

CITES CoP20 Highlights: Tuesday, 25 November 2025

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES) Committees at the twentieth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP20) began their consideration of agenda items in earnest. Committee I started discussions on compliance, strategic, and species specific matters, while Committee II addressed administrative and financial and strategic matters.

Committee I

Compliance

Review of the provisions of Resolution Conf. 17.7 (Rev. CoP19) on review of trade in animal specimens reported as produced in captivity: Committee I Chair Mathias Lörtscher (Switzerland) introduced [CoP20 Doc.36](#), which proposes, among others, a decision to develop a Captive Breeding tracking and management database.

The US, supported by ISRAEL, requested that the database be renamed a “Captive Production tracking and management database.” The UK, opposed by BRAZIL, suggested deleting duplicative language on founder stock.

Committee I agreed to changing the name of the database, and to forward decisions to the CoP as amended.

Strategic Matters

Cooperation: Joint CITES-CMS African Carnivores Initiative: Committee I agreed to amendments to Resolution Conf. 13.3, revised draft decisions on the African Carnivores Initiative, and new draft decisions on African lions as set out in [CoP20 Doc.16.3](#).

Species Specific Matters

African Lions (*Panthera Leo*): Committee I agreed to the amendments in the revised draft decisions set out in [CoP20 Doc.80 \(Rev.1\)](#) with some additions: the EU suggested specific reference to reviewing a report on the comparative study of African Lion population trends, and to add a subdecision for parties to undertake national population counts where necessary. The US supported CONSERVATION FORCE’s suggestion that these be population “estimates.”

Guidance on non-detriment findings for trade in leopard (*Panthera pardus*) hunting trophies: Chair Lörtscher introduced [CoP20 Doc.82](#).

The EU, supported by UGANDA, proposed several amendments and a new decision to facilitate information sharing on the making of non-detriment findings (NDF) with importing countries. The US recommended that CITES NDF guidance modules incorporate best practices. BOTSWANA

expressed concern about the financial implications of the proposed amendments.

Committee I agreed to the document as amended by the EU but without the proposed new decision.

West African vultures (*Accipitridae spp.*): Committee I approved document [CoP20 Doc.74](#). The EU encouraged West African range states to implement zero annual export quotas for all Appendix II vulture species.

Conservation of amphibians (*Amphibia spp.*): Chair Lörtscher introduced [CoP20 Doc.75](#).

The EU, opposed by INDONESIA, proposed the deletion of the draft decision on the development of conversion factors. SINGAPORE clarified that certain species for which Singapore is reported as a source of wild-caught specimens are non-native. BRAZIL, on behalf of several parties, proposed amending the draft decision to ensure information collected on current levels of trade considers compatibility with conservation of the species in the wild.

Committee I agreed to the document as amended.

Songbird trade and conservation management (*Passeriformes spp.*): Chair Lörtscher introduced [CoP20 Doc.83](#). MALAYSIA, INDIA, and NIGERIA supported the document. BRAZIL, supported by NEW ZEALAND and COLOMBIA, and opposed by the US and CANADA, proposed a set of new draft decisions ([CoP20 Inf.52](#)) to ensure continued implementation of the recommendations from the technical workshop. The EU proposed similar draft decisions. JAPAN said there was insufficient time for consideration.

Committee I formed a drafting group.

Resolving the implementation of the CoP12 decision that the Convention applies to fungi: The UK presented [CoP Doc.101 \(Rev.1\)](#), which includes decisions to provide scientific and technical advice to the Standing Committee (SC) on fungi, and for the SC to consider how CITES parties might take a common approach to fungi.

CHINA, supported by BAHRAIN and KUWAIT, and opposed by the UK and EU, requested additional language clarifying that Article 1 of the Convention does not include fungi in its definition of “specimen.” Discussions were suspended and will be resumed later in the week.

Annotations

Informal review mechanism for existing and proposed annotations: Chair Lörtscher introduced [CoP20 Doc. 107](#). The US opposed the Secretariat’s suggestion for a small study on implementation challenges. CANADA called for the deletion of draft decision 20.BB.

Committee I agreed to the document without draft decision 20.BB.

Species Specific Matters

Trade in medicinal and aromatic plant species: Chair Lörtscher introduced [CoP20 Doc. 100](#).

The US requested additional language asking the Plants Committee (PC) to provide guidance on implementation of the draft decisions.

INDIA, supported by BRAZIL and opposed by the US, requested an additional draft decision on developing monitoring systems alongside national and regional centres of excellence for medicinal and aromatic plant species. CANADA requested clarification on the definition of “cross-reference” between CITES and Medicinal Plant Names Service databases.

Committee I moved to adopt the draft decisions as amended by the Secretariat, with the additional amendment by the US, and noted INDIA and BRAZIL’s comments.

Agarwood-producing taxa (*Aquilaria* spp. and *Gyrinops* spp.): Chair Lörtscher introduced [CoP20 Doc.93](#), including proposed amendments to the resolution on implementation of the Convention for agarwood-producing taxa. INDIA, MALAYSIA, and CHINA supported the amendments. The US proposed editorial amendments, which received no support.

Committee I agreed to the document.

