout the week. On Thursday in plenary, WG Chair Grimm presented the WG's report. The AC agreed to the WG's recommendation on the matter without amendment.

**Recommendation:** The AC recommends (AC24 WG9 Doc.1) that in accordance with AC23's previous recommendation on the matter, *Mammal Species of the World* by Wilson and Reeder (1993) be included in Res.Conf. 12.11 (Rev. CoP14) (Standard nomenclature) as the standard reference for *Puma concolor*.

**PROGRESS REPORT ON THE IDENTIFICATION MANUAL**

On Thursday in plenary, the Secretariat gave an oral report on progress made on the identification manual for CITES-listed species. He informed that, due to the decrease in budget for updating a paper manual, the Secretariat contracted UNEP-WCMC to develop a web-based identification manual. He explained that such a manual will be easier to update, uses a wiki-type technology, and is scheduled to be completed by July 2009. AC Chair Althaus highlighted the new capacity-building platform established by the Secretariat. The AC took note of the information presented.

**REGIONAL REPORTS**

On Tuesday in plenary, Siti Nuramaliati Prijono, (Indonesia) presented the Asia regional report (AC24 Doc.5.2). She highlighted the region's activities on capacity building, contribution to wildlife law enforcement, NDFs and cooperation with NGOs and relevant stakeholders.

Oceania representative Rod Hay (New Zealand) then presented his region's report (AC24 Doc.5.6). He noted challenges faced by developing countries with respect to capacity building, highlighting the workshop on capacity building, which was held in Brisbane, Australia, from 23-26 March 2009.

On Thursday morning in plenary, Khaled Zahzah (Tunisia) presented the Africa regional report (AC24 Doc.5.1), informing on activities in his region including workshops on the implementation of CITES and marine conservation. He highlighted national reports on CITES action plans.

Marcel Calvar (Uruguay) then presented the Central and South America and the Caribbean regional report (AC24 Doc.5.3), underscoring activities on awareness raising and capacity building. He also highlighted national legislations aimed at improving CITES implementation.

Europe regional representative Carlos Ibero Solano (Spain) delivered his region's report (AC24 Doc.5.4). He highlighted various activities in the region including CITES projects in Slovenia on brown bears and turtles and Croatia's capacity-building activities for CITES authorities.

Rodrigo Medellín (Mexico) presented the North America regional report (AC24 Doc.5.5). He highlighted a number of technical workshops on sharks, white turtles and the International Expert Workshop on NDFs.

The AC noted the reports.

**PREPARATION OF THE CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR COP15**

On Thursday in plenary, AC Chair Althaus noted that he would circulate his CoP15 report to AC members prior to submission, adding that if possible he would try to read the report aloud at CoP15.

**TIME AND VENUE OF THE 25TH MEETING OF THE ANIMALS COMMITTEE**

On Friday, the Secretariat informed that the next meeting of the AC would likely take place in 2011 in Geneva, Switzerland, but that the exact dates and location still needed to be finalized.

**ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

On Friday afternoon in plenary, the Africa representative introduced the document on improving the participation of parties in the African region in CITES and strengthening the implementation of CITES throughout Africa (AC24 Inf.3). He proposed the creation of a WG on the participation of the African region in CITES, inviting the AC to take note of the document and participants to support the document at the SC. He also asked interested parties to consider providing financial support to the proposed WG. The AC noted this intervention.

**CLOSING REMARKS**

On Friday afternoon in plenary, the Secretariat noted that the final dates and location for CoP15 were still being finalized but that the meeting would likely take place in March 2010 in Doha, Qatar. AC Chair Althaus then thanked the various participants, and gavelled the meeting to a close at 5:25 pm.

**A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE MEETING**

Once again CITES Animals Committee (AC) Chair Thomas Althaus' Swiss efficiency and steadfast dedication to the process skillfully shepherded AC24 and its nine working groups through its 22 agenda items. AC24 added to PC18's large stack of recommendations for CoP15 and decided to do work with the PC during the intersessional period on at least one important joint issue, namely non-detriment findings (NDFs).

As is typical for the CITES scientific committees, the AC was faced with the challenge of managing the tricky balance between making recommendations based on sound scientific data and managing politics in the face of scientific uncertainty and, at times, diverging national priorities. This balance was

most evident in the AC's deliberations on sharks, NDFs, and the inclusion of Solomon Islands' population of *Tursiops Aduncus* (Bottlenose dolphin) in the review of significant trade (RST).

Specifically, on these issues AC24 participants were faced with the task of balancing the content of scientific information with issues such as: protecting sovereign rights to conduct NDFs; timeliness of submissions of scientific information on which to base any recommendations on NDF guidelines; and improving data collection on sharks to improve species management. This brief analysis will highlight the core elements of these discussions at AC24, shedding light on what to expect on these issues at CoP15.

## SHARKS

High-seas sharks are one of the most unknown and unstudied marine species, making attempts to gather data on their biology, life history, distribution, reproduction and population dynamics a Herculean task. Given the growing concern about the overexploitation and conservation of sharks, CITES stepped up its participation in shark management and conservation when CoP14 tasked the AC to refine a list of shark species of concern for possible inclusion in CITES Appendices, if their management and conservation status do not improve. This activity aimed to ensure collaboration with management entities such as the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Plan of Action for Conservation and Management of Sharks (IPOA-Sharks) and Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) in the hope of promoting more effective shark management.

