

Summary of the 18th Meeting of the CITES Conference of the Parties: 17-28 August 2019

Less than four months after the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services released its landmark Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services warning that nature is declining globally at rates unprecedented in human history—and the rate of species extinctions is accelerating, with grave impacts on people around the world—the eighteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP18) to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) convened in Geneva, Switzerland. CoP18 responded to this crisis, in part, by revising the trade rules for dozens of wildlife species that are threatened by unsustainable trade linked to overharvesting, overfishing, or overhunting.

As Ivonne Higuero told delegates at her first meeting as CITES Secretary-General, “Humanity needs to respond to the growing extinction crisis by transforming the way we manage the world’s wild animals and plants. Business as usual is no longer an option.”

During the meeting, CITES delegates addressed 57 proposals to increase or decrease controls on international trade in wildlife and wildlife products, submitted by 90 parties. In addition, a record 140 documents proposing new measures and policies on international trade in wild fauna and flora were submitted for consideration by the Conference.

In response to demand for African teak from western Africa, CoP18 addressed the need for trade permits to include plywood and other forms. Delegates also agreed to protections for the Mulanje cedar, and mukula tree, which were added to Appendix II, indicating they may become endangered if their trade is not regulated. All Latin American species of cedar were also listed in Appendix II.

CoP18 added 18 more shark species to Appendix II, including blacknose and sharpnose guitarfishes, shortfin and longfin mako sharks, and wedgefishes. The CoP also addressed other marine species, including eels, teatfish (sea cucumber), queen conch, marine turtles, precious corals, sturgeons, and seahorses.

In response to the increasing exotic pet trade, many species of turtle, lizard, and gecko were also granted protections.

CoP18 also established the CITES Big Cat Task Force with a mandate to improve enforcement, tackle illegal trade and promote collaboration on conserving tigers, lions, cheetahs, jaguars and leopards. CoP18 rejected proposals to permit some limited trade in ivory from African elephants.

Delegates also adopted the CITES Strategic Vision Post-2020, positioning CITES as a leader in promoting transformative change; environmental, economic and social sustainability; and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. And in a landmark decision, the critical role of local and indigenous communities that live on the frontlines of wildlife conservation and sustainable management, and their need for adequate incomes and livelihoods, was widely recognized.

CoP18 took place from 17-28 August 2019 and was attended by 169 member governments and the European Union, including 1,700 delegates, observers, and journalists. CoP19 will be held in 2022 in Costa Rica.

A Brief History of CITES

CITES was established as a response to growing concerns that over-exploitation of wildlife through international trade was contributing to the rapid decline of many species of plants and animals around the world. The Convention was signed by representatives from 80 countries in Washington, DC, on 3 March 1973, and entered into force on 1 July 1975. There are currently 183 parties to the Convention.

The aim of CITES is to ensure that international trade of wild animal and plant species does not threaten their survival. CITES parties regulate wildlife trade through controls and regulations

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on species listed in three appendices. Appendix I lists species endangered due to international trade, permitting such trade only in exceptional circumstances. Appendix-II species are those that may become endangered if their trade is not regulated, thus they require controls aimed at preventing unsustainable use, maintaining ecosystems, and preventing species from entering Appendix I. Appendix-III species are those subject to domestic regulation by a party requesting the cooperation of other parties to control international trade in these species.

In order to list a species in Appendix I or II, a party needs to submit a proposal for approval by the Conference of the Parties (CoP), supported by scientific and biological data on population and trade trends. The proposal must be adopted by a two-thirds majority of parties present and voting. As the trade impact on a species increases or decreases, the CoP decides whether or not the species should be transferred or removed from the appendices.

There are approximately 5,800 fauna species and 30,000 flora species protected under the three CITES appendices. Parties regulate international trade of CITES species through a system of permits and certificates that are required before specimens listed in its appendices are imported, exported, or introduced from the sea. Each party is required to adopt national legislation and to designate two national authorities, namely, a Management Authority responsible for issuing permits and certificates based on the advice of a Scientific Authority. These two national authorities also assist with CITES enforcement through cooperation with customs, police, and other appropriate agencies. Parties maintain trade records that are forwarded annually to the CITES Secretariat, thus enabling the compilation of statistical information on the global volume of international trade in an appendix-listed species.

The operational bodies of CITES include the Standing Committee (SC) and two scientific committees: the Plants Committee (PC) and the Animals Committee (AC).

Conference of the Parties

The first CoP was held in Bern, Switzerland, in November 1976, and subsequent CoPs have been held every two to three years. The CoP meets to, *inter alia*:

- review progress in the conservation of species included in the appendices;
- discuss and adopt proposals to amend the lists of species in Appendices I and II;
- consider recommendations and proposals from parties, the Secretariat, the SC, and the scientific committees; and
- recommend measures to improve the effectiveness of the Convention and the functioning of the Secretariat.

The CoP also periodically reviews the list of resolutions and decisions, as well as the species listed in its appendices.

CITES CoP13: CoP13 met in Bangkok, Thailand, from 2-14 October 2004. Delegates addressed a range of topics, including 50 proposals to amend the CITES appendices. CoP13 approved the listing of ramin, agarwood-producing taxa, the great white shark, and the humphead wrasse in Appendix II, as well as the uplisting of the Irrawaddy dolphin from Appendix II to I. Regarding the African elephant, Namibia saw its request for an annual ivory quota rejected, but was allowed to proceed with a strictly controlled sale of traditional ivory carvings. Delegates also agreed on an action plan to curtail unregulated domestic ivory markets. Namibia and South Africa were each allowed an annual quota of five black rhinos for trophy hunting, and Swaziland was allowed to open up strictly controlled hunting of white rhinos. Other decisions focused on synergies with the Food and Agriculture

Organization of the UN (FAO) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), while enforcement issues also received considerable attention.

CITES CoP14: CoP14 met in The Hague, the Netherlands, from 3-15 June 2007. Delegates addressed a range of topics including: the CITES Strategic Vision 2008-2013; a guide on compliance with the Convention; management of annual export quotas; and species trade and conservation issues, including Asian big cats, sharks, and sturgeons. Delegates agreed that no cetacean species should be subject to periodic review while the International Whaling Commission moratorium is in place. CoP14 approved the listing of slender-horned and Cuvier's gazelles and slow loris on Appendix I and Brazil Wood, sawfish and eel on Appendix II, and amended the annotation on African elephants to allow a one-off sale of ivory from Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe with a nine-year resting period for further ivory trade. The media spotlight was on negotiations on the future of ivory trade and African elephant conservation, with many highlighting the consensus by African range states as a major achievement of this meeting.

CITES CoP15: CoP15 met in Doha, Qatar, from 13-25 March 2010. The meeting considered 68 agenda items and 42 proposals to amend the CITES appendices. CoP15 adopted resolutions and decisions directed to parties, the Secretariat, and Convention bodies on a wide range of topics including: electronic permitting; Asian big cats; rhinos; bigleaf mahogany; and Madagascar plant species. Regarding species listings, CoP15 decided to list, among others: Kaiser's spotted newt; five species of tree frogs; the unicorn beetle; rosewood; holywood; and several Madagascar plant species.

CITES CoP16: CoP16 met in Bangkok, Thailand, from 3-14 March 2013. The meeting adopted 55 new listing proposals, including on sharks, manta rays, turtles, and timber. Nine proposals were rejected (Caspian snowcock, Tibetan snowcock, saltwater crocodile, Siamese crocodile, South American freshwater stingray, Rosette river stingray, blood pheasant, and two species of freshwater turtles). Three proposals were withdrawn: on Southern white rhino and two African elephants, and three were not considered: on Indochinese box turtle, Ryukyu black-breasted leaf turtle, and Annam leaf turtle. The CoP also adopted strong enforcement measures to address wildlife crime.

CITES CoP17: CoP17 convened from 24 September to 4 October 2016 in Johannesburg, South Africa. CoP17 was the largest CITES meeting to date, with more than 3,500 participants representing 152 governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and media. Delegates considered 90 agenda items and 62 species-listing proposals submitted by 64 countries. Resolutions and decisions were adopted on, *inter alia*: actions to combat wildlife trafficking; demand reduction strategies to combat illegal trade in CITES-listed species; provisions on international trade in hunting trophies of species listed in Appendix I or II aimed at enabling better controls of the sustainable and legal origin of those specimens; illegal trade in cheetahs; elephants and trade in ivory; agarwood-producing taxa; and ebonies.

Intersessional Subsidiary Body Meetings

CITES AC29 and PC23: The Scientific Committees convened from 18-27 July 2017 in Geneva, Switzerland. During AC29, participants piloted a new process for a review of trade in animal specimens reported as produced in captivity. They also adopted recommendations on, among other things, sharks, snakes, freshwater stingrays, sturgeons and paddlefish, and nomenclature. During their Joint Meeting, the AC and PC considered

guidance on non-detriment findings, collaboration with the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), and annotations, and also adopted recommendations on, among other things, terms of reference for a planned study on specimens produced from synthetic or cultured DNA.

At PC23, participants adopted recommendations on, *inter alia*: rosewood timber species; timber identification; Malagasy ebony, palisanders, and rosewoods; and cooperation with the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation of the CBD. They discussed agarwood-producing taxa, African cherry, and annotations for Appendix-II orchids. Both AC29 and PC23 adopted recommendations, for animals and plants respectively, on the review of significant trade in specimens of Appendix-II species and the periodic review of species included in the CITES appendices.

CITES SC69: SC69 convened from 27 November – 1 December 2017 in Geneva, Switzerland. The Committee addressed a long agenda, considering, among other issues, progress in: implementation of National Ivory Action Plans; tackling illegal trade in pangolins; assessing Japan's introduction of sei whales from the high seas; and compliance with the Convention in the Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and Guinea.

CITES AC30 and PC24: The Scientific Committees convened from 14-26 July 2018 in Geneva, Switzerland. The AC provided technical and scientific guidance on the trade management of a variety of marine species, lions, leopard hunting trophies, and great apes. The PC focused much of its work on tree species and high-value timbers, agarwood, orchids, and African cherry. Jointly, the two committees examined how best to support the making of non-detriment findings by CITES parties, capacity-building issues, and challenges in regulating trade in wildlife produced through new biotechnology.

CITES SC70: SC70 convened from 1-5 October 2018 in Sochi, Russian Federation. SC decisions included: disposal of confiscated specimens, forwarding to CoP18 draft decisions calling on the Secretariat to collect information on existing networks and resources on the management of seized and confiscated live animals and make it available to parties; Application of Article XIII in Nigeria, to agree that parties shall suspend commercial trade in specimens of the species Kosso Wood (*P. erinaceus*) from Nigeria until the party makes satisfactory scientifically based non-detriment findings for trade in the species in the country; and engagement of rural communities, asking CoP18 whether to extend the mandate of the working group on how to engage rural communities in CITES processes and report to CoP19.

CoP18 Report

CITES CoP18 opened on Saturday, 17 August. Speakers at the opening plenary expressed condolences on the terrorist attacks in Sri Lanka, which resulted in the postponement and relocation of CITES CoP18 to Switzerland. CITES Secretary-General Ivonne Higuero led participants in observing a minute of silence to honor of the victims of the attacks. Sri Lanka expressed regret for being unable to welcome the CoP in Colombo, reaffirming commitment to the Convention.

Alain Berset, Swiss Federal Council and Federal Department of Home Affairs, expressed Switzerland's ongoing commitment as the host country of the CITES Secretariat, as well as to the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda.

Inger Andersen, Executive Director, UN Environment Programme (UNEP), called for "effective multilateralism" to resolve wildlife challenges, emphasizing the importance of the 10-year strategic vision, the value of CITES as a science-based decision-making body, and the need for collective action across processes beyond CITES to address the drivers of biodiversity loss.

Standing Committee Chair Carolina Caceres (Canada) emphasized the crucial role of CITES as a pragmatic, results-driven Convention in addressing key drivers of global biodiversity loss.

In her opening remarks, Higuero emphasized: the need to update and expand CITES's compliance instruments, including the permit system, given new challenges presented by the digital era; the importance of cooperation with other multilateral environmental agreements and intergovernmental organizations; the need to bring equal attention to lesser known species; and the crucial role of wildlife custodians and rural communities.

Administrative and Financial Matters

Election of Chair, Alternate Chair and Vice-Chairs of the meeting and of Chairs of Committees I and II: On Saturday, 17 August, the CoP elected Thomas Jemmi (Switzerland) as Chair; Awilo Ochieng Pernet (Switzerland) as Alternate Chair; Maurice Isaacs (Bahamas) and James Lutalo (Uganda) as Vice Chairs; Miet Van Looy (Belgium) as Chair of the Credentials Committee; Rod Hay (New Zealand) as Chair of Committee I; and Craig Hoover (US) as Chair of Committee II.

