

CITES CoP20 Highlights: Wednesday, 3 December 2025

Delegates sped through the final listing proposals on the last day of committee-level discussions at the twentieth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES CoP20). Sloths, mangabey, and vultures, among others, received greater protections, while parties opposed downlisting the peregrine falcon from Appendix I to Appendix II. Committee II efficiently covered a range of items, from orchids to musical instruments and caviar, until the contentious budget debate ran overtime.

Committee I

Proposals to Amend the Appendices I and II

Linnaeus's two-toed sloth (*Choloepus didactylus*) and Hoffman's two-toed sloth (*Choloepus hoffmanni*): BRAZIL introduced CoP20 Prop.11 to include these two species of sloths in Appendix II.

Committee I accepted the proposal.

Golden-bellied mangabey (*Cercocebus chrysogaster*): The DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO introduced CoP20 Prop.12 to uplist the golden-bellied mangabey from Appendix II to Appendix I.

Committee I accepted the proposal.

African hornbills (*Bycanistes* spp. and *Ceratogymna* spp.): NIGERIA introduced CoP20 Prop.15 to include these two African hornbills genera in Appendix II.

Committee I accepted the proposal.

White-backed vulture (*Gyps africanus*) and Ruppell's vulture (*Gyps rueppelli*): NIGER introduced CoP20 Prop.16 to uplist these two vulture species from Appendix II to Appendix I.

Committee I accepted the proposal.

Peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*): CANADA introduced CoP20 Prop.17 to downlist *Falco peregrinus* from Appendix I to Appendix II.

KUWAIT, the UK, CHINA, and others supported the proposal, asserting that the species no longer meets the Appendix I biological criteria. DJIBOUTI, the EU, ARGENTINA, and others opposed, citing insufficient global data to justify the downlisting. As a compromise, NEW ZEALAND proposed adding a zero annual export quota for wild-taken specimens traded for commercial purposes, which was accepted.

BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL clarified that while some metric data used in the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List in 2021 was of poor quality, current data still suggest that peregrine falcon is of least concern globally.

By a secret vote of 61 for, 74 against, and 7 abstaining, Committee I rejected the proposal.

Great-billed seed-finch (*Sporophila maximiliani*), Chestnut-bellied seed-finch (*Sporophila angolensis*), Black-billed seed-finch (*Sporophila atrirostris*), Large-billed seed-finch

(*Sporophila crassirostris*), and Thick-billed seed-finch (*Sporophila funeralis*) and Nicaraguan seed-finch (*Sporophila nuttingi*): BRAZIL introduced CoP20 Prop.18 to include *Sporophila maximiliani* in Appendix I and the other five seed-finch species in Appendix II.

Committee I accepted the proposal.

Hispaniolan giant galliwasp (*Caribicus warreni*): DOMINICAN REPUBLIC introduced CoP20 Prop.19 to list the Hispaniolan giant galliwasp (*Caribicus warreni*) in Appendix I.

JAPAN suggested an Appendix II listing but said they would not oppose consensus. The EU encouraged the Dominican Republic to propose two lookalike species, *Caribicus anelpistus* and *Caribicus darlingtoni*, for an Appendix III listing at the next CoP to enable the monitoring of trade in all three species.

Committee I accepted the proposal.

Mount Elliot leaf-tailed gecko (*Phyllurus amnicola*): AUSTRALIA introduced CoP20 Prop.20 to list the Mount Elliot leaf-tailed gecko in Appendix II, noting the species' appearance in international trade despite national protections.

Committee I accepted the proposal.

Ringed thin-tail gecko (*Phyllurus caudiannulatus*): AUSTRALIA introduced CoP20 Prop.21 to list the ringed thin-tail gecko in Appendix II.

Committee I accepted the proposal.

Galápagos marine iguana (*Amblyrhynchus cristatus*): ECUADOR introduced CoP20 Prop.22 to transfer the Galápagos marine iguana (*Amblyrhynchus cristatus*) from Appendix II to Appendix I.

Committee I agreed to the proposal.

Galápagos land iguanas (*Conolophus* spp.): ECUADOR introduced CoP20 Prop.23 to transfer the three species of land iguanas endemic to the Galápagos islands from Appendix II to Appendix I.

Committee I accepted the proposal.

