

CITES CoP20 Highlights: Friday, 28 November 2025

The twentieth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP20) to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES) continued to meet in two parallel sessions throughout the day. Committee I adopted several listing proposals and documents regarding marine species, while delegates in Committee II discussed matters relating to compliance, illegal trade and enforcement, and conservation and trade of, *inter alia*, asian big cats (*Felidae* spp.), great apes (*Hominidae* spp.), jaguars (*Panthera onca*), and saiga antelope (*Saiga* spp.).

Committee I

Proposals to Amend the Appendices I and II

School Shark (*Galeorhinus galeus*) and Smoothhounds (*Mustelus* spp.): Committee I Chair Mathias Lörtscher (Switzerland) reopened discussion on CoP20 Prop.29 to include school sharks (*G. galeus*) and smoothhounds (*Mustelus* spp.) in Appendix II, with an amendment by BRAZIL to delay implementation by 18 months.

Committee I adopted the amended proposal by consensus.

Manta and devil rays (*Mobulidae* spp.): ECUADOR introduced Prop.30 to uplist these species from Appendix II to Appendix I.

JAPAN opposed, citing a lack of scientific evidence. INDONESIA, with CHINA, suggested an amendment which would only see *M. alfredi* and *M. birostris* uplisted. The amendment was rejected by a vote of 17 in agreement, 108 against, and 10 abstaining.

Committee I accepted the original proposal.

Whale shark (*Rhincodon typus*): MALDIVES introduced CoP20 Prop.31 on the transfer of the whale shark (*R. typus*) from Appendix II to Appendix I.

AUSTRALIA pointed to the updated view of the population status in [CoP20 Inf.21](#). JAPAN opposed but did not break consensus.

Committee I adopted the proposal.

Giant guitarfishes (*Glaucostegus* spp.): BENIN introduced Prop.32 to add an annotation requiring a zero annual export quota for wild-taken specimens traded for commercial purposes to the *Glaucostegus* spp. listing under Appendix II.

CANADA, JAPAN, and CHINA opposed, citing, among others, that accepting the annotation would effectively list the species under Appendix I.

By a secret ballot of 105 for, 23 against, and 7 abstaining, Committee I accepted the proposal.

Wedgefishes (*Rhinidae* spp.): SENEGAL introduced CoP20 Prop.33 to add an annotation requiring a zero annual export quota for wild-taken specimens traded for commercial purposes to the *Rhinidae* spp. listing under Appendix II.

JAPAN, INDONESIA, and CHINA opposed, citing insufficient evidence and a lack of consultation with range states. CANADA suggested that concerned parties should consider including these species in the Review of Significant Trade process instead.

By a secret ballot of 118 for, 20 against, and 2 abstaining, Committee I accepted the proposal.

Gulper sharks (*Centrophoridae* spp.): The UK introduced Prop.34, which proposes including this species under Appendix II, with an amendment suggesting an 18-month delay to implementation.

INDONESIA, JAPAN, and KYRGYZSTAN opposed, noting negative economic impacts on small-scale fisheries.

After a secret ballot vote with 113 in favor, 19 against, and 6 abstaining, Committee I accepted the amended proposal.

Species Specific Matters

Resolving the implementation of the CoP12 decision that the Convention applies to fungi: MEXICO introduced [CoP20 Com.I.1](#) prepared by the drafting group on fungi.

The UK suggested additional amendments, including a new draft decision encouraging parties to consider the advice of the Animals and Plants Committees (AC and PC) and Standing Committee (SC) when considering potential fungi-related proposals.

Committee I approved the document as amended.

Species Conservation and Trade

Sharks and rays (*Elasmobranchii* spp.): Report of the Standing Committee: Chair Lörtscher introduced [CoP20 Doc.88.1](#).

NEW ZEALAND, supported by several others, proposed mentioning the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS). CMS suggested alternative wording, which was accepted. The UK and the EU, opposed by AUSTRALIA, preferred the amendments made to question 3 on

laws and regulations applying to legality of the specimen in [CoP20 Doc.49](#), already adopted by Committee II. JAPAN, supported by the REPUBLIC OF KOREA, proposed an amendment to ensure consistency in the language on “coastal State” with other international trade agreements. The US, supported by NEW ZEALAND, the UK, the EU, and others, opposed. JAPAN proposed an alternative but received little support.

The US, on behalf of CANADA and MEXICO and supported by the EU, proposed edits to the draft decisions on sharks and rays regarding inclusion of information on catch location ([CoP20 Inf. 65](#)). AUSTRALIA suggested amendments to grant the SC authority to develop further guidance should it be required. JAPAN made a minor amendment to focus the decision on international trade.

Committee I agreed to: CMS’ proposed amendments to annex 3 of the resolution, but without the amendment to question 3; the draft decisions on sharks and rays regarding inclusion of information on catch location as amended; the draft decisions on the feasibility of an adapted Review of Significant Trade (RST) process for sharks and rays, with minor textual amendments from NEW ZEALAND and CHINA; and the draft decisions on hosting the electronic Non-Detriment Finding (e-NDF) tool on the CITES website, with CANADA’s suggestion of a disclaimer that using the tool is not a requirement for parties.