Adoption of the Agenda and Working Programme: On Saturday, 17 August, the Secretariat introduced the agenda (CoP18 Doc.2 (Rev 1.)), which was adopted without amendments. Higuero introduced the work programme (CoP18 Doc.3 (Rev.4)) and noted two planned evening sessions. The US suggested that agenda item 86 on saiga antelope be discussed after the proposal for transfer of the species to Appendix I and further that agenda item 81 on grey parrots and agenda item 89 on totoaba should be moved to Committee II. The CoP adopted the work programme, as amended.

Rules of Procedure: On Saturday, 17 August, the Secretariat introduced the Rules of Procedure for CoP18 (CoP18 Doc.4.1 and 2), noting no proposals for changes had been submitted. The CoP noted the document.

Review of the Rules of Procedure: On Sunday, 18 August, in Committee II, the SC Chair introduced CoP18 Doc 4.2, and associated draft decision directing the SC to also review Rule 7 paragraph 2A to ensure regional representation on the Credentials Committee. The Committee agreed to the draft decision as amended.

Outcome: The CoP (CoP18 Doc.4.2) directs the SC to review both Rules 7(2) and 25 of the Rules of Procedure.

Credentials Committee: The CoP noted the oral report and recommendations.

Admission of observers: On Saturday, 17 August, the Secretariat introduced the relevant document (CoP18 Doc.6 (Rev.1)). The CoP agreed to admit the observers listed in the document.

Administration, finance and budget of the Secretariat and of meetings of the Conference of the Parties: Administration of the Secretariat: On Sunday, 18 August, in Committee II, the Secretariat introduced CoP18 Doc.7.1 on staffing of the Secretariat, among other issues. The report was noted.

Report of the Executive Director of UNEP on administrative matters: On Sunday August 18, UNEP introduced CoP18 Doc.7.2 on synergies and areas of cooperation. The report was noted.

Financial reports for 2016-2019: On Sunday, 18 August, in Committee II, the Secretariat introduced the relevant reports and annexes (CoP18 Doc.7.3 and Annexes 1-18), expressing concern over the scale of unpaid annual contributions impacting the work of the Secretariat.

Committee II approved the report of expenditures incurred as well as the reports of implementation of the annual costed programmes of work for 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 (up to 30 June 2019).

Outcome: The CoP adopted the reports of implementation of the costed programmes of work for 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019, up to 30 June 2019 (CoP18 Com.II.18).

Budget and work programme for 2020-2022: On Sunday, 18 August, in Committee II, the Secretariat introduced the relevant document (CoP18 Doc. 7.4 and Annexes 1-4), highlighting the three budget scenarios: zero real growth, zero nominal growth and incremental growth. A working group, chaired by Norway, discussed this agenda item.

On Monday, 26 August, Committee II adopted a revised draft resolution (CoP18 Com.II.18) on budget and work programme and agreed, in session, to retain the bracketed language on the proposed temporary positions of one programme management officer on marine species and one research assistant, with parties noting the importance of the marine programme officer to assist parties with conservation of CITES-listed marine species. The Russian Federation wished to note on record its objection to the inclusion of the marine officer position as premature.

Outcome: The CoP adopted the resolution (CoP18 Com.II.18), including the amendments to retain bracketed language on the proposed temporary positions of one programme management officer on marine species and one research assistant.

Access to funding, including GEF funding: On Sunday, 18 August, in Committee II, the Secretariat introduced CoP18 Doc.7.5, highlighting that existing draft decisions related to the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Global Wildlife Program ask for financial or technical assistance to implement all relevant resolutions and decisions, which hinders the Secretariat's efforts to prioritize activities.

Committee II adopted the document with changes aimed at ensuring that the Secretariat's core administrative tasks are not affected and with an amendment proposed by the US replacing the words "enhance access to" with "facilitate use of allocated" funds.

Outcome: In the decisions (CoP18 Doc.7.5), the CoP directs parties, governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and other entities to take into consideration the administrative and financial management support needed to ensure that the funded activities are managed in an efficient, effective and accountable manner, and that they do not affect the Secretariat's core administrative tasks.

Sponsored delegates project: On Sunday, 18 August, in Committee II, the Secretariat introduced CoP18 Doc.7.6, highlighting the draft decision calling on the application of clear selection criteria.

Outcome: In the decision (CoP Doc.7.6), the CoP directs the Secretariat to apply clear selection criteria, taking into account the various possible selection options and additional ways to prioritize beneficiary parties.

Draft resolution on language strategy for the Convention: On Sunday, 18 August, in Committee II, Iraq introduced CoP18 Doc.8 on the inclusion of Arabic as an official language of the Convention.

Given the potential budgetary and implementation implications of expanding the Convention's official languages, the Committee agreed to establish an in-session working group, co-chaired by Georgia and Kuwait, with a mandate to review this issue.

On Sunday, 25 August, the Committee accepted the working group's draft decision.

Outcome: In the decision (CoP18 Com.II.1), the CoP directs the SC, with Secretariat assistance, to consider the implications of adding Arabic, Chinese, and Russian to the working languages of the Convention, and report back to CoP19.

Strategic Matters

Standing Committee report: On Saturday, 17 August, SC Chair Carolina Caceres introduced the SC report (CoP18 Doc.9.1.1) and explained that the work of the committee has grown in both volume and complexity and parties will need to think "thoughtfully and critically" about which bodies are the appropriate venues for decision making. The CoP noted the report.

Animals Committee report: In his report (CoP18 Doc 9.2.1), AC Chair Matthias Lörtscher highlighted the recommendations for country-wide reviews of significant trade, a new compliance process with regard to animals raised in captivity, and review of the quota on leopard hunting. The CoP noted the report.

Plants Committee report: PC Chair Adrienne Sinclair provided an overview of the committee's work (CoP18 Doc.9.3.1) and requested that financial resources be provided in light of the increased workload of the two scientific committees. The CoP noted the report.

CITES Strategic Vision post-2020: On Sunday, 18 August, in Committee II, the SC Chair introduced CoP18 Doc.10, highlighting the process and draft decisions and resolutions.

The EU, US, and Norway cautioned against re-opening discussions on the language of the document, noting the work already undertaken, and supported the adoption of the draft Strategic Vision, as amended by the Secretariat.

Committee II adopted a revised draft resolution prepared by Canada on the basis of CoP18 Doc.10, recognizing the importance of the work of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) to CITES.

Outcome: In the resolution (CoP18 Com.II.7), the CoP recognizes the findings in the IPBES 2019 Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services.

Review of the Convention: On Sunday, 18 August, in Committee II, Zimbabwe introduced CoP18 Doc.11. The European Union (EU), with support from Japan, suggested that a more targeted review of the Convention's effectiveness could be useful but further discussion would be necessary.

The Committee agreed to form a drafting group, chaired by the DRC, to draft a decision directed to the SC that clarifies the scope of an intended review.

On Monday, 26 August, Committee II adopted the revised draft decision and agreed to retain the bracketed text "consider the need for" a targeted review.

Outcome: In the decision (CoP18 Com.II.10), the CoP directs the SC to consider the need for a targeted review of the implementation of the Convention.

Securing better implementation of marine fish species listings in the Appendices: On Tuesday, 20 August, in Committee I, Antigua and Barbuda introduced CoP18 Doc.12, and urged parties not to propose listings of marine fish species until parties are able to implement measures for already listed marine fish species.

New Zealand, Australia, Senegal, and others opposed the proposal.

Committee Chair Hay, noting the strong opposition in Committee from 65 parties, advised Antigua and Barbuda to submit a new document to the AC. The document was withdrawn.

Revision of Resolution Conf. 11.1 (Rev. CoP17) on Establishment of Committees: On Sunday, 18 August, in Committee II, SC Chair Caceres introduced CoP18 Doc.13 and the associated draft resolution and two draft decisions concerning the review of Resolution Conf. 11.1 (Rev. CoP17) on Establishment of Committees.

Committee II accepted the new draft resolution and two decisions.

Outcome: The CoP adopted the resolution and decisions (CoP18 Doc.13) directing the SC to consider the finance and budget subcommittee should be annexed to the new resolution on establishment of committees.

Potential conflicts of interest in the Animals and Plants Committees: On Sunday, 18 August, in Committee I, the SC introduced CoP18 Doc.14, highlighting that the current CITES conflict of interest policy is being applied diligently and there has been no conflict of interest either reported or alleged. The report was noted.

Cooperation with organizations and multilateral environmental agreements: Cooperation with other biodiversity-related conventions: On Sunday, 18 August, in Committee II, the Bahamas introduced CoP18 Doc.15.1, highlighting synergies with the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) and the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

Chair Hoover established a drafting group comprised of Canada, the US, and the Secretariat to revise the draft decisions, keeping in mind the comments made by Mexico to develop terms of reference.

Committee II noted the report and agreed to renew Decisions 17.55 and 56, as amended by the EU, the US, and the Secretariat whereby: parties are encouraged to strengthen synergies among biodiversity multilateral environmental agreements at the national level by improving coordination and cooperation between national focal points and strengthening capacity-building activities.

On Monday, 26 August, the Chair invited comments on the revised draft decisions. The US clarified the intent of the decisions that lessons should be derived from other relevant biodiversity-related conventions and cooperation with other biodiversity-related entities. The Committee adopted the decisions.

Outcome: The CoP, in the draft decisions (CoP18 Com.II.11), directs:

- the Secretariat to prepare a report summarizing existing CITES resolutions and decisions related to synergies, partnership, and cooperation with other biodiversity-related entities and advise on measures to enhance implementation of the Convention; and
- the SC to consider the Secretariat's report and submit resulting recommendations to CoP19.

Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR): On Sunday, 18 August, in Committee II, the Secretariat introduced CoP18 Doc.15.2, asking delegates to adopt the amendments to Resolution Conf. 12.4 on cooperation with CCAMLR. The US provided some wording changes.

The Committee agreed to delete Decisions 17.50 and 17.51.

Outcome: The CoP adopted the amendments to Resolution Conf. 12.4, and deleted Decisions 17.50 and 17.51 (CoP18 Doc.15.2).

Global Strategy for Plant Conservation: On Sunday, 18 August, in Committee II, the PC Chair introduced CoP18 Doc.15.3, including draft decisions on the Global Strategy.

The Committee agreed to the draft decisions on the Global Strategy, as amended by the Secretariat.

Outcome: The CoP, in the draft decisions (CoP18 Doc.15.3), directs the SC to consider the relevant reports by the Secretariat and the PC and, in coordination with the PC, convey its recommendations to CoP19.

Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services: On Sunday, 18 August, in Committee II, the SC introduced CoP18 Doc.15.4 on cooperation with IPBES, highlighting the draft resolution and decisions aimed at strengthening such cooperation.

The US highlighted the importance of the collaboration as long as it does not distract from the mission of the Convention and noted that a new resolution was not necessary.

Chair Hoover requested the Secretariat to prepare a document to reflect the proposed changes to the draft resolution as suggested by the EU, Niger, and the US.

On Monday, 26 August, the Chair invited comments on the revised document. The US proposed deleting a paragraph encouraging parties to use the findings and recommendations of the IPBES 2019 Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, saying that this mischaracterized the nature of the report, which, she argued, does not produce guidance, nor species-specific findings. The Committee agreed to the deletion, and adopted the report.

Outcome: The CoP, in the draft decisions and amendments to the resolution (CoP18 Com.II.3 (Rev.1) instructs the AC and PC, through their Chairs, to assist the SC with the implementation of the resolution and, subject to external funding, instructs the Chairs to participate, when relevant and subject to external resources, as observers in the IPBES Multidisciplinary Expert Panel.

International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime: On Sunday, 18 August, in Committee II, the Secretariat introduced CoP18 Doc.15.5 on the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICCWC). Committee II agreed to the draft decision.

Outcome: In the decision (CoP18 Doc.15.5), the CoP encourages parties to continue providing funding support to ICCWC for the implementation of its Strategic Programme 2016-2020, and any newly developed future Strategic Programme, to ensure that the Consortium continues to take a leading role in providing coordinated global support to the law-enforcement community.

Cooperation between CITES and the World Heritage Convention: On Monday, 19 August, in Committee II, Norway introduced CoP18 Doc.15.6. The Secretariat suggested technical amendments to the draft resolution. The US proposed amendments to both the draft resolution and draft decisions in order to clarify the oversight role of the SC in the development of a memorandum of understanding and to ensure that any cooperation does not distract from core CITES work.