Reports from Working Groups

Boswellia trees (*Boswellia* spp.): SWITZERLAND introduced CoP20 Com.I.3 prepared by the working group on the basis of [CoP20 Doc.94](#), noting that the revised decisions are intended to enable the Secretariat to focus more on facilitation and support, rather than implementation. She also noted that the in-person Boswellia meeting is meant as an opportunity to exchange information and reach conclusions on how to address threats to Boswellia trees.

Committee I agreed to the document as proposed.

Brazilwood (*Paubrasilia echinata*): CANADA introduced CoP20 Com.I.4, noting that the working group had reached consensus on: revised draft decisions which aim to create a harmonized approach to enhancing the traceability of *Paubrasilia echinata*; and a proposed amendment to CoP20 Prop.46 to retain *Paubrasilia echinata* on Appendix II, with a revision to Annotation #10 imposing a zero quota for wild-harvested specimens (source code "W") traded for commercial purposes

while allowing the non-commercial transport of finished musical instruments and their accessories.

Committee I: agreed to the draft decisions contained in CoP20 Com.I.4 and amended on the floor by AUSTRALIA, CANADA, the EU, and the US; noted the final report “Paubrasilia echinata bows: Fine Tuning Traceability Solutions”; agreed to delete Decisions 19.249 to 19.253; and agreed to the proposed amendment to CoP20 Prop.46 contained in CoP20 Com.I.4.

Identifying information on species at risk of extinction affected by international trade: The UK introduced CoP20 Com.I.5, prepared by the drafting group on the basis of [CoP20 Doc.72](#). They noted that the updates of the drafting group related to three key themes: greater transparency; safeguard for information not publicly available; and reviewing mechanisms.

MEXICO, supported by the US, proposed that parties should be able to upload directly to the CITES website. CHINA noted that parties should refer to the mechanism developed in relation to uploading information for possible inclusion on the CITES website.

Committee I accepted the change in the name of the draft decisions and the draft decisions included in CoP20 Com.I.5 as amended.

Committee II

Annotations

Information system for trade in specimens of CITES-listed tree species: Committee II Chair Anna Wong (Singapore) introduced [CoP20 Doc.106](#), which was accepted.

Orchid specimens exempted through annotation #4 g): Chair Wong introduced [CoP20 Doc.108](#).

The UK, the US, SWITZERLAND, and others did not support the adoption of the revised decisions. The EU instead proposed a draft decision directing the Plants Committee (PC) to draft a footnote explaining the “derived from artificial propagation” condition, which the US specified would apply to annotation exemptions.

Committee II rejected the revised decisions, but agreed to the new draft decision from the EU as amended.

Annotation of Cape aloe (*Aloe ferox*): Chair Wong introduced [CoP20 Doc.109](#), which was accepted.

Species Conservation and Trade

Rhinoceroses (*Rhinocerotidae* spp.): Chair Wong introduced [CoP20 Doc.84](#).

The US, supported by KENYA, proposed amendments to establish an intersessional working group and to direct Indonesia to report on implementation. UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (UAE), CHINA, MALAYSIA, and others opposed. INDONESIA said that illegal killing numbers are misleading.

Committee II agreed to the document as amended by the US, but without the working group proposal.

Seahorses (*Hippocampus* spp.): Chair Wong introduced [CoP20 Doc.89](#).

Committee II accepted the draft decisions with edits from the Secretariat, as well as revised Decisions 19.229-19.230 with minor edits from the US.

Regulation of Trade

Purpose-of-transaction codes: Chair Wong introduced [CoP20 Doc.55](#).

Parties disagreed on the proposed definition of purpose-of-transaction code “P” as well as on the mandate of an intersessional working group. They eventually agreed that the working group should consider purpose-of-transaction codes “P” and “B” as priorities, noting that code “Z” has already been defined, but may need minor amendments.

Committee II did not agree to amendments to Annex I of Resolution Conf.12.3 and adopted the draft decisions of purpose-of-transaction codes with the above amendments.

Rapid movement of wildlife diagnostic samples and musical instruments: Chair Wong introduced [CoP20 Doc.61](#).

The UK, supported by the EU, JAPAN, CANADA, and others, proposed extending the validity period of musical instrument certificates from three to ten years. The US preferred, and parties agreed, to add a subparagraph to the draft decisions that would, *inter alia*, have the intersessional working group consider the validity period.

Committee II agreed to the document as amended.

Specimens produced through biotechnology: Chair Wong introduced [CoP20 Doc.62](#).

The US proposed removing the list of potential invited organizations for discussions on trade in biotechnology products. Following opposition, the US suggested only removing the World Health Organization, but this was not accepted.

