

## CITES CoP20 Highlights: Saturday, 29 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 considered several listing proposals and documents regarding saiga antelope (*Saiga tatarica*), rhinoceros species, and African elephants (*Loxodonta africanus*), while delegates in Committee II discussed the level of stocks of pangolins (*Manis* spp.), the definition of stockpiles, trade in endemic species, and other matters.

### Committee I

#### Proposals to Amend the Appendices I and II

**Dorcas gazelle (*Gazella dorcas*):** NIGER introduced CoP20 Prop.2 to include the dorcas gazelle (*G. dorcas*) in Appendix II.

Committee I adopted the proposal.

**Saiga antelope (*Saiga tatarica*):** KAZAKHSTAN introduced CoP20 Prop.3 to amend the zero export quota annotation for saiga (*S. tatarica*) to exclude specimens from Kazakh populations and an amendment, negotiated with the US, the EU, and the UK, to add additional safeguards ([CoP20 Inf.75](#)). MONGOLIA opposed, pointing to enforcement challenges.

By a vote of 111 for, 7 against, and 14 abstentions, Committee I adopted the amended proposal.

**Giraffe (*Giraffa camelopardalis*):** SOUTH AFRICA introduced CoP20 Prop.4 to delete the populations of this species in Angola, Botswana, Eswatini, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe from Appendix II.

SENEGAL, BENIN, NIGER, RWANDA, and others opposed, citing enforcement challenges. In response to taxonomical concerns, the NOMENCLATURE SPECIALIST clarified that the Animals Committee (AC) would work to update the nomenclature for genus *Giraffa*.

By a secret ballot of 49 in favor, 48 against, and 38 abstaining, Committee I rejected the proposal.

**Okapi (*Okapia johnstoni*):** The DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO introduced CoP20 Prop.5 to include the species under Appendix I.

JAPAN opposed but chose not to block consensus.

Committee I approved the proposal.

**Striped Hyena (*Hyaena hyaena*):** TAJIKISTAN introduced CoP20 Prop.6 to include striped hyena (*H. hyaena*) in Appendix I.

ALGERIA, IRAN, KAZAKHSTAN, and others expressed support. The EU, TANZANIA, the UK, and ZAMBIA said that the proposal does not meet Appendix I criteria. ESWATINI suggested an Appendix II listing instead.

By a secret ballot of 75 for, 47 against and 13 abstentions, Committee I rejected the proposal.

**Guadalupe fur seal (*Arctocephalus townsendi*):** MEXICO introduced CoP20 Prop.7 to transfer this species from Appendix I to Appendix II, citing increasing population levels.

Committee I approved the proposal.

**Caribbean monk seal (*Monachus tropicalis*):** MEXICO introduced CoP20 Prop.8 to delete this species from Appendix I due to its likely extinction.

Committee I approved the proposal.

#### Species Specific Matters

##### Songbird trade and conservation management

**(*Passeriformes* spp.):** BRAZIL presented the new decisions as agreed by the drafting group ([CoP20 Com.1.2](#)).

Committee I adopted the draft decisions with a minor amendment by Japan.

#### Nomenclature Matters

##### Taxonomy and nomenclature of African Elephants

**(*Loxodonta* spp.):** Committee II Chair Mathias Lörtscher (Switzerland) introduced [CoP20 Doc.113](#) containing options for how to reflect the nomenclature change for African elephants. Parties were divided between the three options.

Chair Lörtscher adjourned the item to allow African range states to discuss further.

#### Proposals to Amend the Appendices I and II

**Southern white rhinoceros (*Cerathotheirum simum simum*):** NAMIBIA introduced CoP20 Prop.9 to amend the annotation of this species in Appendix II to allow for international trade to verified trading partners, and within a limit of 200kg per annum, for: live animals for *in-situ* conservation only; hunting trophies; and registered government and privately held horn stock.

JAPAN, ESWATINI, ZIMBABWE, and others supported, while the EU, CONGO, TANZANIA, and others opposed.

By a secret ballot of 31 in favor, 70 against, and 18 abstaining, Committee I rejected the proposal.