Committee II agreed to the resolution, as amended by the Secretariat and the US, and accepted all three draft decisions.

Outcome: In the decision (CoP18 Doc.15.6), the CoP directs the Secretariat to enter into dialogue with the UNESCO World Heritage Centre with a view to agreement on a Memorandum of Understanding and, if considered appropriate, a joint programme of work.

CITES Tree Species Programme: On Tuesday, 20 August, in Committee I, the Secretariat introduced CoP18 Doc.16.

Cuba, with Kenya, Guatemala, and others highlighted the importance of the programme and urged CITES to continue it beyond 2020. The International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), as a co-coordinator of the programme, expressed hope the programme will continue in the long term.

Committee I agreed to the draft decisions.

Outcome: In the decisions (CoP18 Doc.16), the CoP directs the PC to consider any reports by the Secretariat on the implementation of the CITES Tree Species Programme, and provide recommendations, as appropriate, to the Secretariat and the SC.

Rural communities: On Monday, 19 August, in Committee II, Namibia introduced the SC report on Rural Communities (CoP18 Doc.17.1). Canada proposed that CITES issue a notification asking parties how they involve such communities in CITES processes. The EU, supported by China, India, Indonesia, Japan, and others, expressed support for the re-establishment of an intersessional working group of the SC to report to CoP19. Ethiopia expressed concern about duplication of work, and Uganda stressed that local communities bear the brunt of the effects of decisions to conserve species. The EU, India, Lesotho, and Peru supported the proposed amendment by the Secretariat to Resolution Conf. 16.6 (Rev.CoP17) on CITES and livelihoods.

Namibia and Zimbabwe introduced the amendments to Resolution Conf. 4.6 (Rev. CoP17) and Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP17) (CoP18 Doc.17.2) aimed at addressing how rural communities are affected by species listings. China introduced similar amendments (CoP18 Doc.18.3). Gabon, Burkina Faso, Brazil, Colombia, the EU, the US, and others expressed concern over the proposed amendments. The US offered new language for a non-binding guidance to be used by parties in consultation with rural communities.

Zimbabwe introduced CoP18 Doc.17.3, which proposes the establishment of a Rural Communities Committee of the CoP. While many parties expressed support for the role of rural communities, many opposed the establishment of a Committee. Chair Hoover noted there was no clear support for the recommendations but that support for incorporating the views of rural communities should be reflected in the mandate of the intersessional working group on rural communities described in document CoP18 Doc.17.1.

Peru introduced CoP18 Doc.18.2 and associated draft decisions on the re-establishment and mandate of a working group on CITES and Livelihoods, as well as a draft resolution on a proposed International Day for Livelihoods of Rural Communities. The Secretariat suggested several amendments to the draft decisions and recommended that livelihoods of rural communities be addressed as part of a future World Wildlife Day.

In the ensuing discussion, some expressed opposition to Peru's proposal on the basis that the proposed draft decisions prioritize trade over conservation, counter to the objectives of the Convention, while others acknowledged the importance of trade in CITES-listed species for livelihoods of rural communities.

The Secretariat presented a second document on CITES and Livelihoods (CoP18 Doc.18.1 (Rev.1)) and associated draft decisions, noting that several of the draft decisions mirror those of CoP18 Doc.18.2.

The Committee agreed to discuss CoP18 Doc.17.1, 17.2, 17.3, 18.1, 18.2, and 18.3 together in an in-session working group chaired by Canada.

On Monday, 26 August, Committee II discussed the revised draft decisions (CoP18 Com.II.17) with particular amended language to provide for an "independent" review. Brazil and Colombia proposed deleting language on consultations with

indigenous peoples and local communities. The EU, the US, and Canada, as Chair of the working group, noted that this was compromise text, rejected this deletion proposal and added that this provision was not mandatory for parties. The EU suggested additional amendments for the purpose of collating case studies that demonstrate how sustainable use contributes to indigenous peoples involved in such trade.

Committee II agreed to the revised draft decisions, as amended.

Outcome: In the decisions (CoP18 Com.II.17) on engagement of indigenous peoples and local communities, the CoP directs:

- the SC to examine the terminology used in different resolutions and decisions when referring to "indigenous peoples," "local communities," or "rural communities"; and make recommendations to CoP19 on whether there is need for consistency of terminology; and
- the Secretariat to issue a Notification inviting parties to provide information on their experiences and lessons learned in engaging indigenous peoples and local communities in CITES processes.

On livelihoods, the CoP directs:

- parties to collate or conduct new case studies, using the standard template, that demonstrate how the involvement of indigenous peoples and local communities who live alongside wildlife in the trade of CITES-listed species contributes to their livelihoods and the conservation of the species in the wild; and
- the SC to establish an intersessional working group on CITES and livelihoods.

The CoP adopted the amended resolution on CITES and Livelihoods recognizing that empowerment of rural communities should be encouraged through measures that may include engaging rural communities in national processes when preparing and submitting proposals to amend the appendices, draft resolutions, draft decisions, and other documents for consideration at CoP meetings.

Food security and livelihoods: On Monday, 19 August, in Committee II, Namibia introduced CoP18 Doc.19, asking for the associated decisions to be renewed. The EU, the US, and others objected to the renewal.

Committee II agreed to the deletion of the associated decisions.

Outcome: The CoP agreed to delete the decisions (CoP18 Doc.19).

Demand reduction strategies to combat illegal trade in CITES-listed species: On Tuesday, 20 August, in Committee II, SC Chair Caceres presented CoP18 Doc.20, underscoring the necessity for CITES guidance on demand reduction. Many parties expressed support, reaffirming the importance of demand reduction in combating illegal wildlife trade.

The Committee adopted the draft decisions in CoP18 Doc.20, with amendments by the Secretariat.

Outcome: In the decisions (CoP18 Doc.20), the CoP directs:

- parties and technical and financial partners to provide the financial and technical support necessary to promote and facilitate the implementation of demand-reduction strategies; and
- the SC to assess the need for the development of CITES guidance on demand-reduction strategies.

World Wildlife Day: On Tuesday, 20 August, in Committee II, the Secretariat introduced CoP18 Doc.22, which proposes an amendment to Resolution Conf. 17.1 on World Wildlife Day. The Chair proposed the inclusion of a new draft decision directed to the SC to consider designating a future World Wildlife Day to be focused on livelihoods of indigenous peoples and local and rural communities.

Committee II accepted the proposed amendment and the new draft decision proposed by the Chair.

Outcome: The CoP agreed that World Wildlife Day 2020 will focus on livelihoods of indigenous peoples and rural and local communities (CoP18 Doc.22).

Youth engagement: On Tuesday, 20 August, in Committee II, South Africa, on behalf of the SC, introduced CoP18 Doc.23, including a proposed amendment to Resolution Conf. 17.5 on Youth Engagement. Parties expressed support for the proposed amendment and shared their own experiences. Mexico proposed a minor textual amendment to Resolution Conf. 17.5 to ensure that a balance between the conservation and sustainable use aims of the Convention was reflected.

Committee II accepted the proposed revisions to Resolution Conf. 17.5 with the amendment proposed by Mexico.

Outcome: The CoP adopted the revised amendments (CoP18 Doc.23).

Capacity-building and identification materials and Identification Manual: On Monday, 19 August, in Committee II, the AC introduced CoP18 Doc.21.1, and noted that the Working Group on Capacity-Building and Identification Materials was not able to complete its work, suggested deleting the relevant decisions on capacity building and adopting new decisions found under agenda item 54.1, on the Identification manual.

The Secretariat introduced CoP18 Doc.54.1, including draft decisions.

Committee II adopted draft decisions with minor amendments.

Outcome: In the decisions (CoP18 Doc.54.1), the CoP directs the AC and PC to establish a joint working group and provide input to the Secretariat to improve the accuracy and availability of identification materials.

Capacity-building activities specified in Resolutions and Decisions and Framework to facilitate coordination, transparency and accountability of CITES capacity-building efforts: On Monday, 19 August, in Committee II, SC Chair Caceres introduced document CoP18 Doc.21.2 and associated draft decisions, highlighting recent achievements since SC70, such as the development of a joint CITES-World Trade Organization e-learning module. The Secretariat suggested minor amendments to the draft decisions.

The US introduced CoP18 Doc.21.3 and associated draft decisions and a draft resolution concerning a proposed framework to facilitate coordination, transparency, and accountability of CITES capacity-building efforts. Noting different perspectives on the various decisions in the two documents, the Chair, with support from Niger and Algeria, proposed to establish an in-session working group.

The working group harmonized the draft decisions in CoP18 Doc.21.2, as amended by the Secretariat, and those of CoP18 Doc.21.3, which were accepted by Committee II.

Outcome: In the draft decisions (CoP18 Com.II.15), the CoP directs the SC to establish a working group on capacity-building to advise the Standing Committee on the actions for the development of an integrated capacity-building framework to improve implementation of the Convention.

Existing Resolutions and Decisions

Review of Resolutions: On Tuesday, 27 August, in plenary, the Secretariat introduced CoP18 Doc.24 highlighting revisions of Resolution Conf. 4.6 (Rev. CoP17), Resolution Conf. 12.8 (Rev. CoP17), and Resolution Conf. 14.3 and noted agreement to delete Resolution Conf. 14.19.

The US supported the amendments to Resolution Conf. 12.8 (Rev. CoP17) and also noted that the process for captive breeding and ranching specimens should follow a similar process as that of the review of significant trade.

Outcome: The CoP agreed to adopt the recommendations of the Secretariat, including the note of the US (CoP18 Doc.24).

Review of Decisions: On Tuesday, 27 August, the Secretariat introduced CoP18 Doc.25, noting the deletion of multiple decisions from CoP17. The US stated that she did not support the deletion of Decision 16.58 related to timber confiscation as it is crucial for ongoing efforts to identify timber species at ports. The EU stated support for the retention of 17.120 as it helps parties access reporting requirements on the CITES website.

Outcome: The CoP adopted the document (CoP18 Doc.25), taking note of the interventions.

General Compliance and Enforcement

National laws for implementation of the Convention: On Monday, 19 August, in Committee II, the Secretariat introduced CoP18 Doc.26 (Rev.1) and provided an update on the implementation of the Convention, noting that progress is slow but ongoing.

Canada, the EU, Niger, and the US supported the draft decisions but suggested amendments to make them time-bound. The US also noted that measures should include suspension of all trade with parties, as opposed to suspension of commercial trade only.

On Sunday, 25 August, the Committee adopted a revised document.

Outcome: In the decisions (CoP18 Com. II.2), the CoP, *inter alia*, directs parties to keep the Secretariat informed of legislative progress, and to provide written updates, at the latest 90 days before SC73.

CITES compliance matters: On Monday, 19 August, in Committee II, the Secretariat introduced CoP18 Doc.27 recommending that the CoP adopt an amendment to Resolution Conf. 11.3 (Rev. CoP17) on Compliance and Enforcement related to the periodic report on the implementation of Article XIII and Resolution Conf. 14.3 on CITES compliance procedures.

The US opposed the draft decisions, including the part calling for the development of a new CITES permit policy.

Committee II, supported by US, Canada, and the EU agreed to adopt the amendment to Resolution Conf. 11.3.

Outcome: The CoP agreed to the amendment instructing the Secretariat to report on the implementation of Article XIII and Resolution Conf. 14.3 on CITES compliance procedures to the SC and at each regular meeting of the CoP (CoP18 Doc.27).

Compliance Assistance Programme: On Monday, 19 August, in Committee II, the Secretariat introduced CoP18 Doc.28, including draft decisions inviting parties to provide financial or technical support to parties subject to compliance mechanisms and other related compliance measures to further strengthen their institutional capacity.

The EU questioned the cost of the programme. The US supported the programme in principle but, echoing the EU, expressed concern over the budgetary implications.

Chair Hoover proposed compromise language indicating that the programme would be implemented if external funding was available. Committee II accepted the compromise.

Outcome: In the decisions (CoP18 Doc.28), the CoP directs parties to provide financial or technical support to parties that are subject to compliance mechanisms and other related compliance measures, if external funding is available.

Country-wide Significant Trade Reviews: On Monday, 19 August, in Committee II, the PC introduced CoP18 Doc.29 and associated draft decisions, recommending that the country-wide significant trade review explore implementation issues as well.

The US supported the draft decisions but expressed concern over the use of Madagascar's country-wide Review of Significant Trade to analyze the benefits and disadvantages of this process due to the challenges faced by Madagascar.