Boswellia trees (*Boswellia* spp.): Chair Lörtscher introduced [CoP20 Doc.94](#), including Secretariat amendments to draft decisions.

KENYA and UGANDA expressed support for the proposed in-person meeting of stakeholders, with PAKISTAN offering to host. SWITZERLAND, supported by the EU, said that the revised decisions do not adequately balance responsibility among range states and other stakeholders, and suggested convening a drafting group to refine the decisions. TANZANIA called for capacity-building. INDIA, OMAN, BAHRAIN, and SAUDI ARABIA opposed the proposal to consider including native species of *Boswellia* spp. in Appendix III. UAE, supported by QATAR, cautioned against “premature listing proposals.” CANADA, supported by the UK, proposed amendments to ensure that the draft decisions do not exceed the mandate of the scientific committees.

Committee I struck a working group and adjourned debate on this item.

Rosewood tree species [Leguminosae (Fabaceae)]: Chair Lörtscher introduced [CoP20 Doc.95](#). Citing the need to prioritize, CANADA proposed deleting several draft decisions, but received no support.

Committee I agreed to the document.

African tree species: Committee I approved the recommendations in [CoP20 Doc.98](#) without amendments.

Neotropical tree species: Committee I approved the recommendations in [CoP20 Doc.99](#) without amendments.

Appendices of the Convention

Considering the ‘look-alike’ criterion Annex 2B A of Res. Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP17) on criteria for amendment of Appendices I and II: The UK introduced [CoP20 Doc.102](#), including additional amendments on the scope of a proposed study to be undertaken by the Secretariat. Extensive discussions followed, with CANADA, REPUBLIC OF KOREA, AUSTRALIA, and others supporting the UK’s amendments, and the EU, US, PANAMA, and others opposing. The EU suggested that such criteria should first be discussed by the AC and PC to make recommendations to the SC. After further discussion, the EU, supported by the US, expressed openness to issuing a notification to parties requesting their interpretation of Criterion A and these views being compiled, but not undertaking an additional study.

Parties could not find agreement, and the debate was adjourned until Wednesday.

Committee II

Administrative and Financial Matters

Administration, finance and budget of the Secretariat and of meetings of the Conference of the Parties:

Administration of the Secretariat: Committee II Chair Anna Wong (Singapore) introduced [CoP20 Doc.7.1](#), which Committee II noted.

Report of the Executive Director of UNEP on administrative matters: The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) introduced [CoP20 Doc7.2 \(Rev.1\)](#), stressing that UNEP and CITES remain committed to collaborating on activities such as the African Elephant Action Plan and Jaguar 2030 Roadmap.

Committee II noted the report.

Financial reports for 2023-2025: Chair Wong introduced [CoP20 Doc7.3](#) and associated annexes and recommendations.

Committee II noted the report and requested that the in-session budget working group, chaired by Zimbabwe, consider the recommendations.

Budget and work programme for 2026 to 2028: Chair Wong introduced [CoP20 Doc.7.4](#) and the associated draft resolution and annexes outlining three possible budget scenarios: zero nominal growth (Scenario 1); zero real growth (Scenario 2); and incremental growth (Scenario 3).

Committee II established an in-session budget working group to address documents 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, and 7.4, including four recommendations and a draft resolution in Doc.7.3 and the three budget scenarios in Doc.7.4.

Arrangements for meetings of the Conference of the Parties: Chair Wong introduced [CoP20 Doc.7.5](#) and associated draft decisions.

BRAZIL, the US, and KUWAIT objected to extending the interval between CoPs from three to four years. JAPAN, supported by the US and KUWAIT, expressed concern over a new budget line for holding CoP meetings in Geneva. The US suggested minor edits to the draft decisions, which no other party supported. CITES Secretary-General Ivonne Higuero noted that Switzerland, as host government, contributes 1 million USD a year to CITES and subsidizes 92% of the cost of holding SC, AC, and PC meetings in Geneva. SWITZERLAND said that changes to the Secretariat host location would impact their future contributions.

Committee II agreed to the draft decisions in Annex I.

Access to funding: Chair Wong introduced [CoP20 Doc.10](#) and Committee II forwarded the document to the budget working group.

Terms of reference of the Finance and Budget

Subcommittee: Committee II agreed to [CoP20 Doc.8](#) recommending the adoption of the amendments to Resolution Conf. 18.2 on Establishment of Committees as annexed to the document and the deletion of Decision 18.2.

Emerging operational issues of the Committees:

Chair Wong introduced [CoP20 Doc.9](#). After minor textual amendments by AUSTRALIA, Committee II agreed to the document.

Sponsored Delegates Project: Chair Wong introduced [CoP20 Doc.11](#). BRAZIL, supported by CAMEROON, ZIMBABWE, and others, lamented the lack of resources for delegates from developing countries. The EU, with FIJI, highlighted the importance of accountability in the usage of funds. The US proposed a draft decision to ask the SC to

consider whether or not to continue the Sponsored Delegates Project, which was put to a vote.

With 66 opposing, 8 abstaining, and 3 supporting, the US proposal was rejected, and Committee II agreed to the document.

