

CITES COP17 HIGHLIGHTS: MONDAY, 26 SEPTEMBER 2016

CITES CoP17 met throughout the day in Committees. Committee I addressed marine species issues, including sharks and rays, totoaba, queen conch, as well as ebonies, rosewoods and agarwoods. Committee II discussed a range of elephant-related agenda items.

COMMITTEE I

SHARKS AND RAYS (*ELASMOBRANCHII* SPP.): Report of the Secretariat: The Secretariat introduced the document on sharks and rays (CoP17 Doc.56.1). EGYPT said more capacity building is needed at national and regional levels to counter negative media on sharks. The EU, FIJI, the MALDIVES, TONGA, SAMOA and BRAZIL supported proposed draft decisions. FIJI urged delegates to submit data on their CITES-listed species to RFMOs to improve stock assessments.

JAPAN proposed amendments, including removing reference to CMS. CMS, supported by ISRAEL, the US and NEW ZEALAND, noted that many CITES Parties are also members of CMS and the Sharks MoU and opposed Japan's proposal to remove the CMS reference.

The Committee Chair invited Japan, New Zealand, Israel, Iceland and the US to form a drafting group to address Japan's proposed amendments.

Report of the AC: NEW ZEALAND introduced the AC's document on sharks and rays (CoP17 Doc.56.2), highlighting cooperation with FAO, CMS and RFMOs.

The EU expressed support for the decisions for the SC to address look-alike and traceability issues.

The Committee took note of the document.

HAWKSBILL TURTLE (*ERETMOCHELYS IMBRICATA*): The Secretariat introduced the document on Hawksbill turtle (CoP17 Doc.59), calling for updated assessments and trade surveys to inform management and conservation efforts.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, SENEGAL, the MALDIVES, IRAN, KENYA, SRI LANKA, the PHILIPPINES and others supported deleting Decision 16.127, considering successful implementation, and adopting draft decisions to enhance communication and collaboration with CMS, among others.

Committee I adopted the document with minor amendments by Colombia.

REGIONAL COOPERATION ON THE MANAGEMENT OF AND TRADE IN THE QUEEN CONCH (*STROMBUS GIGAS*): The Secretariat introduced the document describing progress achieved in regional cooperation on the management of and trade in the queen conch (*S. gigas*) (CoP17 Doc.72). SAINT LUCIA, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, COLOMBIA and others expressed support for the deletion of Decisions that have been fulfilled. JAMAICA recommended an additional draft decision to

direct the AC to "review the process for the setting of scientific quotas for queen conch, in particular where scientific quotas make up a large portion of the overall export quota."

Committee I adopted the document.

TOTOABA (*TOTOABA MACDONALDI*): MEXICO presented the document on totoaba (CoP17 Doc.74 (Rev.1)), stressing the importance of addressing its illegal trade. WWF urged delegates to take measures to limit vaquita bycatch and illegal fishing and trafficking of totoaba.

The Committee invited Mexico, China, New Zealand, the EU, the US and WWF to form a drafting group to finalize decisions.

FRESHWATER STINGRAYS (*POTAMOTRYGONIDAE* SPP.): URUGUAY presented the document (CoP17 Doc.87), highlighting decisions to encourage range States to include all species of concern in Appendix III. NORWAY proposed to include reference to the sustainable use of stingrays, which was accepted by the Committee.

The Committee adopted the document.

EBONIES, PALISANDERS AND ROSEWOODS: The Secretariat introduced the relevant document (CoP17 Doc.55.2), highlighting the Action Plan for *Diospyros* spp. and *Dalbergia* spp. and the SC recommendation for all Parties to suspend commercial trade in these species until Madagascar strengthens its enforcement actions.

MADAGASCAR proposed amendments to Decisions adopted at CoP16 addressed to her country. She proposed selling the audited stockpiles of *Diospyros* spp. and *Dalbergia* spp. The EU, supported by SWITZERLAND, NORWAY, CHILE, WWF, EIA and WRI, opposed Madagascar's proposal to sell its tropical timber stockpile on international markets.