Committee II agreed to the adoption of the draft decisions.

Outcome: In the decisions (CoP18 Doc.29), the CoP directs the Secretariat to consider the "Outlook and recommendations" regarding country-wide significant trade reviews, including the resources required for such reviews.

Compliance in relation to Malagasy ebonies (*Diospyros spp.*) and palisanders and rosewoods (*Dalbergia spp.*): On Monday, 19 August, in Committee II, Madagascar introduced CoP18 Doc.30.1, summarizing achievements in each of the six areas of work that it was asked to address between CoP17 and CoP18.

The SC introduced its report (CoP18 Doc.30.2) and proposed to adopt the draft decisions on Malagasy ebonies (*Diospyros spp.*) and palisanders and rosewoods (*Dalbergia spp.*) with the amendments provided by the Secretariat.

Committee II noted Madagascar's report and established a drafting group including Singapore, UK, China, Belgium, Kenya, Madagascar, the US, and others to review draft decisions and the suggestion to create a consultative group.

On Monday, 26 August, Committee II adopted revised draft decisions prepared by the working group on the basis of document CoP18 Doc.30.2.

Outcome: In the decisions (CoP18 Com.II.8), the CoP directs:

- source, transit, and destination parties for specimens of species of *Dalbergia* and *Diospyros* in Madagascar to enforce all the measures that are recommended by the CITES SC concerning commercial trade in specimens of these species from Madagascar, including suspensions of such trade;
- Madagascar to continue to identify the main commercially valuable species of *Dalbergia* and *Diospyros* from Madagascar, in cooperation with the Secretariat and relevant partners; and
- the SC to review reports from Madagascar and the Secretariat on implementation of relevant decisions.

Domestic markets for frequently illegally traded specimens:

On Tuesday, 20 August, in Committee II, the SC Chair introduced CoP18 Doc.31 proposing a revision to Resolution Conf. 10.10 on Trade in elephant specimens and to consider and adopt the revised Decisions 17.87-17.88.

Committee II accepted the revisions to Resolution Conf. 10.10 and the revised decisions with the Secretariat's amendment.

Outcome: The CoP, in the revised decisions (CoP18 Doc.31), directs the Secretariat to contract independent consultants to undertake a study of the domestic controls in consumer markets for specimens of CITES-listed species for which international trade is predominantly illegal, other than elephant ivory.

Enforcement matters: On Tuesday, 20 August, in Committee II, the Secretariat introduced CoP18 Doc.32, highlighting the proposed guide to assist parties in mitigating the risks of corruption in the trade chain.

Committee II agreed to the draft decisions with small amendments.

Outcome: In the decisions (CoP18 Doc.32), the CoP directs parties to actively promote the use of the Integrity Guide for Wildlife Management Agencies to strengthen responses to and overcome the risks and challenges posed by corruption.

Combating wildlife cybercrime: On Tuesday, 20 August, in Committee II, the Secretariat introduced CoP18 Doc.33.1, followed by the report of the SC (CoP18 Doc.33.2).

Committee II accepted draft decisions in 33.1 and those in 33.2 were amended to ensure consistent use of the term "wildlife crime."

Outcome: The CoP, in the decisions (CoP18 Doc.33.1), directs parties to draw upon the capacity established at INTERPOL in Singapore, for advice and assistance in their efforts to combat wildlife crime linked to the internet; and to make full use of the INTERPOL guidelines on how to combat wildlife crime linked to the internet.

Wildlife crime enforcement support in West and Central Africa: On Tuesday, 20 August, in Committee II, the Secretariat introduced CoP18 Doc.34 and associated draft decisions and recommendations, highlighting the findings of the threat assessment report on illegal wildlife trade in the two sub-regions conducted by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

Niger proposed several amendments to the draft decisions, including to ensure that the priority needs identified by West African states in documents SC70 Inf. 2 and Inf. 3 are considered in the Secretariat's capacity-building work.

The Committee accepted the draft decisions, as amended by Niger.

Outcome: The CoP noted the recommendations and, in the draft decisions (CoP18 Doc.34), directed parties in West and Central Africa identified as affected by illegal trade in wildlife within the region to engage in regional and bilateral activities to share information on their national legislative and regulatory measures to address such illegal trade.

Disposal of confiscated specimens: On Tuesday, 20 August, in Committee II, the SC introduced CoP18 Doc.35, including draft decisions, highlighting the wealth of knowledge available on how to care for confiscated specimens.

Canada, the EU, Peru, South Africa, Switzerland, and others noted that Decisions 17.118 and 17.119 had been implemented, and expressed support for the draft decisions included in Annex 1. Costa Rica, Israel, and Nigeria considered that Decision 17.119 had not been fully implemented.

Wildlife Conservation Society and others supported the decisions proposed by the SC on collecting and making available resources on management of seized and confiscated live animals.

Committee II agreed to form a working group chaired by Belgium and adopted the draft decisions as revised by the working group.

Outcome: The CoP, in the decisions (CoP18 Com.II.9), directs the Secretariat, subject to external funding, to make available materials that may assist parties in implementing Annex 3 to Resolution Conf. 17.8.

Storage and management of illegal trade data collected through the parties' annual illegal trade reports: On Tuesday, 20 August, in Committee II, SC Chair Caceres introduced CoP18 Doc.36, inviting the CoP to adopt a draft decision and amendments to Resolution Conf. 11.17 (Rev. CoP17) on national reports.

China and Japan warned against the use of core funds for the project. The EU supported greater systematic storage of data but shared the concerns regarding submission rates to the database. He suggested adding a decision to remind parties of the importance of submitting their annual reports on illegal wildlife trade. The US supported the EU amendments and highlighted the need for a sustainable funding mechanism.

Committee II accepted the amendments to the resolution and the draft decision, as amended by the Secretariat. Canada and the EU asked to add “subject to the availability of external funding.”

Outcome: The CoP agreed (CoP18 Doc.36) to the decision directing the Secretariat to contract the UNODC to establish, host, and maintain a database for the storage and management of illegal trade data collected through annual illegal trade reports.

Working conditions of wildlife rangers and their implications for implementation of CITES: On Wednesday, 21 August, in Committee II, Nepal introduced CoP18 Doc.37 and drew attention to a survey of ranger working conditions undertaken by WWF with partners. The DRC expressed support for the document.

Committee II and the COP noted the document.

Regulation of Trade

Designation and roles of Management Authorities: On Wednesday, 21 August, in Committee II, the Secretariat introduced document CoP18 Doc.38, including a draft resolution on the designation and role of Management Authorities.

The EU and Norway supported the resolution. Canada added that it would be beneficial for Management Authorities to hold and share information on stricter domestic measures or special requirements in a central repository.

The Chair asked that the proposed amendments be incorporated into an in-session document that would be returned for further discussion by Committee I.

On Sunday, 25 August, the Committee adopted the revised resolution.

Outcome: The CoP, in the revised resolution (CoP18 Com. II.5), resolves that Management Authorities should inform the Secretariat of the existence, adoption, or amendment of stricter domestic measures.

Guidance for making legal acquisition findings: On Wednesday, 21 August, in Committee II, Canada introduced document CoP18 Doc.39 and proposed a draft resolution on guidance for making legal acquisition findings. The US supported the adoption of the draft resolution, including its two annexes, and proposed technical amendments. China welcomed the non-binding guidance proposed.

Committee II Chair Hoover asked to incorporate amendments to the draft resolution into an in-session document.

On Sunday, 25 August, Committee II discussed proposed changes in the revised document (CoP18 Com.II.4). The EU preferred retaining text that Canada had proposed for deletion, which states that the export of hunting trophies of species listed in Appendix I or II should only be authorized when authorities are satisfied that the specimen was not obtained in contravention of the laws of that country. The EU noted that, in some cases, hunting trophies could come under personal and cultural exemptions. The Committee discussed whether CITES Management Authorities, where necessary, “should” or “may” consult competent intergovernmental bodies regarding the verification of legal acquisition. The US and China proposed they “should” do so, and the Committee adopted the document with these changes.

Outcome: In the resolution (CoP18 Com.II.4), the CoP notes that the export of hunting trophies of species listed in Appendix I or II should only be authorized when a Management Authority of the state of export is satisfied that the specimen was not obtained in contravention of the laws of that country for the protection of fauna (among other requirements).

Due diligence by CITES parties and obligations of importing countries: On Tuesday, 20 August, in Committee II, the US introduced CoP18 Doc.40, proposing to adopt recommendations with regard to the obligations of importing parties in verifying the validity of CITES documents and ensuring due diligence in clearing them.

The Bahamas underscored the responsibility of exporting countries to do due diligence. Some countries expressed concern over the proposed changes.

Committee I accepted the revisions to Resolution Conf. 11.3 (Rev. CoP17) on Compliance and enforcement, as amended.

Outcome: The CoP adopted the amendments to the resolution (CoP18 Doc.40), which, *inter alia*, reminds all parties of their obligation to verify the validity of CITES documents accompanying shipments of CITES-listed specimens.

Electronic Systems and Information Technologies: On Thursday, 22 August, in Committee II, Switzerland introduced CoP18 Doc.41. The Secretariat offered several substantive revisions to the draft decisions and proposed the addition of three new draft decisions addressing decisions on authentication and control of permits.

Australia, on behalf of New Zealand and Samoa, expressed support for the draft decisions as amended by the Secretariat, highlighting the potential implications of electronic systems and information technology for compliance mechanisms. Argentina highlighted the need for financing mechanisms for developing countries, while the EU recommended a review by the SC of the resource implications of the draft decisions.

Underscoring the complex sets of issues relating to implementation of electronic systems in diverse contexts, the US opposed the revisions proposed by the Secretariat but supported the new decisions.

The Committee accepted the draft decisions in CoP18 Doc.41, as revised by the Secretariat, and the new draft decisions concerning authentication and control of permits.

Outcome: In the decisions (CoP18. Doc.41), the CoP directs:

- parties to provide the Secretariat with information on their approaches and experiences in the authentication and control of CITES permits; and
- the Secretariat to prepare, in consultation with interested parties, an in-depth study on the current practices in CITES permit authentication and control, using a selection of parties as case studies on how current trading practices and the use of technologies affect their CITES trade regulation process.

Traceability: On Thursday, 22 August, in Committee II, Switzerland introduced CoP18 Doc.42 (Rev.1) and associated draft decisions concerning traceability, highlighting the proposed working definition for traceability and the SC’s conclusion that the development of a new resolution on traceability is unnecessary.

The US, supported by Egypt and Kenya, underscored that the proposed working definition of traceability is not yet finalized and that any associated guidance is non-binding, suggesting revisions to the draft decision to reflect these views.

The Committee accepted the working definition of traceability and the draft decisions as amended by the US and noted the SC’s conclusion that a potential resolution on traceability was not needed.

Outcome: The CoP agreed to the working definition of traceability and draft decisions (CoP18 Doc.42 (Rev.1)), directing the Secretariat to continue updating the CITES website on traceability and to support parties that may request assistance in planning traceability projects, if additional funding is available.

Specimens produced through biotechnology: On Thursday, 22 August, in Committee II, Mexico presented CoP18 Doc.43 on specimens produced through biotechnology, highlighting the evolving nature of these technologies and their potential impact on trade in CITES-listed species.

China questioned the applicability of the term “readily recognizable” in the context of specimens produced through biotechnology, noting that the impact of such specimens on illegal wildlife trade remains unclear and that CITES lacks the resources necessary to regulate a growing biotechnology industry.

Stressing that biotechnology products that are indistinguishable from CITES-listed species should be considered as readily recognizable parts or derivatives, the US, supported by Egypt and Canada, proposed an amendment to Resolution Conf. 9.6 (Rev. CoP16) on trade in readily recognizable parts and derivatives. The EU, echoed by Brazil and South Africa, opposed the US, suggesting that such amendments would be premature and have consequences for the regulatory scope of CITES. Recognizing the enforcement challenges presented by emerging biotechnologies, the Committee accepted the draft decisions as amended.

Outcome: In the decisions (CoP18 Doc.43), the CoP directs the AC and PC to review the complete study on “Wildlife products produced from synthetic or cultured DNA,” monitor the most recent scientific and technological advancements and applications that may lead to the synthetic production of specimens of CITES-listed species, and make recommendations for consideration by the SC, including appropriate revisions to existing resolutions.

Definition of the term “appropriate and acceptable” destinations: On Sunday, 18 August, the US introduced the report of the SC (CoP18 Doc.44.1). She noted that the amendments emphasize that destinations must be suitably equipped to house specimens of African elephant (*Loxodonta Africana*) and Southern white rhinoceros (*Ceratotherium simum simum*). She added that this document includes non-binding guidance for evaluation of suitable destinations.