Despite its CoP mandate and pleas from some shark conservationists to take on this task in the face of scientific uncertainty, some participants were emphatically against the AC refining the list of species, arguing that CITES did not have the capacity to carry out such an overwhelming task with limited or no substantive data on the species. A few pragmatic CITES experts in the Sharks Working Group highlighted the enormous challenge of managing sharks given not only the limited scientific data available on the species, but also its biological characteristics, such as its migratory nature, and the question of who is responsible for imports and exports of high-seas catches, noting that effective management of this, and other marine species, will require a redesign of some aspects of the CITES framework due to the difficulty in obtaining biological information for these species.

Others argued that there is enough expertise within the AC to comply with CoP14's mandate. These participants said that a refined list forwarded to CoP15 would "send the right signal" to national fishery authorities, namely that CITES participation in the management of these species is on the rise. Some participants believed that this signal would create an incentive for countries to improve their own management practices, recognizing that failing to do so could result in a future CITES listing of the species.

A few participants asked whether CITES could make a difference in shark management at all since many other UN entities have tried, without great success, to promote shark conservation. One participant wondered if CITES should just "jump out of the water" and leave shark issues to others, such as FAO and the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), who

have a longer history with the marine species issues and even some species overlap with the CMS appendices, which cover Spiny dogfish and Porbeagle sharks. Many others believed that CITES should forge ahead, with one participant encouraging CITES to "swim in deeper waters," and another highlighting the hair's breadth by which Spiny dogfish and Porbeagle sharks were rejected at CoP14. Optimists were also quick to highlight the positive outcomes that have already emerged from CITES embracement of sharks, including cooperation between fishery and environmental authorities at national levels, which is of practical assistance in fostering shark management.

More than one participant used the metaphor of a "shark circling its prey" to describe the AC's previous discussions on the matter. In the end, the AC agreed that there was a need for parties to improve data collection, management, conservation and trade monitoring for the identified species and recommended that possible future action by the AC could include refining the list of species of concern, if additional data become available. Some delegates noted that in examining a FAO-produced list of priority species in tandem with the list elaborated by CoP14, the AC had nonetheless succeeded in moving discussions on sharks forward.

## NDFS

The AC's discussion on NDFs found delegates split over whether or not to adopt recommendations on the International Expert Workshop on NDFs forwarded by the 18th+ meeting of the CITES Plants Committee (PC18). It was clear that parties' reservations on the matter expressed in the final days of PC18 had "percolated up" to the AC regional representatives. Some AC members were very cautious about submitting a draft resolution to CoP15 that might impinge on sovereign rights of countries to conduct NDFs as they see fit. A few participants noted that developing countries feared that general principles for conducting NDFs, even if voluntary, could be used by NGOs as a "check-list" to question their future NDFs and harvesting quotas. Others stressed that NDFs are a, if not the, core element of CITES implementation and in need of further elaboration to assist parties with capacity limitations and to provide options for voluntarily harmonizing certain aspects of the process.

Also underscoring the centrality of NDFs to CITES, some parties felt strongly that they did not have sufficient time to review and analyze PC18's recommendations on the matter since they were only circulated two days before AC24 began. These parties argued that given the time limitations for proper analysis the AC should not adopt the resolution on the matter recommended by PC18.

Many participants underscored that the dilemma faced on this issue lends further support to AC Chair Althaus' conviction that the AC and PC meetings should be arranged jointly or back-to-back where differences in opinion could be addressed on the spot. Others suggested possible rationales for holding the meetings separately, such as ensuring plants not remain in the "shadow of sharks and elephants" and that holding the AC and PC meetings separately could be less costly.

The AC ultimately agreed to solicit feedback from parties about the NDF Workshop outcomes during the intersessional period, and recommended a set of decisions to continue working on NDF issues in the lead up to CoP15, with a view

to possibly recommending a resolution containing voluntary NDF principles to CoP16. While participants were satisfied with the compromise, others felt the AC's recommendations were restrained by political pressure on this issue.

### **BOTTLENOSE DOLPHINS AND THE RST**

Heated debates resurfaced at AC24 surrounding whether or not the Solomon Islands' population of *T. Aduncus* (Bottlenose dolphins) should be included into the RST on the basis of results emerging from the IUCN and NDF Workshops. Central to the debate was the question of whether or not, based on the available scientific information from IUCN and the range state (which came to vastly different conclusions on the matter), the Solomon Islands export quota is in fact sustainable. The IUCN report said that the number of Solomon Islands' *T. Aduncus* population is in its "low hundreds," which its representative to AC24 said was well below the number necessary to support the countries' export quota of 100 specimens per year. In a letter circulated at AC24, the Solomon Islands NDF estimated the population at approximately 5,000 to 10,000, saying that this estimate can support its quota and questioned the accuracy and "motives" of the IUCN report.