The Committee formed a drafting group to report back on Tuesday.

SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION OF AGARWOOD-PRODUCING TAXA (*AQUILARIA* SPP. AND *GYRINOPS* SPP.): The PC presented progress on Agarwood-producing taxa (CoP17 Doc.53.1), highlighting a proposal to amend annotations to include wood chips, even when packaged.

The Committee took note of the document and adopted its draft decisions with minor amendments.

MAINTENANCE OF THE APPENDICES: Standard nomenclature: Report of the Animals and Plants Committees: AC nomenclature specialist Ute Grimm summarized the report related to fauna (CoP17 Doc.81.1) and PC nomenclature specialist Noel McGough summarized flora.

The Committee noted changes in references and adopted draft decisions, with the exception of the cactus checklist to be discussed in a working group with the US, Mexico, Italy and Peru.

Standard nomenclature for *Hippocampus* spp.: AUSTRALIA presented proposed nomenclature for *Hippocampus* spp. (CoP17 Doc.81.2 (Rev.1)).

The Committee adopted the document.

COMMITTEE II

ELEPHANTS: Report on Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE): The Secretariat introduced document CoP17 Doc.57.5 and the addendum, noting that illegal killing of elephants continues to negatively impact populations in many parts of Africa despite NIAP implementation since CoP16.

UGANDA and KENYA, supported by ISRAEL and opposed by ZIMBABWE, questioned the quality of data provided to MIKE by range States. NAMIBIA suggested sustainable use could help address the poverty and governance issues responsible in part for the illegal killing of elephants. Noting the “dramatic decline” of elephant populations and the “alarming level” of illegal global trafficking in ivory, the EU opposed reauthorizing legal international ivory trade.

The Secretariat noted that Parties could consider removing the restriction that prevents making public detailed carcass data from MIKE.

The Committee took note of the report.

Report on the Elephant Trade Information System (ETIS): The Secretariat introduced the relevant document (CoP17 Doc.57.6 (Rev.1)), highlighting the analysis prepared by TRAFFIC and the recommendations: for Parties to consider the inclusion of Malawi, Singapore and Togo in the NIAP process; and to further encourage the NIAP process with renewed scrutiny.

SRI LANKA lamented its inclusion in the group of countries of “secondary concern” on the basis of only one large seizure. CHINA questioned the data and methodology used in the report. UGANDA expressed concern over the grouping of countries into different levels of concern and the negative publicity it generates. UAE rejected the conclusions of the report to include UAE in the NIAP process. SINGAPORE objected to being identified as country of “primary concern.”

The Committee noted the report and discussions.

Implementation of Resolution Conf. 10.10 (Rev. CoP16) on Trade in Elephant Specimens and Closure of Domestic Markets for Elephant Ivory, Actions to Combat Wildlife Trafficking and Ivory Stockpiles: Proposed Revision of Resolution Conf. 10.10 (Rev. CoP16) on Trade in Elephant Specimens: These agenda items were considered together. The Secretariat introduced the document on trade in elephants (CoP17 Doc.57.1), highlighting the SC recommendations.

Niger introduced the document on the closure of domestic markets (CoP17 Doc.57.2). NAMIBIA, supported by SWAZILAND, raised a point of order under the Rules of Procedure and motioned to close the discussion on this agenda item, noting that this proposal goes beyond the scope of the Convention. ISRAEL and KENYA opposed Namibia’s motion.

The US introduced portions of the document on Actions to Combat Wildlife Trafficking (CoP17 Doc.27) related to the proposed amendments to Resolution Conf. 10.10 (Rev. CoP16) providing for closure of domestic ivory markets.

Chad introduced the document on ivory stockpiles (CoP17 Doc. 57.3).

The Committee called for a vote on Namibia’s motion. The motion was rejected by a simple majority, with 31 Parties in favor and 57 against.

The Committee set up a working group to be chaired by SC Chair Øystein Størkersen.

National Ivory Action Plans Process: The Secretariat introduced the document on NIAPs (CoP17 Doc.24 (Rev.1)), highlighting specific areas for improvement for the NIAPs process.