China noted that there is no universal definition for the terms “appropriate and acceptable” and favored adding more detail and to making the guidelines binding. The US added, in support, that this document should be considered a first step and that it should remain non-binding since some countries have stricter domestic measures.

Committee I agreed to accept the nonbinding guidance, and the draft decisions.

Outcome: In the decisions (CoP18 Doc.44.1), the CoP directs parties to use the non-binding guidance when considering whether the proposed recipient of a living specimen is suitably equipped to house and care for it.

International trade in live African elephants: Proposed revision of Resolution Conf. 11.20 (Rev. CoP17) on Definition of the term “appropriate and acceptable destinations”: On Sunday, 18 August, in Committee I, Burkina Faso, with support from Benin, introduced CoP18 Doc.44.2. He highlighted the important role that African elephants play in their habitat, further urging that live specimens should only be traded to *in situ* conservation programmes or secure areas within the species’ natural range.

The US stated, in opposition to this amendment, that this standard is based on geography alone and not on potential acceptability. She added, with the EU and Canada supporting, that the AC would still need to reach its own conclusions.

India, with Central African Republic and Costa Rica, added that range states and *in situ* programmes are the most appropriate destinations for these animals, highlighting the negative impacts

to elephants and their family groups when captured and removed from the wild.

Committee I Chair Hay asked for a vote. The EU made a point of order asking the Chair to reconsider discussing the matter further. The Committee proceeded to the vote, with 46 voting for the amendments and 18 against, achieving the necessary two-thirds majority.

On Tuesday, 27 August, in plenary, the EU, supported by the DRC and opposed by Costa Rica, requested to reopen discussion on the Committee’s decision to accept the draft amendments to Resolution Conf. 11.20 (Rev. CoP17). The discussion was reopened without a vote, given the lack of a second party opposing reopening the discussion. While declaring support of the intent of the original proponents of the amendments to Resolution Conf. 11.20 (Rev. CoP17), the EU noted areas of concern and suggested several amendments to ensure: scrutiny by relevant CITES scientific and management authorities, and, under exceptional circumstances or emergencies, transfer of wild animals to and between *ex situ* destinations.

Kenya, the Russian Federation, Gabon, Jordan, and others supported the EU’s proposal, while the US and Japan expressed concern that the adoption of these amendments would disregard the information collection and review process as outlined in CoP18 Doc.44.1, which was already adopted by the CoP.

Zimbabwe, supported by eSwatini, Zambia, Namibia, and other southern African countries, invoked Article XVIII of the Convention, declaring a dispute with the proponents of the originally proposed amendment and the EU, argued that the proposed amendments were a “backdoor attempt” to amend the annotation to Appendix II-listed African elephants. The Secretariat suggested that the dispute be addressed following a vote on the EU’s proposed amendments, noting that this was the first time in the history of the Convention that this article had been invoked. South Africa raised a point of order querying how to proceed concerning Zimbabwe’s declared dispute. The CoP Chair adjourned the morning session early to discuss this issue.

At the beginning of the afternoon session, Zimbabwe expressed concern that their dispute had not been adequately addressed. Niger cautioned that should Zimbabwe’s interpretation of Article XVIII be accepted it would set a precedent where any party could block a vote by invoking this article.

The Secretariat explained that Zimbabwe’s dispute concerned a proposal, rather than a decision that had been taken, and thus advised that the CoP move forward with a vote. They also recalled that should Zimbabwe wish to request the resolution of a dispute this would need to be resolved between the parties involved and not in plenary.

The CoP voted to adopt the amendments to Resolution Conf. 11.20 (Rev. CoP17) as proposed by the EU, with 87 in favor and 25 against.

Outcome: CoP18 Doc.44.2, the amendments to Resolution Conf. 11.20 (Rev. CoP17), allow trade in live elephants to be subject to scrutiny by relevant CITES scientific and management authorities, and, under exceptional circumstances or emergencies, transfer of wild animals to and between *ex situ* destinations.

Non-detriment findings: On Sunday, 18 August, in Committee I, the PC Chair introduced the draft decision (CoP18 Doc.45), which recommends conducting an inventory and review of existing non-detriment findings (NDFs) guidance to identify gaps and needs, noting that countries are increasingly requesting support from the Secretariat in this area. The document proposed, subject to the findings, that a second international

expert workshop be organized to update the existing guidelines. Many countries, including Mexico, the EU, China, and Canada, supported the proposal.

Committee I accepted the draft decisions.

Outcome: In the decisions (CoP18 Doc.45), the CoP agreed to assist the Secretariat in preparing the 2nd international expert workshop on NDFs, as a follow up from Cancun 2008.

Quotas for leopard hunting trophies: On Sunday, 18 August, in Committee I, the Secretariat introduced CoP18 Doc.46 addressing a review process to determine if quotas are still non-detrimental.

The US warned that the Secretariat's proposal went beyond its mandate. The EU favored suspending the quotas of countries that have not provided relevant information for review, pending recommendations to be made by the AC and SC. She noted that further discussion is needed on the setting of sustainable harvest levels. Canada opposed a suspension, reasoning that a specific review process had yet to be conducted. Several African countries highlighted the difficulty of assessing leopard populations.

The Committee formed a working group, chaired by the UK, to review the process for interpreting and applying quotas for species included in Appendix 1, and the text of the draft decision proposed in Annex 3 of the document.

On Monday, 26 August, the UK introduced the draft decisions and amendments to Resolution Conf. 9.21 (Rev. CoP13) (CoP18 Com.I.10), noting that the in-session working group recommended the draft decisions be accepted as originally drafted and explained that the amendments to the resolution would allow for regular review of quotas for Appendix I species by the SC and the AC.

Committee I accepted the draft decisions and amendments to Resolution Conf. 9.21 (Rev. CoP13).

Outcome: The CoP, in the decisions (CoP18 Com.I.10), directs parties with quotas established under Resolution Conf. 10.14 (Rev. CoP18) that have not yet provided relevant information to the AC (Botswana, the Central African Republic, and Ethiopia), to review these quotas and consider whether these quotas are still set at levels that are non-detrimental to the survival of the species in the wild, and to share the outcomes of the review and the basis for the determination that the quota is not detrimental, at AC31.

In the amendments to the resolution, the CoP invites parties to consider if the AC can play an important advisory role in the determination of whether a quota set for a species included in Appendix I is non-detrimental to its survival.

Enhancement of quotas for markhor hunting trophies: On Sunday, 18 August, Chair Hay announced that the proposal (CoP18 Doc.47) by Pakistan had been withdrawn.

Black rhinoceros hunting trophies: Export quota for South Africa: On Monday, 19 August, in Committee I, South Africa introduced CoP18 Doc.48 and explained the scientific analysis behind the proposed change in hunting trophy quotas.

Botswana, supported by eSwatini, Zimbabwe, and Canada, commended the conservation efforts by South Africa and offered strong support. Kenya opposed the proposal, highlighting the unpredictable poaching rates of an already critically endangered species, and cautioned that reported population numbers are not current. Senegal remarked on the conflicting numbers and advised to delay until CoP19. The EU, with Japan and Namibia, commended the adaptive management strategies and supported the proposal because of the potential for incentivizing conservation efforts.

After a small drafting group convened, South Africa presented the agreed amended language, which was accepted.

Outcome: The CoP accepted CoP18 Doc.48, with the proposed quota change to 0.5% of the total black rhinoceros population.

Implications of the transfer of a species to Appendix I and Trade in "pre-Appendix-I" specimens: On Thursday, 22 August, in Committee II, the Secretariat introduced CoP18 Doc.49.1 and raised the issue of trade in stockpiles of pangolin specimens that were legally obtained in accordance with the provisions of the Convention prior to the transfer of the pangolin species to Appendix I at CoP17, noting that the rules at the time of trade and not at the time of acquisition should apply. The Secretariat suggested amendments to Resolution Conf. 12.3 (Rev. CoP17) on permits and certificates so that the period of validity of export permits granted while the species was included in Appendix II be limited to the date of the entry into force of the inclusion of the species in Appendix I.

Nigeria introduced CoP81 Doc.49.2 noting that the "non-retroactivity" principle does not mean that an individual who acquired specimens of an Appendix II species can trade them as Appendix II specimens after an Appendix I listing comes into force for that species.

Brazil, Canada, and the EU expressed support for the intent of CoP18 Doc.49.2, but noted a preference for the approach outlined in CoP18 Doc.49.1. Canada, supported by Brazil, Cameroon, and New Zealand, suggested an amendment to the Secretariat's proposed changes to paragraph 10 of Resolution Conf. 12.3 (Rev. CoP17) to ensure that it applied to all transfers between appendices.

Committee II accepted the proposed amendments and draft decisions.

Outcome: In the decision (CoP18 Doc.49.1), the CoP noted CoP18 Doc.49.2 and agreed to the amendment to Resolution Conf. 13.6 (Rev.CoP16) concerning "pre-Convention specimens" and the amendment to Resolution Conf. 12.3 (Rev. CoP17) on permits and certificates, as amended by Canada; as well as the draft decision, directing the SC, with the assistance of the Secretariat, to consider whether further guidance related to the period of transition, including the period between the adoption of a proposal to transfer a species from one appendix to another and the entry into force of the new listing, should be developed.

Amendments to Resolution Conf. 10.13 (Rev. CoP15) on Implementation of the Convention for timber species: On Thursday, 22 August, in Committee II, the PC Chair introduced CoP18 Doc.50, recommending the adoption of the revisions provided by the SC to Resolution Conf. 10.13 (Rev. CoP15).

Committee II agreed to the proposed revision of Resolution Conf. 10.13 (Rev. CoP15) with minor amendments.

Outcome: The CoP adopted revised Resolution Conf. 10.13 (Rev. CoP15) wherein parties are encouraged to collaborate with relevant stakeholders to develop shared priorities for timber identification, including priority species, and on developing identification techniques, such as DNA analysis (CoP18 Doc.50).

Stocks and stockpiles: On Thursday, 22 August, in Committee II, Israel introduced CoP18 Doc.51 asking to continue the mandate of the Working Group to review the existing provisions on controls on stocks of specimens of CITES-listed species.

The US and EU agreed and asked for the mandate to be more focused.

Committee II agreed to the renewal of Decision 17.170 (Rev. CoP18), taking note that work on this matter should be more focused.

Outcome: The CoP agreed (CoP18 Doc.51) to the renewal of Decision 17.170 (Rev. CoP18), taking note of the need that work on this matter be more focused.

Introduction from the sea: On Thursday, 22 August, in Committee II, the SC Chair introduced CoP18 Doc.52.

Committee II agreed to the new draft decisions.

Outcome: In the decisions (CoP18 Doc.52), the CoP directs the Secretariat to monitor the implementation of Resolution 14.6 (Rev. CoP16) on Introduction from the sea, including the provisions on chartering, and report to the SC.

Purpose codes on CITES permits and certificates: On Thursday, 22 August, in Committee II, Canada presented CoP18 Doc.53 on purpose-of-transaction codes (purpose codes).

There was general support for the proposed amendments to Resolution Conf. 12.3 (Rev. CoP17).

Committee II accepted the proposed amendments to Resolution Conf. 12.3 (Rev. CoP17) including minor revisions proposed by the US, as well as, the proposed extension of Decision 14.54.

Outcome: The CoP adopted CoP18 Doc.53 with the amendments to the resolution and the proposed extension of Decision 14.54, directing the SC to re-establish an intersessional joint working group to review the use of purpose-of-transaction codes by parties.

Identification of specimens in trade: Identification of sturgeons and paddlefish specimens in trade: On Sunday, 18 August, the Secretariat introduced CoP18 Doc.54.3, noting the importance of this issue in range states for sturgeons that have established aquaculture operations where mixing of caviar from captive-bred and wild-caught sturgeons can occur easily.

Committee I agreed to the extension of several decisions.

Outcome: The CoP adopted the document (CoP18 Doc.54.3), *inter alia*, encouraging the AC to consider involving the AC and PC's joint intersessional working group on identification materials in the implementation of Decision 16.137 (Rev. CoP17).

Identification of CITES-listed tree species: On Sunday, 25 August, in Committee II, the PC Chair presented the document on Identification of CITES-listed tree species (CoP18 Doc.54.2), recommending that the information be included in a resolution since it involves a long-term direction to parties. The Republic of Korea, the EU, and Canada supported the document noting that it helps parties to improve capacity in the identification of tree species.