AC24 participants diverged on whose population data should be used as the scientific basis for deciding the matter. While some participants said that there was no reason to assume one source of information was more reliable than the other, many felt that the Solomon Islands had not submitted adequate explanation of how it reached its NDF conclusions. The Solomon Islands argued in its letter to the CITES Secretary-General that, despite its quota of 100 specimens per year, its actual export is only 74 species in the last decade and therefore there was no "significant trade."

The AC's ultimate decision was to include the species into the RST and request that the Solomon Islands adopt a more conservative export quota, without suggesting a specific number. While participants, who wanted a zero quota pending better scientific information, said the AC was handling the Solomon Islands as a relatively new party, with "kid gloves," others believed that the decision was a good compromise that accommodated everyone's concerns.

### **THE ROAD TO COP15**

The AC's recommendations to improve data collection related to shark management and to solicit parties' comments on the NDF Workshop postponed further scientific discussions on these matters. Nonetheless, these recommendations demonstrated the AC's commitment to basing policy decisions on the best available scientific information, even in the face of external political pressure to act quickly, such as on sharks. The AC also demonstrated that it is not paralyzed from scientific uncertainty, however, as demonstrated by its precautionary decision to include the Solomon Islands' *T. Aduncus* population in the RST. As participants filed out of the final plenary, many expressed interest in the AC's expected report to CoP15 that will compile parties' comments on the NDF Workshop outcomes. Others speculated about which marine species listing proposals might resurface at CoP15. Participants left Geneva with a feeling that, while not everyone was completely satisfied with the AC's recommendations on every single issue, common ground was found on many of the challenging ones.

## **UPCOMING MEETINGS**

**WORLD OCEAN CONFERENCE:** This Conference will be held from 11-15 May 2009, in Manado, Indonesia. Organized by the Government of Indonesia, the Global Forum on Oceans, Coasts and Islands, and other partners, it will draw high-level attention to issues of ecosystem-based integrated oceans management in the context of climate change, focusing especially on the policy recommendations emanating from the 2008 Global Conference. For more information, contact: World Ocean Conference Secretariat; tel: +62-431-861-152; fax: +62-431-861-394; e-mail: [info@woc2009.org](mailto:info@woc2009.org); internet: <http://www.woc2009.org/>

**INTERNATIONAL MARINE CONSERVATION CONGRESS:** This event will take place from 19-24 May 2009, in Washington DC, US. It will encompass the Second International Marine Protected Areas Congress. For more information, contact: Conference Chair John Cigliano; tel: +1-610-606-4666, ext. 3702; e-mail: [john.cigliano@cedarcrest.edu](mailto:john.cigliano@cedarcrest.edu) or [IMCC2009@conbio.org](mailto:IMCC2009@conbio.org); internet: <http://www2.cedarcrest.edu/imcc/index.html>

**IWC-61:** The 61st Meeting of the International Whaling Commission will take place from 22-26 June 2009 in Madeira, Portugal. For more information, contact: IWC Secretariat; tel: +44-1223-233-971; fax: +44-1223-232-876; e-mail: [secretariat@iwcoffice.org](mailto:secretariat@iwcoffice.org); internet: <http://www.iwcoffice.org>

**MEETING OF THE COMMISSION ON BIORESOURCES OF THE CASPIAN SEA:** This meeting is expected to take place in Iran in June 2009 (exact dates to be determined) to discuss, *inter alia*, issues related to *Huso huso* (Beluga). For more information, contact: Caspian Fisheries Research Institute; tel: +7-8512-25-86-36; fax: +7-8512-25-25-81; internet: <http://www.kaspnirh.ru/en>

**CITES SC58:** The 58th meeting of the CITES Standing Committee will take place from 6-10 July 2009 in Geneva, Switzerland. For more information, contact: CITES Secretariat; tel: +41-22-917-8139; fax: +41-22-797-3417; e-mail: [info@cites.org](mailto:info@cites.org); internet: <http://www.cites.org>

**THIRD MEETING ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION ON MIGRATORY SHARKS UNDER CMS:** This meeting will take place in the Philippines in October or November 2009 (exact date to be determined). For more information, contact: the CMS Secretariat; tel: +49-228-815-2426; fax: +49-228-815-2449; e-mail: [secretariat@cms.int](mailto:secretariat@cms.int); internet: <http://www.cms.int>

**WORLD WILDERNESS CONGRESS:** This meeting will be held from 6-13 November 2009, in Merida, Mexico. It is organized by the Wild Foundation and Unidos Para la Conservación, and will discuss the conservation of wilderness, wild lands and seas. A four-day meeting will be held at the Congress, entitled "A New Age Continental Jaguar Research and Conservation," which will focus on priorities and strategies to protect jaguars across the continent. For more information, contact: Maria Lascurain; tel: +52-55-5615-9650; e-mail: [info@wild9.org](mailto:info@wild9.org); internet: <http://www.wild9.org>

**CITES COP15:** CITES CoP15 will be held in 2010 (exact dates and location to be confirmed). For more information, contact: CITES Secretariat; tel: +41-22-917-8139; fax: +41-22-797-3417; e-mail: [info@cites.org](mailto:info@cites.org); internet: <http://www.cites.org>