**South-western black rhinoceros (*Diceros bicornis bicornis*):** NAMIBIA introduced CoP20 Prop.10 to transfer the south-western black rhinoceros (*D.b. bicornis*) from Appendix I to Appendix II, with an annotation to allow the sale of registered rhinoceros horns.

JAPAN, ESWATINI, BOTSWANA, and others supported the proposal, citing Namibia's conservation efforts. The EU, KENYA, SENEGAL, and others opposed the proposal, concerned that it may fuel illegal trade. ZIMBABWE, supported by ZAMBIA, called for a dialogue meeting on sustainable financing of rhinoceros conservation.

By a secret ballot of 28 for, 80 against, and 9 abstaining, Committee I rejected the proposal.

**African elephant (*Loxodonta africana*):** NAMIBIA introduced CoP20 Prop.13 to allow Namibia to trade in registered stocks of raw ivory of Namibian origin from this species, deleting all annotations from the Namibian population under Appendix II.

BOTSWANA, JAPAN, and CHINA supported the proposal. SENEGAL, the EU, KENYA, and many others opposed, arguing that it would undo the work of ending the global ivory trade.

By a secret ballot of 22 in favor, 81 against, and 14 abstaining, Committee I rejected the proposal.

**African elephant (*Loxodonta africana*):** BOTSWANA introduced CoP20 Prop.14 to amend the annotation pertaining to elephant populations of Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe to harmonize the conditions of trade in live African elephants.

NIGER, supported by KENYA and SENEGAL, suggested amendments to include a definition of “appropriate and acceptable destinations” and to clarify that the annotation cannot be used for the export of Appendix I live elephants. ZIMBABWE, supported by SOUTH AFRICA and KENYA, suggested that further discussion was needed among African range states to reach consensus.

Chair Lörtscher adjourned the discussion.

## Committee II

### Species Conservation and Trade

**Saiga antelope (*Saiga* spp.):** Chair Anna Wong (Singapore) re-opened discussion of [CoP20 Doc.85.1\(Rev.2\)](#) and [CoP20 Doc.85.2](#).

Committee II established a drafting group to consider the recommendation to eliminate the use of source code “Unknown” (U) to trade in saiga antelope parts and derivatives for commercial purposes.

**Jaguars (*Panthera onca*):** Chair Wong re-opened discussion of [CoP20 Doc.81 Add.](#)

Committee II agreed to delete Decisions 19.110 to 19.114.

### Regulation of Trade

**Proposal to amend Resolution Conf. 12.3 (Rev. CoP19):** CAMEROON introduced [CoP20 Doc.48](#), highlighting the importance of amending Resolution Conf. 12.3 (Rev. CoP19) on permits and certificates to address issues related to delays.

Chair Wong noted the Secretariat’s comments on the document, which JAPAN, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (UAE), CANADA, and others supported. The US, supported by the EU, MALAYSIA, AUSTRALIA, and others opposed, underscoring that an export permit does not guarantee legality.

Committee II established a working group.

**Stocks and stockpiles:** Chair Wong introduced [CoP20 Doc.59](#), noting the comments of the Secretariat.

BRAZIL opposed restricting the definition of privately held stockpiles to only those specified in a resolution or decision. INDIA noted that the definition should distinguish between stockpiles for species in different CITES Appendices. The UK and others noted that museums should be included on the list of exemptions. BENIN, TOGO, BURKINA FASO, and others asserted that seized and confiscated specimens still under an enforcement procedure should be deleted in the exemptions list in the definition.

Committee II established a drafting group.

**Transport of live specimens:** Chair Wong introduced [CoP20 Doc.60](#), noting the Secretariat’s recommendation not to adopt the draft decision due to limited party uptake of negotiated International Air Transport Association (IATA) discount codes.

The UK, supported by CANADA and the US, suggested identifying alternative options or mechanisms to give management authorities ongoing IATA regulations access. The ASSOCIATION OF ZOOS AND AQUARIUMS, supported by the US and CANADA, proposed adding reference to “the regulated community.”

Committee II agreed to the draft decision as amended.