Committee II agreed to the document that invites the CoP to adopt the draft decisions on identification of timber and other wood products.

Outcome: The CoP adopted the draft decisions (CoP18 Doc.54.2).

CITES implementation for trade in medicinal plant species: On Thursday, 22 August, in Committee II, the Secretariat introduced CoP18 Doc.55, and added that this trade poses particular issues from a traceability perspective and thus encouraged parties to share information on trade throughout the value chain. The Republic of Korea highlighted the value of stricter domestic measures on medicinal plants. Kenya, Ecuador, and Lesotho supported.

Committee II agreed to the document, as amended by the US.

Outcome: In the decisions (CoP18 Doc.55), the CoP directs the Secretariat to liaise with key players of the medicinal and aromatic plant trade supply and value chains to raise awareness and understanding of CITES regulations for such species.

Exemptions and Special Trade Provisions

Simplified procedure for permits and certificates: On Monday, 26 August, in Committee II, the Secretariat presented the documents (CoP18 Doc.56 and CoP18 Com.II.14), with amendments to Resolution Conf. 11.15 (Rev.CoP12) on non-

commercial loan, donation, or exchange of museum, herbarium, diagnostic, and forensic research specimens, and Resolution Conf. 12.3 (Rev.CoP17) on permits and certificates.

The Committee adopted the document, with minor editorial amendments, including Australia's suggestion to refer to "records" rather than a "register."

Outcome: The CoP, in the amended resolution (CoP18 Com.I.14), directs the Secretariat to issue a Notification every five years requesting that parties review and update their records of scientific institutions.

Implementation of Resolution Conf. 17.7 on Review of trade in animal specimens reported as produced in captivity: On Sunday, 25 August, the AC Chair introduced CoP18 Doc.58. The US supported the draft decisions.

The Committee adopted the draft decisions and amendments proposed to Resolution Conf. 17.7.

Outcome: The CoP agreed (CoP18 Doc.58) to amend the resolution.

Definition of the term "artificially propagated" and Source codes for plant specimens in trade: On Sunday, 25 August, in Committee II, the PC Chair introduced the documents, first addressing guidance on the term "artificially propagated" (CoP18 Doc.59.1), and second on source codes for plant specimens in trade (CoP18 Doc.59.2). The EU proposed moving the deadline for the PC to review guidance material by PC26 rather than PC25. China and the US also supported the draft text, with minor amendments proposed by Canada. The Committee accepted the document.

On source codes for plant specimens in trade, the Committee welcomed the introduction of source code "Y" to refer to the assisted production of plants that are neither "artificially propagated" nor "wild," as they are propagated or planted in an environment with some level of human intervention.

Committee II adopted the draft decisions and agreed to amend Resolution Conf. 11.11 (Rev. CoP17) on Regulation of trade in plants, and Resolution Conf. 12.8 (Rev.CoP13) on Permits and Certificates, to reflect the change.

Outcome: In the decisions (CoP18 Doc.59.1 and 2), the CoP directs:

- the PC to review the trade in specimens of artificially propagated Appendix I species, considering the conservation benefits to wild populations and any adverse effects on the conservation of Appendix I species; and propose any amendments to the SC; and
- the SC to consider the PC recommendations and make further recommendations to CoP19.

Species Specific Matters

Illegal trade in cheetahs (*Acinonyx jubatus*): On Thursday, 22 August, in Committee II, the Secretariat introduced CoP18 Doc.60 and highlighted the work of the intersessional working group to develop the CITES cheetah trade resource kit, which compiles relevant information and tools to assist parties in implementing the Convention. She introduced draft decisions calling for further funding for the work to be completed. She also highlighted the proposal by the in-session lion working group to establish a big cats task force, noting that matters related to illegal trade in cheetahs could be addressed by such a task force.

Kuwait, supported by Oman, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, and others, emphasized that the illegal trade in cheetah in the Gulf States has decreased due to enforcement efforts and public campaigns. She supported the proposal that the proposed big cats task force address illegal trade in cheetah issues. Somalia emphasized the challenges in dealing with illegal trade and

especially hunting in northern Somalia, including illegal trade to the UAE and South Africa. South Africa denied that cheetahs are illegally imported into the country. Tanzania and Burkina Faso supported the recommendations submitted by Kenya and Ethiopia in CoP18 Inf. 73.

Chair Hoover proposed to accept the draft decision (18 AA). The Committee accepted.

On Tuesday, 27 August, Ethiopia, seconded by Kenya, moved to reopen the debate, saying there had been inadequate time to consider the decision. Kuwait, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia opposed reopening the debate. The motion failed, as 29% voted in favor of reopening the debate, and 70% against.

Outcome: In the draft decision (CoP18 Doc.60), the CoP directs the Secretariat, subject to external funding, to make the final version of the CITES cheetah trade resource kit available in the languages and formats agreed by the SC.

Sturgeons and paddlefish (*Acipenseriformes spp.*): The Secretariat introduced CoP18 Doc.61 in Committee II, which provides clarification of country of origin definition for caviar from the work of the intersessional Working Group, and noted this group did not reach consensus. The Russian Federation stated that this compromise takes a step back, especially considering the problems of caviar labeling and identifying sturgeon in trade. The EU and Japan, considering the difficulties of identifying the country of origin for roe and the shift to aquaculture, offered support for continuation of the mandate of the working group.

The US opposed the renewal of the Working Group mandate since consensus could not be reached, but also offered amended language to reflect the cases of specimens produced in aquaculture facilities, should the mandate get renewed.

Committee II agreed to the renewal of the Working Group and the document, as amended.

On Tuesday, 27 August, the Russian Federation moved to reopen the debate, highlighting the need for the SC to consider practical challenges in labeling systems and make recommendations to CoP19. The motion to reopen the debate failed.

Outcome: In the decisions (CoP18 Doc.61), the CoP directs the SC to consider the practical challenges in the implementation of the provisions of the Convention with regard to the application of the “CITES guidelines for a universal labelling system for the trade in and identification of caviar” in light of the recognized shift in source from wild to aquaculture.

Draft decisions on the conservation of amphibians (*Amphibia*): On Monday, 19 August, in Committee I, Costa Rica introduced CoP18 Doc.62 (Rev.1). Noting the extinction crisis for many amphibian species, he called for setting up a working group to study the impacts of trade on amphibians and develop recommendations for the SC. Paraguay, Peru, Israel, Mali, and the US supported the proposal, and the US noted that the threats are diverse, and include the spread of fungal infections. Canada, China, and Creative Conservation Solutions cautioned that some aspects of the proposal address all amphibian species, and are beyond the scope of CITES. The EU expressed willingness to consider a more focused proposal.

The Committee established a working group chaired by Mexico to consider the draft decisions and develop recommendations as to whether to revise or adopt the text.

On Monday, 26 August, Mexico introduced draft decisions on the conservation of amphibians (CoP18 Com.I.2) directing the Secretariat, subject to external funds and in consultation with the AC, to conduct interdisciplinary workshops for CITES authorities on amphibian species.

Committee I adopted the draft decisions.

Outcome: In the decisions (CoP18 Com.I.2), the CoP directs the Secretariat to conduct interdisciplinary workshops for CITES Authorities and other relevant authorities and stakeholders about amphibian species in international trade, including but not limited to evaluating whether current levels of trade are compatible with the conservation of these species in the wild; and explore the emerging threat of diseases to traded amphibians, including amphibian chytrid fungi.

Eels (*Anguilla spp.*): On Monday, 19 August, in Committee I, the AC Chair introduced the proposed decision (CoP18 Doc.63), which outlines measures to promote international collaboration among range states of European eel (*Anguilla Anguilla*), which is listed in Appendix II, including measures to improve the traceability of eels in trade, and engagement with the World Customs Organization (WCO) to examine the feasibility of harmonizing customs codes. The US proposed text to clarify that traceability measures would apply to both live and dead eels.

Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria requested revising the AC deadline to review significant trade on eel species. Algeria noted the country’s lack of expertise in conducting an inventory, and requested technical support from the AC. The Secretariat offered to meet with these parties to discuss the timetable for conducting the review.

The Committee agreed on the draft decision, with minor changes proposed by the US and EU.

Outcome: In the decisions (CoP18 Doc.63), the CoP directs:

- range states of other eel species to implement conservation and management measures and related legislation to ensure the sustainability of harvests and international trade and, where appropriate, and collaborate with other range states on shared stocks;
- the Secretariat to report back on implementation and provide draft recommendations to the AC and SC, and collate information on the biology of European eel;
- the AC to consider reports submitted by parties on NDFs with regard to trade in European eel; and
- the SC to consider reports and other information regarding illegal trade in European eel, and make recommendations, as appropriate, and engage with the WCO to examine the feasibility of harmonizing customs codes, and report to CoP19.

Precious corals (Order *Antipatharia* and family *Coralliidae*): On Monday, 19 August, in Committee I, the AC Chair introduced CoP18 Doc.64 and stated that a study on coral species was underway but the work has yet to be completed. Global Guardian Trust, on behalf of multiple non-governmental organizations (NGOs), described efforts by fishermen in Japan for conservation and control of trade in coral species and supported the ongoing work.

Committee I agreed to extend Decisions 17.192 and 17.193 in Annex 1.

Outcome: The CoP agreed (CoP18 Doc.64) to extend the decisions.

Implementation of Res. Conf. 16.10 on Implementation of the Convention for agarwood-producing taxa (*Aquilaria spp.* and *Gyrinops spp.*): On Tuesday, 20 August, in Committee I, the PC Chair presented CoP18 Doc.65, stating the identification material has been made available on the website, but that work was restrained by a lack of external funding. The US announced its support for the document, stating that it could assist in efforts to prevent conversion of forests to agarwood plantations.

Committee I agreed to the draft decisions, as amended by the Secretariat and PC Chair.

Outcome: The decisions (CoP18 Doc.65) direct, *inter alia*, the PC to develop a questionnaire on gaps in the implementation of Resolution Conf. 16.10 on Implementation of the Convention for agarwood-producing taxa.

Trade in *Boswellia spp.* (Burseraceae): On Tuesday, 20 August, in Committee I, the US introduced the proposal (CoP18 Doc.66). He highlighted reports of increased global demand for *Boswellia*, which is tapped for frankincense and used in many different products, noting indicators of resource depletion. He proposed amendments to include mention of *Boswellia* population size, distribution, status, trends, and its role in ecosystems. He drew attention to a proposal to initiate a project (CoP18 Inf.53) that would assess the impact of international trade in *Boswellia*, noting the possibility of US support for a collaborative effort. Sri Lanka, Senegal, Oman, Ethiopia, EU, and others supported the draft decision. Canada cautioned that no *Boswellia* species are listed under CITES, and the work therefore falls beyond its scope.

Committee I agreed on the draft decision.

Outcome: The decision (CoP18 Doc.66) directs the CITES Secretariat to issue a Notification to the Parties requesting, *inter alia*, information on biological data on *Boswellia* species, including population size, distribution, status, and trends.

Humphead wrasse (*Cheilinus undulatus*): On Monday, 19 August, in Committee I, Canada, on behalf of the SC, introduced the document (CoP18 Doc.67) and described the ongoing work to ensure sustainable management and ranching methods of the species.

Indonesia, supporting the document, outlined sustainability measures undertaken including ranching and fishing controls at multiple levels. WWF drew attention to the ranching practices of Indonesia, stating that there is potential for sustainable management, but that the purpose code R should not be used for this trade and practice for the species.

Committee I agreed to the new draft decision.

Outcome: The decision (CoP18 Doc.67) directs the CITES Secretariat, subject to external funding, to invite the FAO and International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Groupers and Wrasses Specialist Group to assist it in supporting major exporting and importing countries of the humphead wrasse, upon request, to address remaining CITES implementation challenges and ensure well-regulated, sustainable management of, and trade in, the species.

Sharks and rays (*Elasmobranchii spp.*): On Monday, 19 August, in Committee I, the AC Chair and the Secretariat introduced their respective reports (CoP18 Doc.68.1 and CoP18 Doc.68.2).

The US expressed concern that some activities directed to the Secretariat should be more appropriately directed to the AC and SC, specifically, measures relating to NDFs and “legal acquisition.” Japan requested to qualify a reference to regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) with “where they exist.”

Committee I established a working group, chaired by New Zealand, to discuss possible amendments to the decision text, as well as changes to Resolution Conf. 12.6 (Rev. CoP17) on the conservation and management of sharks.

On Monday, 26 August, New Zealand introduced the revised draft decisions and amendments to Resolution Conf. 12.6 (Rev. CoP17).

Committee I accepted the draft decisions and amendments to the resolution.

