

**SEVENTEENTH MEETING OF THE
CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES OF THE
CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE
IN ENDANGERED SPECIES OF WILD FAUNA
AND FLORA:
24 SEPTEMBER - 5 OCTOBER 2016**

The seventeenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP17) to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) opens in Johannesburg, South Africa on Saturday, 24 September 2016 and will continue through Wednesday, 5 October 2016.

During CoP17, participants will consider: actions to combat wildlife trafficking; demand reduction strategies to combat illegal trade in CITES-listed species; provisions on international trade in hunting trophies of species listed in Appendix I or II aimed at enabling better controls of the sustainable and legal origin of those specimens; illegal trade in cheetahs; elephants and trade in ivory; agarwood-producing taxa; and ebonies.

Several proposals concern transfer of species from Appendix II to Appendix I, including the proposal to transfer the African grey parrot, African lion, Indian pangolin, Philippines pangolin, Sunda pangolin, Chinese pangolin and four African species of pangolins. A number of other species are proposed for listing in Appendix II or transfer from Appendix I to Appendix II, including the Peregrine falcon. There is also a proposal to alter the existing annotation on the Appendix II listing of Swaziland's white rhino, so as to permit a limited and regulated trade in white rhino horn which has been collected in the past from natural deaths, or recovered from poached Swazi rhino, as well as horn to be harvested in a non-lethal way from a limited number of white rhino in the future in Swaziland.

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 by representatives from 80 countries in Washington, DC, on 3 March 1973, and entered into force on 1 July 1975. There are currently 183 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 require 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 needs to submit a proposal for approval by the CoP, supported by scientific and biological 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 the species should be transferred or removed from the appendices.

There are approximately 5,600 fauna species and 30,000 flora species protected under the three CITES appendices. Parties regulate international trade of CITES species through a system of permits and certificates that are required before specimens listed in its appendices 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 these permits and certificates, and a Scientific Authority, responsible for providing advice. These two 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.

CITES CoP13: CoP13 met in Bangkok, Thailand, from 2-14 October 2004. Delegates addressed a range of topics, including 50 proposals to amend the CITES appendices. CoP13 approved the listing of ramin, agarwood, the great white shark and the

humphead wrasse in Appendix II, as well as the uplisting of the Irrawaddy dolphin from Appendix II to I. Regarding the African elephant, Namibia saw its request for an annual ivory quota rejected, but was allowed to proceed with a strictly-controlled sale of traditional ivory carvings. Delegates also agreed on an action plan to curtail unregulated domestic ivory markets. Namibia and South Africa were each allowed an annual quota of five black rhinos for trophy hunting, and Swaziland was allowed to open up strictly controlled hunting of white rhinos. Other decisions focused on synergies with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Enforcement issues also received considerable attention.

CITES CoP14: CoP14 met in The Hague, the Netherlands from 3-15 June 2007. Delegates addressed a 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. Delegates agreed that no cetacean species should be subject to periodic review while the International Whaling Commission (IWC) moratorium is in place. CoP14 approved the listing of: slender-horned and Cuvier's gazelles and slow loris on Appendix I; and Brazil wood, sawfish and eel on Appendix II. It also agreed 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. The media spotlighted negotiations on the future of ivory trade and African elephant conservation, with many highlighting the consensus by African range states as a major achievement of this meeting.

CITES CoP15: CoP15 met in Doha, Qatar from 13-25 March 2010. The meeting considered 68 agenda items and 42 proposals to amend the CITES appendices. CoP15 adopted resolutions and decisions directed to parties, the Secretariat and Convention bodies on a wide range of topics including: electronic permitting; Asian big cats; rhinoceroses; bigleaf mahogany; and Madagascar plant species. Regarding species listings, CoP15 decided to list, among others: Kaiser's spotted newt; five species of tree frogs; the unicorn beetle; rosewood; holywood; and several Madagascar plant species.

CITES CoP16: CoP16 met in Bangkok, Thailand, from 3-14 March 2013. The meeting adopted 55 new listing proposals, including on sharks, manta rays, turtles and timber. Nine proposals were rejected (Caspian snowcock, Tibetan snowcock, saltwater crocodile, Siamese crocodile, South American freshwater stingray, Rosette river stingray, blood pheasant and two species of freshwater turtles). Three proposals were withdrawn: Southern white rhino and two African elephants. Three were not considered: Indochinese box turtle; Ryukyu black-breasted leaf turtle; and Annam leaf turtle. The CoP also adopted strong enforcement measures to address wildlife crime.

INTERSESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

SC64: SC64 convened in Bangkok, Thailand, on 14 March 2013. The meeting discussed: national ivory action plans, wherein the SC Chair noted the willingness of the eight parties concerned to cooperate to produce ivory action plans and to report on their implementation; and the establishment and renewal of working groups.

AC27 AND PC21 MEETINGS: AC27 convened in Veracruz, Mexico, from 28 April to 1 May 2014. AC27 was followed by the Joint Meeting of the AC and PC, which took place in Veracruz, Mexico, from 2-3 May 2014. Finally, PC21 met in Veracruz from 4-8 May 2014. The Committees focused

on the levels of global commercial trade in products and derivatives of CITES-listed species, and the identification of cases of unsustainable use of species of conservation concern. Some species were highlighted for special review, including lions and cheetahs. The Committees also recommended bringing international trade in long-tailed macaque monkeys, Fischer's two-horned chameleons, West African and Asian three-spot seahorses and *Euphorbia itremensis* back to sustainable levels. The Committees also expressed concern over the sustainability of international trade in specimens of polar bears, pangolins, tortoises and turtles, and butterflies, and planned to examine these cases in more detail at their next meetings.

SC65: SC65 convened from 7-11 July 2014 in Geneva, Switzerland. On Asian big cats, the SC agreed to establish an intersessional working group to report back at SC66. On cheetahs, the SC mandated the newly established intersessional working group to coordinate with the Secretariat on the organization of a workshop before the next AC meeting. On rhinos and elephants, the SC adopted recommendations requesting non-complying countries to meet a tight deadline to take actions, or suspension of trade may be considered.

AC28: AC28 convened from 30 August - 3 September 2015 in Tel Aviv, Israel. The AC addressed a lengthy agenda, including: extinct or possibly extinct species; freshwater stingrays; periodic review of species included in Appendices I and II; evaluation of the Review of Significant Trade (RST); captive-bred and ranches specimens; snake trade and conservation management; production systems for specimens of CITES-listed species; RST of Appendix II species; and conservation and management of sharks. Delegates also considered proposals for possible listings at CoP17.

PC22: PC22 convened from 19-23 October 2015 in Tbilisi, Georgia. PC22 discussed: guidance on making non-detriment findings (NDFs) for trees; the Action Plan for Malagasy ebonies (*Diospyros* spp.) and Malagasy Rosewoods (*Dalbergia* spp.); capacity building; extinct or possibly extinct species; evaluation of the RST; harvesting of and trade in *Prunus africana* (African cherry); timber identification; amendment of the annotation for Appendix-II orchids to exempt finished products packaged and ready for retail trade containing components of Appendix-II orchids; standard nomenclature; and regional reports.

SC66: SC66 convened from 11-15 January 2016 in Geneva, Switzerland. SC66 addressed: livelihoods, captive breeding, and species trade and conservation, with discussions focusing on elephants and National Ivory Action Plans, rhinos, Asian big cats, saiga antelopes, great apes, pangolins, sharks and rays, sturgeons and paddlefish, ebony and rosewoods and African teak. Among different decisions, SC66 agreed to suspend trade in specimens of wildlife originating in Guinea Bissau, Liberia and Venezuela for failure to adopt appropriate measures for the effective implementation of the Convention.

Drawing attention to 14 parties (Bhutan, Central African Republic, Republic of the Congo, Grenada, Guinea, Mali, Mongolia, Nicaragua, Panama, Rwanda, São Tomé and Príncipe, San Marino, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu), that have failed to submit annual reports for three consecutive years and have not provided adequate justification for this, SC66 agreed to suspend all trade of CITES-listed species with them if they do not submit their annual reports within 60 days. SC66 also recommended that parties suspend commercial trade in specimens of CITES-listed species with Nigeria, Angola and the Lao People's Democratic Republic until these parties submit progress reports on National Ivory Action Plans (NIAPs) implementation, acknowledging that some progress has been made towards NIAP actions.