Draft decisions on trade, conservation and management of deep-water elasmobranchs: The EU introduced [CoP20 Doc.88.2](#), supported by the UK.

CANADA, with CHINA, AUSTRALIA, and JAPAN, preferred adopting the draft decisions as amended by the Secretariat, which limit the scope of species to CITES-listed species. Chair Lörtscher suggested striking a drafting group to find consensus on the decisions, but CHINA, AUSTRALIA, and CANADA opposed.

Committee I rejected the Secretariat amendments in a vote with 47 in favor, 26 against, and 51 abstaining; and adopted the original draft decisions in a vote with 73 in favor, 14 against, and 40 abstaining.

Conservation of and trade in sea cucumbers: The US introduced [CoP20 Doc.90](#), including amendments by the Secretariat.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA suggested including technical experts and range states in the proposed workshop. AUSTRALIA proposed an amendment to ensure that Pacific island states could also receive support from the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO). SAUDI ARABIA, echoed by CHINA, called for amendments to limit the decisions to CITES-listed species.

Committee I agreed to the document as amended.

Committee II

Illegal Trade and Enforcement

Review of Resolution Conf. 11.3 (Rev. CoP19) on Compliance and enforcement: Committee II Chair Anna Wong (Singapore) introduced [CoP20 Doc.38](#).

RUSSIAN FEDERATION, supported by UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (UAE), SUDAN, and others, proposed that the Secretariat remind parties to respond to requests for information

on potential compliance matters. CHINA preferred to remove reference to differentiated liability, which was noted but not accepted.

Committee II accepted the document as amended.

Enforcement matters: Chair Wong introduced [CoP20 Doc.39](#).

INDIA, supported by CANADA, the UK, and others, proposed deleting reference to the CITES Management Authorities. INDONESIA suggested including financial intelligence units. KYRGYZSTAN suggested two new draft decisions: recommending that parties enhance coordination and information exchange to ensure completeness of annual illegal trade reports to CITES; and encouraging the translation of the “Guidelines for preparing and submitting annual illegal trade reports” into all six UN languages. KAZAKHSTAN suggested an additional draft decision encouraging parties to use the CITES Illegal Trade Database to inform enforcement efforts.

Committee II agreed to the recommendations as amended.

Wildlife crime enforcement support in West and Central Africa: Chair Wong introduced [CoP20 Doc.40](#), noting a minor edit from the Secretariat to specify that draft decision 20.BB is subject to extrabudgetary resources.

Committee II accepted the document with the edit.

Strategic Matters

Demand reduction to combat illegal trade: Chair Wong introduced [CoP20 Doc.31](#).

MALAYSIA sought clarification on how parties can share best practices in implementing the CITES “Guidance on demand reduction.” The Secretariat pointed to a new page on demand reduction on the CITES website and invited parties to submit additional case studies.

Committee II accepted the document as amended.

Compliance Matters

Totoaba (*Totoaba macdonaldi*): Chair Wong presented [CoP20 Doc.35.3](#).

The US introduced proposed amendments to the draft decisions as contained in [CoP20 Inf.72](#), submitted with Mexico.

The EU, the UK, BRAZIL, and others supported the amendments. SWITZERLAND commended progress made by Mexico, but noted that transit and destination countries must also step up their efforts. MEXICO highlighted progress on strengthening inspections for legal prosecution and increasing penal sanctions. The UK underscored the importance of meaningful collaboration with local communities to implement the Compliance Action Plan.

Committee II accepted the document as amended.

Illegal Trade and Enforcement

CITES Big Cats Task Force: Chair Wong introduced [CoP20 Doc.41](#).

TANZANIA, BENIN, UGANDA, LIBERIA, RWANDA, and KENYA, as range states for big cats, highlighted the progress made during the CITES Big Cats Task Force meeting and the CITES-CMS Joint African Carnivores Initiative (ACI) meeting in 2023.

Committee II accepted the draft decisions on illegal trade in big cats.

Illegal trade in cheetahs (*Acinonyx jubatus*): Chair Wong introduced [CoP20 Doc.45](#).

KUWAIT, supported by CANADA, UAE, QATAR, and SAUDI ARABIA, suggested integrating matters relating to illegal trade in cheetahs into the CITES Big Cat Task Force under [CoP20 Doc.41](#). ETHIOPIA proposed amendments to the draft decisions to, *inter alia*, urge for stronger enforcement across the full supply chain.

The Secretariat agreed to prepare an in-session document compiling edits and a new draft decision based on Kuwait's suggestion which, if adopted, would go into [CoP20 Doc.41](#).

