

CITES CoP19 Highlights: Wednesday, 16 November 2022

Sharks and rays, the World Wildlife Trade Report, and cooperation with other biodiversity-related conventions were some of the items on the agenda today. In the evening, Committee II met for an extraordinary session.

Committee I

Species specific matters: Sharks and rays (*Elasmobranchii spp.*): New Zealand introduced CoP19 Doc.65, expressing reservations about the Secretariat's "major revisions" to the merged draft decisions on sharks and rays. The chair of the SC's working group on sharks and rays agreed. The EU said capacity-building assistance for parties should not be subject to the availability of external funds. The US highlighted challenges faced by parties in transferring scientific samples of CITES-listed sharks. BANGLADESH called for more engagement with Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs). MEXICO, PERU, and JAPAN supported the Secretariat's amendments to the merged draft decisions, while SRI LANKA, PANAMA, GABON, SENEGAL, and several other parties opposed them.

SEA SHEPHERD LEGAL, on behalf of 17 organizations, expressed concern that no progress had been reported by the Secretariat on investigating the mismatch between the trade of CITES-listed shark products in the CITES Trade Database versus available information on catches, and on building the capacity of parties to implement Appendix-II shark and ray listings.

Committee I established a working group on sharks and rays to revise the merged decisions, taking into account the amendments suggested by parties and the Secretariat.

Marine Ornamental Fishes: Annotations: Switzerland introduced CoP19 Doc.80. The UK supported the recommendation made by the Secretariat. Ornamental Aquatic Trade Association (OATA) supported the recommendations and emphasized that good data and evidence is now available on trade in marine ornamental fishes.

Committee I adopted the remainder of the recommendations, with an amendment proposed by the UK.

CITES Tree Species Programme (CTSP): Annotations: The Secretariat introduced CoP19 Doc.20. BENIN, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO, MALAYSIA, and others supported the document and called for the continuation of the CTSP.

Committee I agreed to the document with changes.

Agarwood-producing taxa (*Aquilaria spp.* and *Gyrinops spp.*): Aurélie Flore Koumba Pambo (Gabon), PC Chair, introduced CoP19 Doc.62.1. The UK introduced CoP19 Doc.62.2 on the history and challenges of agarwood and CITES. The EU stressed the need to consider CoP19 Inf.5 and Inf.12 when revising Resolution Conf.16.10 on implementation for agarwood-producing taxa, and suggested using source code 'Y'

for assisted production in cases that do not fit strict definitions of artificial propagation but are not wild-sourced either.

Committee I agreed to the document with some changes.

Boswellia trees (*Boswellia spp.*): The PC Chair introduced CoP19 Doc.63. KENYA, INDIA, and SOMALIA voiced concern for the rural communities who depend on these species for their livelihoods.

Committee I agreed to the document with some changes.

Rosewood timber species (*leguminosae (Fabaceae)*): **Annotations:** The PC Chair introduced CoP19 Doc.70 related to CITES-listed rosewood tree species. The EU supported the draft decision as agreed by the PC and with the changes suggested by the Secretariat. The US, while supporting the draft decisions, called for the PC to share the findings of the study on how to enhance implementation for CITES-listed rosewood tree species.

Committee I agreed to the document with changes.

African Tree Species: Annotations: The PC Chair introduced CoP19 Doc.79 on facilitating the exchange of experiences on the sustainable use and management of the CITES-listed African tree species among range states, importing countries, and other stakeholders.

Committee I agreed to the document with some changes

Neotropical Tree Species: Annotations: The PC Chair introduced CoP19 Doc.81 on re-establishing the intersessional neotropical tree species working group by electronic means.

Committee I agreed to the document with the proposed changes.

Trade in Medicinal and Aromatic Plant Species: Annotations: The PC Chair introduced CoP19 Doc.82 on the impact of trade on CITES-listed medicinal and aromatic plant species in the wild. The US and EU suggested changes to the draft decisions. TRAFFIC, on behalf of several groups, supported the amendments proposed by the EU.

Committee I struck a small contact group to determine the way forward on the draft decisions.

Standard nomenclature for *Dipteryx spp.* (Proposal 48): Panama introduced CoP19 Prop.48 to include *Dipteryx spp.* in Appendix II, noting that some species of this genus meet the listing criteria and the rest qualify for inclusion for reasons of resemblance.

BRAZIL, PERU, BOLIVIA, and GUYANA opposed the proposal. Should it go through, PERU requested a delayed entry into force of 24 months, instead of the standard 90 days, which the UK opposed. SURINAME, supported by PERU, asked to withdraw *Dipteryx* seeds from the proposal. SENEGAL, COLUMBIA, the EU, and PANAMA expressed a willingness to exclude seeds from the proposal and allow a delayed entry of force of some length.

The EU made a procedural motion to postpone discussion until the co-proponents could decide how best to proceed by consensus. There were no objections.

Committee I agreed to resume discussions on Thursday morning.

Maintenance of the Appendices: Standard

Nomenclature: Ronell Renett Klopper, PC Nomenclature Specialist (South Africa), summarized the report related to flora, and Peter Paul Van Dijk, AC Nomenclature Specialist (US) summarized fauna (CoP19 Doc.84.1). ETHIOPIA recommended reviewing the nomenclature of African elephants with technical expertise from IUCN.

Committee I agreed to the document with the proposed changes.

Committee II

Strategic matters: Implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of the Convention: The Secretariat introduced CoP19 Doc.24, suggesting draft decisions on these emerging operational matters on the AC, PC, and SC. Parties broadly supported the draft decisions.