Committee II agreed to the document without amendment.

Labelling system for trade in caviar: Chair Wong introduced [CoP20 Doc.65](#), which was accepted.

Existing Resolutions and Decisions

Review of Resolutions: Chair Wong introduced [CoP20 Doc.32](#), including the draft decision to review Resolution Conf.10.4 (Rev. CoP14) on Cooperation and synergy with the Convention on Biological Diversity and Resolution Conf.13.2 (Rev. CoP14) on Sustainable use of biodiversity: Addis Ababa Principles and Guidelines.

MEXICO, the US, ISRAEL, and CANADA introduced amendments to, *inter alia*, ensure consultation with the Animals Committee (AC) and PC Chairs, direct the SC to submit any recommendations to CoP21, and keep the scope of the review in the context of CITES and international wildlife trade.

Committee II agreed to the document as amended.

Review of decisions: Chair Wong introduced [CoP20 Doc.33](#) reviewing decisions not covered in other CoP20 documents.

The US and BRAZIL proposed minor amendments to Resolution Conf.13.3, with the former requesting reference to Black sea bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus ponticus*) and the latter requesting reference to jaguars (*Panthera onca*).

Committee II agreed to delete: Decisions 17.108 to 17.110 on Review of Significant Trade; Decision 18.55 on cooperation on the Black Sea bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus ponticus*); Decisions 19.71 to 19.73 on Malagasy palisanders and rosewoods (*Dalbergia* spp.) and ebonies (*Diospyros* spp.); and Decision 18.209 on Humphead wrasse (*Cheilinus undulatus*), with the US opposing their deletion.

Committee II also agreed to maintain Decision 17.256 on African grey parrots (*Psittacus erithacus*), with CANADA preferring its deletion.

Reports from Working Groups

Livelihoods: CANADA outlined the draft decision in CoP20 Com.II.1, supported by BRAZIL, CHINA, ZIMBABWE, and others.

The US and the EU opposed, arguing that further discussion would be unproductive given diverging positions.

With a vote of 38 for, 33 against, and 19 abstentions, Committee II did not adopt the draft decision.

Sustainable financing for the African elephant conservation and management: ZIMBABWE introduced CoP20 Com.II.3 and proposed a further amendment to specify that the workshop would consider mechanisms for “sustainable financing.”

Committee II adopted the draft decisions as amended.

Cooperation with the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation: Chair Wong introduced CoP20 Com.II.4 (Rev.1). The UK suggested an amendment to include the incorporation

of plant conservation activities in “relevant plans, programs and initiatives.” The EU requested to retain the reference to the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation. The UK proposed a compromise amendment, which was accepted.

Committee II agreed to the document, as amended.

Enhancing the work and efficiency of the Convention through the permanent committees: Chair Wong introduced CoP20 Com.II.5, which was accepted.

Illegal trade in cheetahs (*Acinonyx jubatus*): Chair Wong introduced CoP20 Com.II.6, highlighting the additional draft decision proposed by Kuwait.

The US, ETHIOPIA, and others opposed the additional decision, stressing that illegal trade in cheetahs differs from other big cats and requires standalone work. The EU proposed a compromise to avoid duplication of work with the CITES Big Cats Task Force, which was accepted.

Committee II accepted the amended decisions in the document, without the new draft decision proposed by Kuwait.

Great Apes: UGANDA introduced CoP20 Com.II.7.

The UK requested language “urging” rather than “encouraging” parties. RWANDA requested language on consulting range states.

Committee II accepted the document as amended.

Pangolins: Chair Wong introduced CoP20 Com.II.8.

CHINA requested, among others, additional language outlining “feasible and proportionate” as well as time-bound and measurable considerations, taking into consideration party capacities.

Committee II accepted the document with these amendments.

Illegal trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles: PANAMA introduced CoP20 Com.II.11, which was accepted without amendments.

Trade in threatened endemic species: AUSTRALIA introduced CoP20 Com.II.12, noting square brackets in the first draft decision.

BRAZIL offered compromise language involving founder stock such that guidance would take into account discussions from the intersessional working group.

The US recommended that a draft decision aimed at the Secretariat developing case studies should be redirected towards parties, non-governmental organizations, intergovernmental organizations, academia, and other relevant stakeholders. FIJI opposed. After a vote of 84 in favor, 3 against, and 11 abstaining, Committee II reverted to the original draft decision.