Outcome: The CoP, in the decisions and amendments to the resolution (CoP18 Com.I.5):

- directs the Secretariat, subject to external funding, and in collaboration with relevant organizations and experts, to conduct a study to investigate the apparent mismatch between the trade in products of CITES-listed sharks recorded in the CITES Trade Database and what would be expected against the information available on catches of listed species; and
- invites parties that engage in directed or non-directed shark fishing activities of shared stocks to collect and share, on a regional basis, where they exist, data on including effort and catches.

Implementation of Resolution Conf. 10.10 (Rev. CoP17) on trade in elephant specimens: On Wednesday, 21 August, in Committee II, the Secretariat introduced CoP18 Doc.69.1 and the Addendum to Implementation of Resolution Conf. 10.10 (Rev. CoP17) on trade in elephant specimens (CoP18 Doc.69 Add.).

Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, India, Niger, and others expressed disappointment at the delay in publication by the Secretariat of guidance on ensuring effective stockpile management. Some discussion focused on what countries should be included in the National Ivory Action Plan (NIAP) process, with some suggesting that Category C parties (parties affected by illegal trade in ivory) should continue to be part of it. China believed that the Elephant Trade Information System (ETIS) report should not be the basis for participation in NIAP.

Many parties provided comments on the practical guidance on the management of ivory stockpiles.

The Chair requested, with regard to the proposed amendments to Resolution Conf. 10.10 (Rev. CoP17) that an in-session document showing only the further changes proposed by China, India, Kenya, and the UAE be returned to the Committee for consideration later in the meeting.

On Sunday, 25 August, Committee II adopted the revisions to the resolution with changes to Annex 3 on Guidelines to the NIAP Process.

Outcome: The CoP, in the amendments to the resolution and guidelines (CoP18 Com.II.6), adopts language mandating the SC to consider other relevant information that is new or may not have been reported to ETIS when making decisions about which countries to include in the NIAP process.

Report on Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE):

Report on Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE): On Wednesday, 21 August, in Committee II, the Secretariat introduced CoP18 Doc.69.2 and the addendum relating to the implementation of the MIKE mandate, noting that relative poaching levels in Africa remain unchanged between 2017 and 2018, with some regional variation.

While Botswana, South Africa, and Zimbabwe expressed their confidence in the MIKE process, Burkina Faso and Kenya, supported by several African countries and Israel, expressed concern about the independence and transparency of the analysis, calling for an open and transparent peer-review of MIKE’s methodology. Committee II and the CoP noted the report.

Report on the Elephant Trade Information System (ETIS): On Wednesday, 20 August, in Committee II, the Secretariat introduced document CoP18 Doc.69.3 (Rev.1) involving a comprehensive analysis of ETIS data and noted a modest decrease in illegal ivory trade activity but cautioned that over 250 seizures were not included in the analysis.

Several transit countries such as Singapore and the UAE questioned the transparency of the ETIS methodology and categorization process. China and the DRC lamented the report’s neglect of their domestic efforts to combat the illegal trade in ivory. Vietnam, sharing concerns regarding the ETIS methodology, expressed disappointment that despite

correspondence with the Secretariat on this issue, the report remained mostly unchanged. Angola called on Vietnam to more collaboratively address the role of Vietnamese-led criminal networks in the illegal African ivory trade.

Committee II and the CoP noted the report.

Ivory stockpiles: Implementation of Resolution Conf. 10.10 (Rev.CoP17) on Trade in Elephant Specimens: On Wednesday, 21 August, in Committee II, Burkina Faso introduced CoP18 Doc.69.4, providing an update on recent seizures and destructions of ivory stocks and stockpiles by CITES parties and suggesting a way forward on the implementation of decisions directed to the Secretariat and SC in order to secure the completion of the delayed CITES guidance for the management of ivory stockpiles before or during CoP18.

Angola, Côte d'Ivoire, the EU, Gabon, Liberia, Mali, and Niger expressed support for the proposals.

Committee II accepted draft decisions and the amendments to Resolution Conf. 10.10 (Rev. CoP17).

Outcome: The decisions (CoP18 Doc.69.4), direct:

- the Secretariat to disseminate the practical guidance for the management of ivory stockpiles, including their disposal; and
- SC72 and SC73 to consider the report and recommendations of the Secretariat and determine whether any further actions are necessary in the case of parties who fail to provide annual inventories of government-held stockpiles of ivory and significant privately held stockpiles of ivory within their territory or where stockpiles are not well secured.

Implementation of Resolution Conf. 10.10 (Rev. CoP17) on the closure of domestic ivory markets: On Wednesday, 21 August, in Committee II, Kenya presented document CoP18 Doc.69.5 concerning proposed amendments to Resolution Conf. 10.10 (Rev. CoP17) on the closure of domestic ivory markets and associated draft decisions on closing all remaining legal domestic ivory markets.

Gabon, Burkina Faso, and other member states of the African Elephant Coalition, with support from Israel, supported the proposal and emphasized that legal domestic ivory markets drive demand, complicate enforcement efforts, and are linked to poaching and the illegal ivory trade.

Namibia, eSwatini, and other southern African countries expressed strong opposition, stressing that there was no evidence of a link between legal domestic markets and poaching. They questioned the value of re-opening the issue of domestic markets given the extensive debates and compromise achieved at CoP17. Thailand shared their success in exiting the NIAP process as evidence that the closure of all domestic markets was unnecessary.

Chile, EU, Japan, and several others noted that this proposal falls outside the scope of the Convention and might pave the way for similar restrictive measures to be adopted for the legal domestic markets of other CITES-listed species.

The US also opposed the proposed amendments underscoring that focus should remain on assisting parties in effectively implementing Resolution Conf. 10.10 in its current form but acknowledged the importance of monitoring the impact of these markets. To this end, she proposed a new set of draft decisions requesting remaining parties with legal domestic ivory markets report on measures they are taking to ensure that such markets are not contributing to poaching or to the illegal ivory trade. In response to concerns voiced by South Africa and Zimbabwe on the role of the SC in these new decisions, Canada proposed a textual amendment to the draft decisions to ensure that they stay within the scope of CITES.

The Committee accepted the three new draft decisions proposed by the US, as amended by Canada.

Outcome: In the decisions (CoP18 Doc.69.5), the CoP directs:

- parties that have not closed their domestic markets for commercial trade in raw and worked ivory to report to the Secretariat for consideration of SC73 and SC74 on what measures they are taking to ensure that their domestic ivory markets are not contributing to poaching or illegal trade;
- the Secretariat to compile the reports and make them available to parties in advance of the SC meetings; and
- the SC to consider the reports and report on this matter and make recommendations, as appropriate, to CoP19.

Hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) and other marine turtles (Cheloniidae and Dermochelyidae): On Monday, 19 August, in Committee I, the Secretariat introduced CoP18 Doc.70, noting that the work is ongoing, and suggested establishing an intersessional working group.

Costa Rica, on behalf of multiple parties, expressed concern over delay in completing the work and suggested that the study should be monitored and supported by the SC. Solomon Islands also expressed concern and added that the illegal marine turtle trade is not getting the attention it deserves. The US, with Philippines, Jamaica, and Fiji, expressed the need for rapid implementation of conservation measures.

The Chair established a working group chaired by Australia to develop draft decisions for the CoP.

On Monday, 26 August, Committee I agreed to the draft decisions based on the recommendations of the study contained in CoP18 Inf.18 on the legal and illegal international trade in marine turtles.

Outcome: In the decisions (CoP18 Com.I.7), the CoP directs AC31 and SC73 to review the study contained in CoP18 Inf.18 and any additional information received by the Secretariat.

Asian big cats (*Felidae spp.*): On Monday, 26 August, in Committee II, the Secretariat introduced CoP18 Doc.71.1 summarizing progress made on the review of facilities of concern with Asian big cats in captivity, but that missions still need to be sent to scrutinize some of these operations. She added that the proposed CoP18 big cats task force will help support parties to address issues related to illegal trade in Asian big cat parts and derivatives.

India then presented the draft decisions (CoP18 Doc.71.2 (Rev.1)), adding that his country does not allow for any trade in Asian big cats and derivatives and that this document can help ensure that they are not viewed as commodities. He stated, with the Russian Federation, Brazil, and Malaysia, that Decision 14.69 should be extended, as it has not been completed after 12 years, encouraged parties to share seized tiger skin images, and that the amended document includes time bound limits on captive Asian big cat facilities. Bhutan, with Bolivia, stated that captive tiger facilities must be closed and supported India's proposed amended document.

The US, noting that the Secretariat's review work is ongoing, suggested that Decision 17.226 be retained since it has not been fully implemented. Niger, in support of the documents along with Ethiopia, noted that this trade is fueling demand for parts of the African lion and that CITES should prioritize reducing demand for big cats as a whole. The Russian Federation, the EU, Bangladesh, and Israel supported both documents.

The EU noted with regret the lack of completion of missions to facilities of concern and that Decision 17.227 has not yet been implemented. She proposed an additional draft decision encouraging parties to share samples of tiger specimens of living and seized animals. China added that the draft decisions seem to

repeat aspects of Resolution Conf. 12.5 on Conservation of and trade in tigers and other Appendix-I Asian big cat species, and that they are beyond the scope of the Convention, overburden the Secretariat, and do not respect the sovereign rights of parties. Lao PDR asked for further clarification on the definition of commercial captive breeding facilities and opposed the draft decisions, requesting India to provide more information.

Bolivia and Brazil, in support of both documents, stated concerns on the growing illegal trade in jaguar parts and derivatives, which links to the trade in Asian big cats.

Chair Hoover stated, in light of substantial support for India's draft decisions, that the Committee would retain Decisions 14.69 and 17.226; and retain Resolution Conf. 12.5.

Committee II agreed to the draft decisions, as amended.

Outcome: In the decisions (CoP18 Doc.71.2), the CoP directs:

- parties with intensive operations breeding tigers on a commercial scale to implement measures to restrict the captive population to a level supportive only to conserving wild tigers;
- parties in whose territory there are facilities keeping Asian big cats in captivity to review national management practices and controls that are in place for such facilities; ensure strict application of all management practices and controls implemented; and report to the Secretariat on progress.

Seahorses (*Hippocampus* spp.) on CITES – a roadmap

to success: On Monday, 19 August, in Committee I, Monaco introduced CoP18 Doc.72, noting with concern that illegal trade in the species continues.

The US, in support of the document, suggested minor amendments. Japan noted the increased illegal trade after the listing of the species and wondered whether management would be better handled by RFMOs, but conveyed his support for the document with the Secretariat's amendments.

Committee I agreed to the draft decisions.

Outcome: The decisions (CoP18 Doc.72) direct the Secretariat, *inter alia*, subject to external funding to commission a study on trade in *Hippocampus* spp., including applicable regulations, to understand shifts in international trade patterns since the inclusion of seahorses in Appendix II and the Review of Significant Trade (RST) as well as implementation challenges and possible solutions.

Great apes (*Hominidae* spp.): On Tuesday, 20 August, in Committee I, the SC Chair introduced CoP18 Doc.73 and outlined proposed amendments to Resolution Conf. 13.4 (Rev. CoP16) on conservation of and trade in great apes.

The US and China supported the amendments. Gabon, Senegal, Mali, and Uganda expressed concern about removal of the previous requirement for the SC to review the issue at each of its regular meetings, and to report to each CoP. The Secretariat affirmed that illegal trade data will still be reported regularly to the SC.

The EU proposed the use of the term “wild meat” to replace “bush meat,” opposed by the US. Several NGOs highlighted the serious threats to great apes, including the trade in exotic pets, which are advertised openly online.

Committee I established a working group, chaired by the US, to review reporting obligations on great apes to the SC and CoP.

On Monday, 26 August, the US introduced draft resolution Conf. 13.4 (Rev.CoP18) on conservation of and trade in great apes, including the reporting requirements of the Secretariat and SC.

Committee I adopted the draft resolution by consensus.

Outcome: The CoP, in the resolution (CoP18 Com.I.6), directs the SC to review the implementation of this resolution at each of its regular meetings on the basis of the Secretariat's reports; and

report at each meeting of the CoP on the implementation of this resolution, with any recommendations for further action.

Queen conch (*Strombus gigas*): On Monday, 19 August, in Committee I, the Secretariat introduced CoP18 Doc.85. Jamaica requested deleting a reference to “agreed regional conversion factors,” which influence estimates of catch data, and requested that the working group consider the issue of “scientific quotas” and provide recommendations for the AC. The US preferred the term “science-based quotas.” The EU, the Bahamas, Venezuela, Antigua and Barbuda, and the Dominican Republic supported the draft.