Committee II agreed to the document with minor amendments.

World Wildlife Trade Report: South Africa introduced CoP19 Doc.12, aimed at assisting parties in making use of their wildlife trade data. SENEGAL and PERU supported the initiative. MALAYSIA expressed concern over the reporting burden. COLOMBIA stressed the need for support for megadiverse countries. NEW ZEALAND questioned the value of parties going down this route and recommended commissioning a report looking at the value of the World Wildlife Trade Report. MEXICO noted it was premature to adopt the Report.

Committee II agreed to establish an in-session working group.

Cooperation with organizations and multilateral environmental agreements: Cooperation with other biodiversity-related conventions: The Secretariat introduced CoP19 Doc.17.1. BRAZIL, supported by the US and opposed by the EU, CANADA, and GEORGIA, requested that references to “synergy” be replaced by “complementarity.” SWITZERLAND, supported by GEORGIA and opposed by the EU and the US, proposed amendments encouraging parties and the Secretariat to engage with the Berne Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats.

Committee II agreed to the document.

Cooperation with the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation: The PC Chair introduced CoP19 Doc.17.2. The US generally supported the document.

Committee II agreed to the document with minor amendments proposed by the Secretariat and the US.

Cooperation with the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES): The AC Chair introduced CoP19 Doc.17.3. IPBES described the global declines due to unsustainable use. Many parties welcomed the document. NEW ZEALAND invited parties to adopt the report now instead of sending it to the scientific committees for consideration first.

Joint CITES-CMS African Carnivores Initiative (ACI): The Secretariat introduced CoP19 Doc.17.4, highlighting ongoing synergies. NIGER welcomed the initiative and expressed hope funding would be available.

Committee II agreed to the document.

International Consortium on Combatting Wildlife Crime (ICCWC): The Secretariat introduced the document (CoP Doc.17.5), which provides an overview of the ICCWC’s activities. Parties broadly supported adopting draft decisions to provide funding and support for the ICCWC for its implementation of its vision and strategic action plan.

Committee II agreed to it.

Capacity-Building: New Zealand, on behalf of the SC Chair, presented CoP19 Doc.16. Parties broadly welcomed the document, with several expressing their gratitude for the University of Andalucía CITES Master’s Programme.

Committee II adopted the document with minor amendments.

Compliance Assistance Programme: The SC introduced CoP19 Doc.30. Several countries welcomed the Programme, citing implementation challenges.

Committee II agreed to the document.

Country-wide Significant Trade Reviews: Switzerland introduced CoP19 Doc.31.

Committee II agreed to it with a change proposed by the US.

Engagement of Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs): Kenya introduced CoP19 Doc.13 on, *inter alia*, extending the mandate of the intersessional working group. Several parties lamented no progress on this item in six years. CHINA, CANADA, and ZAMBIA supported extending the mandat. IUCN, on behalf of several NGOs, noted that one of the incomplete tasks is the non-binding guidance for consulting with IPLCs.

Committee II agreed to the document with some changes.

Livelihoods: Peru presented CoP19.Doc.14, including on the renewal of the livelihoods working group’s mandate. BURKINA FASO, TOGO, and ISRAEL opposed the recommendations in the document, with BURKINA FASO citing concerns over transparency. CHINA, MEXICO, and the MALDIVES supported the recommendations.

The US, TANZANIA, BOTSWANA, SOUTH AFRICA and others indicated their support for renewing the working group, with ISRAEL, KENYA, and GABON objecting. BOLIVIA suggested an amendment whereby case studies would show both positive and negative impacts of species use.

Committee II agreed to the recommendations with Bolivia’s proposed amendment.

Participatory mechanisms for rural communities in CITES: Zimbabwe, on behalf of Eswatini and Namibia, introduced CoP19 Doc.15 (Rev.1), emphasizing discussions on the creation of a permanent CITES advisory body providing rural community input. BURKINA FASO opposed the proposed body, noting that it could make socio-economic criteria decisive in species listings. SENEGAL, CANADA and the US also voiced opposition. NIGER underscored that CITES is a “convention of parties not local communities”. CHINA and JAPAN supported the Secretariat’s proposal to establish a Rural Communities Advisory sub-Committee.

KENYA opposed going with the Secretariat’s proposal. CANADA suggested that terms of reference for the working under agenda item 13 are robust enough to address this item.

Committee II agreed that the intersessional working group set up under agenda item 13 considers this issue.

Report on Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE): The Secretariat introduced CoP19 Doc.66.5. Parties broadly supported the report. UGANDA noted that the report does not analyze the impacts of COVID-19 on illegal elephant killings.

Committee II noted the report.

In the Corridors

Perhaps the discussions were getting dry, or the sound of heavy rain on the conference centre roof lulled people to sleep. Whatever the reason, seasoned CITES participants noted a classic “hump day” lull on Wednesday. “That was one sleepy afternoon,” remarked one. Another expressed surprise at agenda items being approved so quickly, with barely any conflict, despite their importance. “It’s all being kicked down the road to the budget committee,” they observed. “No wonder today was boring—all the fireworks are being reserved for sessions behind closed doors.”

But “boredom, angst, ennui—these are the true hero’s enemies,” as American writer David Foster Wallace observed. As eyes drooped during discussions on Indigenous Peoples and local communities, those same communities were mostly remarkable by their absence. “The strongest Indigenous representation at CITES right now is at the craft tables in the lunch area,” mourned a delegate. “How can we say we are involving First Peoples in good faith when they aren’t even in the room?”