Committee II accepted the document with the compromise language.

Report on Elephant Trade Information System (ETIS): SINGAPORE introduced CoP20 Com.II.10, which was accepted.

ETIS Categorisation: SINGAPORE introduced CoP20 Com.II.16, which was accepted.

CITES and forests: The EU introduced CoP20 Com.II.15, with a minor editorial amendment.

Committee II accepted the document as amended.

Proposal to amend Resolution Conf.12.3 (Rev. CoP19): The US introduced CoP20 Com.II.13, including the draft decision to address concerns regarding stricter domestic measures.

Citing insufficient time for discussion, CAMEROON, supported by GABON, proposed to include language on clear and predictable deadlines and to delete reference to fulfilling obligations related to stricter domestic measures. The US and the EU opposed.

Committee II agreed to the document without amendment, following a vote of 71 for, 17 against, and 13 abstentions.

Stocks and stockpiles: The UK introduced CoP20 Com.II.14 and proposed a minor amendment.

BENIN, supported by KENYA, NIGERIA, and others, proposed to add a 100-kilogram threshold for seized or confiscated specimens. AUSTRALIA, the US, and the EU opposed. With a

vote of 18 for, 82 against, and 10 abstentions, the amendment was not accepted.

Committee II adopted the definition of stockpiles, as amended by the UK.

Saiga antelope (*Saiga spp.*): KAZAKHSTAN introduced CoP20 Com.II.9, which Committee II accepted with minor amendments from the US.

Chair Wong re-opened [CoP20 Doc.85.1 \(Rev.2\)](#). The EU introduced a number of edits, including: referring to saiga horns rather than “parts” or “specimens”; a new subparagraph encouraging parties to exchange information; and a new draft decision urging saiga range states to evaluate the impact of trade in wild saiga following CoP20, and report on the established monitoring and reporting system and on how revenue from legal saiga horn trade is used to support conservation. CHINA requested that range states be “encouraged” to establish internal market controls, while the EU preferred “request.” The US requested language to ensure coverage of the entire trade chain. The UK requested language encouraging extrabudgetary funding for the Secretariat.

Committee II accepted the proposed amendments from the EU and the floor.

Budget and work programme for 2026-2028: ZIMBABWE introduced CoP20 Com.II.17, prepared by the budget working group, noting the amended proposed scenario 3 to reflect an increase of 6.98% to finance the implementation of the costed programmes of work of the Secretariat for the triennium 2026 to 2028.

MEXICO, SENEGAL, the UK, BRAZIL, FRANCE, PANAMA, and others supported the proposed 6.98% increase. KUWAIT, CHINA, the US, CÔTE D’IVOIRE, JAPAN, and others opposed, preferring a zero nominal growth budget.

The US, supported by KUWAIT called for a vote.

Committee II accepted paragraph 9 as contained in CoP20 Com.II.17, accepting a 6.98% increase in budget, with 68 in favor, 19 opposed, and 11 abstaining.

The US then requested a vote on the rest of Resolution Conf.20.1 as contained in CoP20 Com.II.17 except for paragraph 9, which the Secretariat clarified had already been agreed.

FIJI protested against forcing a vote “despite clear and overwhelming consensus” and stressed that votes should only take place on issues for which there is “a real and substantive split among parties.”

Committee II agreed to the rest of the Resolution Conf.20.1 as contained in CoP20 Com.II.17, with 80 in favor, 2 opposed, and 14 abstaining.

In the Corridors

“Turning and turning in the widening gyre, / The falcon cannot hear the falconer:” after eight long days of discussions, some delegates could be forgiven for thinking of Yeats’ famous poem—and not only because of the peregrine falcon’s failed downlisting in Committee I. Delegates felt the perpetual tension between agreeing on the most details possible before forwarding documents to the CoP and simply completing the agenda on time. One Committee II delegate, seeing discussions extend far into overtime, was overheard sighing: “This is what happens when we allow this many decisions in the first place! Things will fall apart, the committee cannot hold...”

And yet—things held. Committee I finished its work ahead of schedule, with some notable decisions: the working group on brazilwood emerged with an elegant compromise that tightens oversight through a zero-export quota, while still allowing non-commercial transport of finished musical instruments. “I know many violinists and cellists are breathing a sigh of relief right now,” one observer noted. Relief will be temporary, as the return to plenary will bring up final disagreements. “We’re ready, I hope,” a delegate said.

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