### Illegal Trade and Enforcement

**Marine turtles (*Cheloniidae* spp. and *Dermochelyidae* spp.):**

Chair Wong introduced [CoP20 Doc.46](#), drawing attention to the Secretariat’s edits to, *inter alia*, adjust terminology to reflect the development stages of marine turtles.

FIJI stated that the illegal take of marine turtles was “not only an ecological harm but a cultural violation.”

Committee II agreed to the draft decision as edited by the Secretariat.

**Tortoises and freshwater turtles (*Testudines* spp.):** Chair Wong introduced [CoP20 Doc.47.1](#) and [CoP20 Doc.47.2](#) on trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles from Madagascar.

PANAMA, with the US, suggested an additional draft decision on preparing a report proposing country-specific recommendations to address illegal trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles, and agreed to prepare an in-session document.

Committee II adopted the amendments to Resolution Conf. 11.9 (Rev. CoP18) on Conservation of and trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles, noted the report from Madagascar, and agreed on the draft decisions as consolidated by the Secretariat and with amendments from the floor.

Committee II will consider the in-session document from Panama and the US later in the meeting.

### Species Conservation and Trade

**Pangolins (*Manis* spp.): Implementation of Resolution Conf. 17.10 (Rev. CoP19) on Conservation of and trade in pangolins:** Chair Wong introduced [CoP20 Doc.79.1](#).

INDIA proposed moving the deadline for reporting of the level of stocks to 31 October to maintain uniformity with the reporting of annual illegal trade data. The US, supported by the UK and the EU, proposed aligning the reporting dates to before 28 February for the sake of consistency. CHINA suggested using the aggregated summary of pangolin stockpile declarations of parties with their permission. The US, supported by the EU, highlighted, *inter alia*, the need to include time-bound and measurable recommendations.

Committee II established a working group to look at the draft decisions.

**Report on Decisions:** Chair Wong introduced [CoP20 Doc.79.2](#), noting comments from the Secretariat including on a proposal to invite the International Union for Conservation of Nature to further develop conversion parameters for all pangolin species.

Committee II agreed to the document with a textual edit from the US.

### Species Conservation and Trade

**Trade in endemic species:** BRAZIL introduced [CoP20 Doc.73](#) and a new set of draft decisions in [CoP20 Inf.56](#) which take into consideration the Secretariat’s comments and aim to, *inter alia*,

ensure that states of origin of endemic species are consulted regarding potential transactions.

NEW ZEALAND, supported by PAPUA NEW GUINEA and SAMOA, suggested amendments to the draft decisions in CoP20 Inf.56 to involve the AC and Plants Committee (PC) in investigating and providing input on endemic species. The US suggested amendments to pare down the scope of work in draft decisions. Noting they did not support a proposed study on trade in threatened endemic species listed in Appendix I and II, they suggested new draft decisions.

Committee II established a working group to revise and consolidate the draft decisions.

### Compliance Matters

**National laws for implementation of the Convention:** Chair Wong introduced [CoP20 Doc.34](#).

Many parties supported the recommendations. The EU, with RUSSIAN FEDERATION and ISRAEL, disagreed with posting the draft “Guidance on the implementation of the Convention in the event of exceptional circumstances that impede the proper functioning of CITES at the national level” on the CITES website before the SC had reviewed the current version.

The Chair proposed an additional draft decision directing the SC to review the draft guidance and update as appropriate.

Committee II agreed to adopt the draft decisions in Annex 1 with the Chair’s addition and to make the Guidance available on the CITES website.

**Possession of specimens of species included in Appendix I:** Chair Wong introduced [CoP20 Doc.37](#).

INDIA, TANZANIA, and others supported the recommendation to adopt the amendments to Resolution Conf. 8.4 (Rev. CoP15) on National laws for implementation of the Convention. The US proposed textual amendments in the preamble to refer to the National Legislation Project (NLP) when noting that approximately one-third of parties have not taken appropriate measures. The UK noted that the Secretariat should consider the Convention text when supporting parties to improve or assess their legislation under the NLP.