The draft decisions and draft amendments contained in the annexes to the document were forwarded to the working group on NIAPs, to be chaired by Canada.

Actions to Combat Wildlife Trafficking: The US introduced the remaining draft decisions set forth in CoP17 Doc.27, as related to domestic markets for frequently illegally traded specimens of CITES-listed species and CITES controls for specimens of CITES-listed species produced from synthetic or cultured DNA.

CANADA supported the draft decisions on wildlife products produced from synthetic or cultured DNA with the Secretariat’s amendment on timing of reporting. The EU supported the draft

decisions related to domestic markets for frequently illegally traded specimens of CITES-listed species. CHINA opposed the draft decisions.

The Committee adopted the two draft decisions with minor amendments.

DECISION-MAKING MECHANISM FOR A PROCESS OF TRADE IN IVORY: Report of the Standing Committee, Proposal of Benin, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Chad, Ethiopia, Kenya, Niger and Senegal; and Proposal of Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe: SC Chair Størkersen introduced CoP17 Doc.84.1 inviting the CoP to decide whether the mandate directed to the SC in Decision 16.55 (and formerly Decision 14.77), concerning the development of a decision-making mechanism (DMM) for a process of trade in ivory, should or should not be extended.

Benin introduced CoP17 Doc.84.2 proposing that the CoP does not extend the DMM mandate provided to the SC in light of the crisis facing elephant populations in the majority of range States.

South Africa introduced CoP17 Doc.84.3 with a proposal for a DMM for a process of future trade in ivory in which the proceeds of the trade are used exclusively for elephant conservation and community development within or adjacent to range States.

ZIMBABWE, NAMIBIA, TANZANIA, SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC and several others supported the proposal for a DMM as presented in Annex I of CoP17 Doc.84.3, with several Parties stressing that if a DMM were not approved at CoP17, they would consider the current annotation as though it had not been written. KENYA, on behalf of 28 other Parties from Africa, and supported by the US, the EU, ISRAEL and many observers, stressed that establishing a DMM when African elephants are in critical decline “would send the wrong signal at the wrong time,” and instead called for, *inter alia*, legislative, enforcement, educational and fund-raising measures to reduce poaching rates and demand for ivory and illegal commerce. SWAZILAND, who supported South Africa’s proposal, said that many more Parties supported it privately but feared supporting it openly because donors might withdraw funding. The NAMIBIAN ASSOCIATION FOR CBNRM SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS (NACSO) stressed the importance of sustainable use to community-based wildlife conservation in rural areas of Namibia.

The Committee voted on the draft decisions in the order in which they were submitted, with a two-thirds majority required for a motion to pass. CoP17 Doc.84.2 was rejected (45 in favour, 46 against, 11 abstained); CoP17 Doc.84.3 was rejected after a secret ballot requested by South Africa (21 in favour, 76 against, 13 abstained); and CoP Doc.84.1 was rejected (20 in favour, 76 against, 13 abstained).

REVISION OF THE CITES STRATEGIC VISION: 2008-2020: The Secretariat introduced the document (CoP17 Doc.9) and draft decisions (Annex 1).

The Committee accepted the draft decisions.

RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR THE CITES BODIES: The Secretariat introduced the documents (CoP17 Docs.11 and 10.2.1) and associated draft decisions. The US and AUSTRALIA suggested textual amendments to the draft decisions.

The Committee agreed to the draft decisions as amended.

IN THE CORRIDORS

If discussions on marine species took place in the relatively calm waters of Committee I, Committee II was more like a sold-out rock concert with some delegates and observers forced to sit on the floor. After passionate speeches for and against a decision-making mechanism (DMM) for the legal trade of elephant ivory, the zen-like Chair Jonathan Barzdo deftly guided Parties through three separate votes (one in a secret ballot requested by South Africa) on three proposals, all of which were rejected. With these agenda items unlikely to be approved in Plenary, the votes essentially slammed the door—for now—on legal international trade in elephant ivory, though one veteran CITES delegate noted that there are possibilities to make proposals at the next CoP to allow ivory sales.