Enhancing the work and efficiency of the Convention through the permanent committees: Committee II established an in-session working group chaired by New Zealand to consider [CoP20 Doc.14](#).

Strategic Matters

Role of CITES in reducing risk of future zoonotic disease emergence associated with international wildlife trade:

Committee II simultaneously considered two documents: the SC report ([CoP20 Doc.15.1](#)), and [CoP20 Doc.15.2](#), submitted by Senegal.

Committee II agreed to the documents with minor amendments.

CITES Strategic Vision: Chair Wong introduced [CoP20 Doc.13 \(Rev.1\)](#), with proposed amendments to Resolution Conf. 16.4 on Cooperation of CITES with other Biodiversity-related Conventions, and Resolution Conf. 18.3 on CITES Strategic Vision: 2021-2030.

The US requested the deletion of references to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) but did not find support. The EU, supported by FIJI but opposed by the US, suggested adding reference to the Agreement on Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) in the preambular and operative text of the Resolutions, while the RUSSIAN FEDERATION and MEXICO suggested restricting mention to preambular text. The EU suggested renewing, not deleting, Decision 19.14 but others opposed.

Committee II agreed to the recommendations and to adding preambular references to the BBNJ in Resolutions 16.4 and 18.4.

Cooperation with Multilateral Environmental

Agreements and other international organizations: Chair Wong introduced [CoP20 Doc.16.1](#). The US opposed replacing “convention” with “agreements” and proposed the deletion of reference to the SDGs. ZIMBABWE proposed using conventions and/or agreements. The EU, opposed by MEXICO and others, proposed deleting a reference to national focal points.

Committee II agreed to the draft decision as originally proposed in the document.

Cooperation with the Global Strategy for Plant

Conservation (GSPC): Committee II considered [CoP20 Doc.16.2](#). The UK, with RUSSIAN FEDERATION and EU, requested minor textual amendments to align with language used in CBD Decision 16/20. MEXICO stressed that voluntary activities related to plant conservation should be promoted. After clarifying that the representative should be from the CBD Secretariat, Chair Wong stated that the Secretariat will prepare an in-session document to reflect the changes proposed which will be published for the parties.

International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICCWC): Chair Wong introduced [CoP20 Doc.16.4](#) and its associated information document [CoP20 Inf.15](#), which contained the ICCWC Annual Report 2024. The US proposed changing “inviting” to “encouraging” the CoP to adopt the draft decision, and rejected the document’s reference to SDGs, particularly those related to climate change and gender equality and the invocation of gender and human rights in ICCWC Toolkit and Indicator Framework.

Committee II accepted the draft decision as contained in the document.

Cooperation with the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES): Committee II considered [CoP20 Doc.16.5](#), which recommends the adoption of the draft decisions on the IPBES Assessment on the sustainable use of wild species as annexed in the document. IPBES highlighted the value of their assessments for the deliberation and policy formulation within CITES. The US opposed the adoption of the draft decisions. MEXICO, COLOMBIA, EU, TANZANIA and others supported the document.

Committee II accepted the document and its recommendations.

World Wildlife Trade Report: Chair Wong introduced [CoP20 Doc.17](#). The EU proposed seeking parties’ feedback on the report. CHINA affirmed the strategic value of the report. TANZANIA drew attention to [CoP20 Inf.54](#) submitted by South Africa.

Clarifying that there will be a feedback loop for parties which can include whether to proceed to commission the overview report, Committee II accepted the document.

Language strategy for the Convention: Chair Wong introduced [CoP20 Doc.19](#) concerning the translation of new and revised CITES Resolutions and Decisions into three additional languages (Arabic, Chinese, and Russian).

Committee II accepted the document.

Capacity-building framework: Chair Wong introduced [CoP20 Doc.20](#).

Committee II accepted the document.

Compliance Assistance Programme: Chair Wong introduced [CoP20 Doc.21](#).

The US, RUSSIAN FEDERATION, and BAHRAIN opposed mention of gender in a draft decision. The EU, supported by CANADA, suggested waiting for a conclusion on agenda item 25 concerning the CITES gender action plan before discussing the draft decisions.

Committee II accepted the deletion of 19.44 to 19.66 and will return to the draft decisions when agenda item 25 is taken up.

Country-wide Review of Significant Trade: Chair Wong introduced [CoP20 Doc.22](#).

The EU suggested minor clarifying edits and CANADA suggested replacing “a complementary new mechanism” with “an adapted Compliance Assistance Programme.”

Committee II accepted the document as amended.

In the Corridors

Neither the smoggy skies nor the mental haze of some attendees’ jetlag could taint participants’ determination as the CoP began in earnest on Tuesday. Parties seemed well aware of the sheer volume of work the coming weeks will require. In Committee I, Chair Lörtscher earned a few laughs when he asked parties to hold back their congratulations on his election: “Wait until the work is over,” he pleaded, “when I might deserve your praise.” Despite early progress, some seasoned observers were quick to point out that some bumps already lie ahead on crucial areas of inquiry. “There’s been a lot of discussion of limited capacity in the Convention,” they opined. “But we shouldn’t use that as an excuse to avoid doing what’s necessary to protect species.”

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