Committee II agreed to adopt the amendments to Resolution Conf. 8.4 (Rev. CoP15) as amended, and delete Decision 19.67. Committee II did not consider recommendations a and b of the document.

**Implementation of Article XIII and Resolution Conf. 14.3 (Rev. CoP19) on CITES compliance procedures:** Chair Wong introduced [CoP20 Doc.35.1](#).

The US noted that both trade and trade for commercial purposes should be considered. The UK, supported by CANADA and others, proposed a new draft decision on how to conduct the compliance processes. CHINA suggested consulting with the AC and PC and gathering input from concerned parties when preparing the draft guidance. The US noted the vagueness of “concerned parties” and suggested referring to the AC and PC Chairs.

On draft amendments to Resolution Conf. 14.3 (Rev. CoP19) on CITES Compliance Procedures, the US proposed an amendment to reflect the non-binding nature of the SC recommendations. CHINA, supported by CANADA and INDIA, highlighted the need to expressly refer to the voluntary nature of the Compliance Action Plan template.

Committee II agreed to: the draft decision as amended; the new draft decision proposed by the UK as amended; and the draft amendments as revised.

### Regulation of Trade

**Introduction from the sea:** Chair Wong introduced [CoP20 Doc.52](#), noting proposed amendments by the Secretariat.

JAPAN, AUSTRALIA, and others supported the document. The EU proposed deleting draft decision 20.BB and including a new paragraph for draft decision 20.AA on submitting the report of the outcome of information received from implementation to SC81. The US, supported by CHINA, introduced several amendments as contained in [CoP20 Inf.79](#). The EU, with the UK, CANADA, and NEW ZEALAND, proposed developing a guidance instead of revising Resolution Conf. 14.6 (Rev. CoP16). Noting that such work is part of the core mandate of the Convention, AUSTRALIA, supported by the UK, proposed replacing “subject to external funds” to “subject to available resources.”

Committee II agreed to the draft decision as amended.

### Appendices of the Convention

**Annotations:** Chair Wong introduced [CoP20 Doc.103](#).

Committee II agreed to the document.

**Annotation #15:** Chair Wong introduced [CoP20 Doc.104](#).

Noting the availability of numerous traceability models and guidelines, the US, supported by the EU, suggested deleting the draft decision directing the Secretariat to undertake a study to develop guidelines specific to CITES-listed trees. CANADA suggested edits to narrow the scope of draft decisions to CITES-listed trees for which there are enforcement challenges.

Committee II agreed to, *inter alia*: consider the revised report in Annex 3 in the context of any potential new decisions that may be needed; consider and adopt the draft decisions as amended on traceability systems for CITES-listed tree species; and request the Secretariat to publish the revised “Report on the impact of CITES exemptions for Dalbergia and Guibourtia” on the CITES website.

**Implications of the transfer of a species from one Appendix to another: Report of the Secretariat:** Chair Wong introduced the report of the Secretariat ([CoP20 Doc.105.1](#)).

Committee II agreed to, *inter alia*, encourage parties to consult the revised draft “Guidance and best practices related to periods of transition and possible transitory measures” and adopt the draft decision on “Guidance related to periods of transition.”

### In the Corridors

Celebrating International Jaguar Day on 29 November, delegates were in good spirits as they came roaring in for the last day of week 1 of CITES CoP20.

“Did you know jaguars have the strongest bite out of all the big cats?” asked one observer. “Then maybe we’ll take a big bite out of the agenda items today!” replied one delegate jovially. And so they did: parties in Committee II asked the Chair to have an in-session working group to discuss the definition of stockpile instead of an intersessional one, noting that they feel very close to a compromise. Chair Wong thanked them for this proposal: “This is brilliant—we have a consensus on how to move forward.”

This momentum to move forward slowed down considerably in the afternoon, however, as delegates in Committee I considered proposals on rhinoceros and elephants. These discussions were characterized by a lack of consensus due to entrenched positions, with delegates repeatedly casting secret votes or requesting deferred discussions. One observer commented on the African elephant nomenclature debate: “If we can’t even agree on the name, how can we protect them as we claim?”

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