Species Conservation and Trade

Asian big cats (*Felidae* spp.): Implementation of Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev. CoP19) on Conservation of and trade in tigers and other Appendix-I Asian big cat species: Chair Wong introduced [CoP20 Doc.77.1](#).

The US, supported by the EU, proposed to amend Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev. CoP19): to include information provided by transit and consumer states; to capture the entire trade chain in addition to range states; and, subject to external funding, for the Secretariat, with the Chairs of the SC and AC, to commission a report to the CoP on the status of Asian big cats in the wild. CHINA opposed, asserting that the information provided by range states is sufficient. The US, the EU, INDIA, BANGLADESH, SRI LANKA, and others opposed deleting Decision 18.105, which directed parties to address illegal trade in leopard parts and derivatives. CHINA supported the deletion.

Committee II agreed to: note the document, with Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev. CoP19) as amended by the US; retain Decision 18.105; and delete the other decisions in the document.

Asian big cats in captivity: Chair Wong introduced [CoP20 Doc.77.2](#), noting that the Secretariat added comments to delete reference to Decision 14.69.

The EU proposed revising the language on the draft decisions on tigers (*Panthera tigris*) in captivity. The PHILIPPINES noted that the term "large numbers" remains undefined, which may result in potential inconsistencies. RUSSIAN FEDERATION, supported by CHINA, called to delete reference to euthanasia.

INDIA, NEPAL, the US, and others opposed deleting reference to Decision 14.69.

Committee II agreed to: note the report and recommendation of the SC; adopt the draft decisions as amended by the EU and Russian Federation; retain reference to Decision 14.69; and delete the remaining decisions.

Jaguars (*Panthera onca*): Chair Wong introduced [CoP20 Doc.81](#) and MEXICO introduced [CoP20 Doc.81.Add](#) on the outcomes of the second meeting of the jaguar range states in September 2025.

CANADA proposed amendments to the draft resolution to encourage parties to consider limiting the breeding of jaguars to serve a clearly defined, nationally determined conservation purpose, and to clarify that the SC should provide input on, but not determine, the terms of reference and modalities for the operationalization of the Intergovernmental Platform for Jaguar.

Committee II noted CoP20 Doc.81 and accepted the draft decisions in the annex to CoP20 Doc.81.Add as amended.

Great apes (*Hominidae* spp.): Chair Wong introduced [CoP20 Doc.78.1](#) and UGANDA introduced [CoP20 Doc.78.2](#), highlighting draft decisions on the re-establishment of a CITES Great Ape Enforcement Task Force. The Chair noted that the Secretariat had proposed, in CoP20 Doc.78.2, an alternative set of draft decisions.

Noting the additional Secretariat workload that would be involved in re-establishing a CITES Great Ape Enforcement Task Force, KUWAIT and several other parties supported the Secretariat's draft decisions. SENEGAL, the EU, the US, and others supported the draft decisions proposed by range states, with the US and MALAYSIA suggesting edits.

Committee II noted CoP20 Doc.78.1 and established a drafting group for CoP20 Doc.78.2.

Saiga antelope (*Saiga* spp.): Chair Wong introduced the report of the Secretariat ([CoP20 Doc.85.1\(Rev.2\)](#)) and KAZAKHSTAN introduced [CoP20 Doc.85.2](#), submitted with the Russian Federation.

For [CoP20 Doc.85.1\(Rev.2\)](#), CHINA disagreed with deleting a reference to international cooperation. The US, supported by the UK, called to retain "collaborate in the conservation and restoration" of Saiga antelopes. UZBEKISTAN proposed including documentation of stockpile volumes.

For [CoP20 Doc.85.2](#), Chair Wong noted the amendment to Decision 19.213 (Rev. CoP20) proposed by the Secretariat to include, where possible, the origin of the saiga species. JAPAN opposed the deletion of source code "Unknown" (U). The EU proposed including source code "Pre-Convention specimens" (O). CANADA, supported by the US, opposed directing management authorities on how to conduct their activities. RUSSIAN FEDERATION underscored that saiga antelopes have clearly defined geographical boundaries, which makes source code U inadequate to regulate trade.

This agenda item remained open, to be considered by Committee II on Saturday morning.

In the Corridors

"We're getting into a rhythm," one attendee was overheard saying on Friday, as delegates moved through shark and ray proposals at a solid clip. "You might even say we're... doing *fin*." Indeed, the mood in Committee I was joyful, with delegates and observers alike ignoring protocol and celebrating loudly after votes to list key shark species under the Convention's Appendices.

Still, some urged temperance. "If listing these species is a procedural victory, it's also a sign of our failure to protect them," one senior observer commiserated. "Parties can high-five here, but we need to take a long look at our implementation of the Convention—or lack thereof."

In the other room, the conversation was about efficiency in the obverse. "We haven't even finished yesterday's agenda," one delegate in Committee II complained in the late afternoon. Observers hoped delegates would follow their Chair's exhortations to be quick and to the point; and, perhaps inspired to seize the most of a brief day, headed out to catch the last rays of sunset.

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