The Committee established a drafting group, chaired by the EU, to take account of the draft decision text and the amendments proposed.

On Monday, 26 August, the Committee agreed to new draft decisions.

Outcome: The decisions (CoP18 Com.I.9) direct:

- the range states to continue to collaborate in exploring ways to enhance the traceability of specimens of *S. gigas* in international trade;
- the SC to review traceability, especially for meat, and enforcement issues concerning international trade; and
- the Secretariat to monitor the development of traceability systems for queen conch and report relevant developments to the SC.

Conservation of the Titicaca water frog (*Telmatobius*

culeus): On Monday, 19 August, in Committee I Peru introduced CoP18 Doc.87, noting that this species faces increasing threats from illegal international trade, despite extensive regional conservation efforts.

The Chair convened a working group, chaired by the US, to revise or adopt the draft decisions.

On Monday, 26 August, the US introduced revised draft decisions concerning the conservation of the Titicaca water frog (CoP18 Com.I.8).

Committee I accepted the draft decisions.

Outcome: In the decisions (CoP18 Com.I.8), the CoP encourages range states and other parties to collect information on the conservation status of the species, assess the ongoing threat of illegal trade, and support demand reduction efforts.

Rosewood timber species [Leguminosae (Fabaceae)]: On Tuesday, 20 August, in Committee I, the PC Chair introduced CoP18 Doc.74, which proposes conducting a study of rosewood biology, population status, management, use and trade of CITES-listed rosewood as a first priority, and non-CITES listed rosewood as a second priority. She highlighted proposed Secretariat amendments to the draft, including a proposal to develop a list of species commonly referred to as rosewood, and to refer to the rosewood “tree” rather than “timber.”

The US supported the draft, with an addition that a nomenclature specialist be involved. The International Association of Violin and Bowmakers, with other organizations representing the manufacturers of musical instruments, highlighted the industry's reliance on access to limited quantities of *Dalbergia*, a rosewood species, and supported the use of permits, with exemptions for finished instruments.

Committee I accepted the document.

Outcome: In the decisions (CoP18 Doc.74), the CoP directs the Secretariat to provide or confirm with the nomenclature specialist of the PC, a reference list of genera that are commonly referred to as “rosewood tree species.”

Pangolins (*Manis* spp.): On Thursday, 22 August, in Committee II, the Secretariat introduced CoP18 Doc.75, which

requests pangolin range states to develop and implement *in situ* pangolin management and conservation programmes.

Singapore expressed its support for the document, and highlighted its recent large seizures of pangolin scales. China noted that NDFs are important to non-commercial trade in pangolins. Gabon, supported by the US, proposed text directing the Secretariat to prepare a report on the conservation status of African species of pangolin, available data on its legal and illegal trade, measures taken to fight illegal trade, stocks of pangolin derivatives, and problems related to law enforcement. Several countries expressed support for this.

The US, supported by the EU, opposed deleting the recommendation for range states to make NDFs, arguing that, even though commercial trade is no longer permitted, any trade in pangolin species, including for zoological and scientific purposes, still requires the making of NDFs. Kenya, Malaysia, and the DRC supported the document with a need for increased focus on enforcement. Bangladesh, India, and Philippines also supported the document. The Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA), on behalf of multiple NGOs, noted their concern about the continuation of and expansion of illegal trade in pangolin.

Chair Hoover directed Gabon, the US, and Kenya to prepare an in-session document on agreed amendments.

On Monday, 26 August, the Secretariat introduced its document prepared with amendments from Gabon, Kenya, and the US. The Committee adopted the document, with minor editorial changes.

Outcome: In the decisions (CoP18 Com.II.16), the CoP directs:

- the Secretariat, subject to external funding, to work with relevant experts and the pangolin range states to prepare a report for review by the Animals Committee and Standing Committee on the national conservation status of pangolin species, legal and illegal trade in pangolins, stocks of specimens of pangolins and stockpile management, and enforcement issues; and
- the SC to report the results of its work together with any recommendations it may have, to CoP19.

African lion (*Panthera leo*) and Conservation of and trade in African lions: On Sunday, 18 August, in Committee I, the Secretariat introduced CoP18 Doc.76.1 (Rev.1) and the associated draft decisions (Annex 1) addressing cooperation among African lion range states.

The US, EU, Benin, and South Africa supported the draft decisions. The EU proposed introducing specific time frames to guide Secretariat activities, and requesting Secretariat consultation with the SC. Benin, Kenya, Mali, and Niger emphasized the urgent need for action, given declining lion populations in West Africa.

Mexico, supported by China, the EU, Kenya, and Israel, recommended the establishment of a task force to address problems relating to big cats everywhere.

Togo, with Niger, introduced CoP18 Doc.76.2. Niger stated that there is an emerging trade in bones and thus there is a need for a separate resolution. Nigeria echoed these statements and emphasized a prior EU statement on the need for time bound targets so the populations do not further decline. Botswana, Tanzania, and the EU noted that there should not be a separate resolution since the decision in CoP18 Doc.76.1 was comprehensive enough to cover the issues. South Africa concurred and noted it seemed to single out the captive lion programme in his country, and thus this document should not be discussed in the working group.

Committee I Chair Hay summarized proposals from the discussion and established a working group, chaired by Switzerland, to address the concerns and further develop the draft decisions contained in Annex 1 of CoP18 Doc.76.2.

On Tuesday, 20 August, Switzerland reported back to Committee I that the working group had revised the text (CoP18 Com.I.1) to: reflect the responsibility of the SC on this matter, and ensure that regional concerns would be addressed in a big cats task force. He noted that the group did not reach a clear consensus about whether a resolution on lions would be needed at present, and therefore recommended postponing the decision until the work of the task force provides more complete information. The Committee accepted the draft decisions in the document.

Outcome: In the decisions (CoP18 Com.I.1), the CoP directs the Secretariat to:

- draft terms of reference and a modus operandi for the CITES Big Cat Task Force prior to convening its first meeting and submit it to SC73 for review and adoption, and
- subject to external resources, to convene, in consultation with the SC, a CITES Big Cats Task Force focusing on big cat species from Africa, Asia, and Latin America, and consisting of representatives from parties most affected by the illegal trade in big cats, the ICCWC and partner organizations, and experts who the Secretariat determines may contribute to the Task Force.

The CoP also directs: the SC to review and adopt the draft terms of reference, membership and modus operandi for the CITES Big Cat Task Force; and parties to help identify lion specimens in trade and when importing lion specimens from South Africa.

Jaguar (*Panthera onca*): On Monday, 26 August, in Committee II, Costa Rica introduced CoP18 Doc.77.1 (Rev.1), noting increased international demand for teeth, skin, and bones through illegal trade, and urging the Committee to adopt three related decisions to map the illegal trade in jaguar, including poaching, trade pathways, and main markets driving the trade. Peru, the US, Bolivia, Brazil, and others supported the draft decisions. The US proposed additional text extending the scope of the study to also examine how the jaguar trade is connected to other wildlife trafficking in the region.

The Committee agreed to the proposal, incorporating text proposed by the US.

On Tuesday, 27 August, in plenary, Committee II Chair Hoover clarified that one document on jaguar was withdrawn (CoP18 Doc.77.2).

Outcome: In the decisions (CoP18 Doc.77.1 (Rev.1)), the CoP directs:

- the Secretariat, subject to the availability of external funding, to commission a study on illegal trade in jaguars to map illegal trade in the jaguar throughout its range and how that is connected to wildlife trafficking in the region; and
- the parties to recognize the jaguar as the flagship species of its range countries so that the protection and conservation of the species and its habitat becomes a joint priority.

Illegal trade in Tibetan antelope (*Pantholops hodgsonii*): On Sunday, 25 August, in Committee II, the SC representative introduced the document (CoP18 Doc.78), which reports that the conservation status of Tibetan antelope has improved, and proposes to amend Resolution Conf. 11.8 (Rev. CoP17) to remove the requirement to report back on enforcement measures at every CoP. The US, opposed by China, supported the proposal to amend the resolution. Switzerland agreed that “in principle” it was unnecessary to report at every CoP, and noted that collaboration

and information exchange is still needed, as many aspects of the illegal trade remain unclear. Committee II and the CoP noted the SC document.

Songbird trade and conservation management

(Passeriformes): On Tuesday, 20 August, in Committee I, the US introduced CoP18 Doc.79. Benin, with Senegal and Ukraine, strongly supported this document and the proposed workshop. Guyana and Benin stated that they would consider an Appendix III listing for some species. Bird Life International expressed its support for this study and workshop.

Committee I Chair formed a working group, chaired by the EU.

On Monday, 26 August, the EU introduced revised draft decisions, which the Committee adopted.

Outcome: In the decisions (CoP18 Com I.3), the CoP directs the Secretariat within 12 months to commission a study on the scale and scope of the songbird trade and establish a review process through the AC and the SC, with each providing recommendations to the CoP, as appropriate.

African cherry (*Prunus africana*): On Tuesday, 20 August, in Committee I, the PC Chair presented CoP18 Doc.80 and stated that specific funding has not been secured for the proposed workshop but that the work could be incorporated into a regional meeting in Africa.

The EU, as a main importer of African cherry bark, stated his support for this document and continued work on data collection for more sustainable management of the species.

Committee I accepted the draft decisions.

Outcome: In the decisions (CoP18 Doc.80), the CoP directs the PC to review the recommendations from the *Prunus africana*-related discussions within the CITES Tree Species Programme Regional Meeting for Africa for consideration and advice to the range states.

African grey parrots (*Psittacus erithacus*): On Sunday, 25 August, in Committee II, South Africa introduced CoP18 Doc.81. The US voiced support for this document and the amendments put forward by South Africa and supported, along with the EU and the Parrot Breeders Association of Southern Africa, the extension of Decision 17.258 until CoP19. The EU proposed language referring to internationally agreed guidelines for reintroduction and noted reservations taken by the DRC on this species. Nigeria, Gabon, and Ghana supported the EU. The Wildlife Conservation Society, on behalf of multiple NGOs, strongly urged parties with reservations to remove them, noting extension is not necessary as there has been ample time for implementation.

Committee II agreed to the document, as amended.

On Tuesday, 27 August, in plenary, Angola's request to reopen discussion was rejected as no party seconded their request.

Outcome: The draft decisions (CoP18 Doc.81) direct range states to undertake a scientifically-based field survey to establish the population status and review progress made towards the restoration and conservation of the species.

Banggai cardinalfish (*Pterapogon kauderni*): On Monday, 19 August, in Committee I, the AC Chair introduced CoP18 Doc.82 and outlined the conservation and management measures Indonesia has undertaken for the species.

The Chair, as the EU suggested, convened a small drafting group to develop agreed language.

On Monday, 26 August, following consultations among the US, Indonesia, and the EU, Committee I accepted the draft decisions.

Outcome: In the decisions (CoP18 Com.I.4), the CoP directs Indonesia to continue conservation efforts and submit a progress report for review by the AC.

Rhinoceroses (*Rhinocerotidae* spp.): Report of the SC and the Secretariat: On Wednesday, 21 August, in Committee II, the Secretariat introduced CoP18 Doc.83.1 and draft decisions, highlighting that the annual number of rhino poached in Africa has been declining since 2015, and that the decline appears to have continued into 2018. However, TRAFFIC noted that the demand remains high as the percentage of horns seized in Africa has almost doubled since CoP17, from 4.5% to 8.9%, while the percentage of horns seized outside of Africa has remained at similar levels, 5.8% and 5.5%, respectively.

The EU expressed alarm at the rate of illegal trafficking and proposed some amendments to the draft decisions. South Africa supported the draft decisions. Mozambique, Viet Nam, and Zimbabwe expressed support for the document. The US supported the document and proposed a new draft decision to be added.

The EU and eSwatini, supported by South Africa, Namibia, and Tanzania, proposed further amendments.

China objected to its categorization as a "priority country of concern."

The Chair requested an in-session document incorporating revisions proposed by China, eSwatini, the EU, and US.

On Monday, 26 August, the Chair invited comments on the document as revised by the working group. The US, supported by eSwatini, opposed deleting China's name from a list of countries encouraged to make every effort to strengthen investigation into organized crime networks across the illegal trade chain, stating that China is still "a country of concern." China explained its inclusion on the list had been due to a misreading of an IUCN-TRAFFIC report.

Committee II retained the mention of China on this list, and agreed to change a request to the Secretariat to report to the SC by October 2021, with a reference to reporting back "in time for the SC."

The Committee adopted the report with these amendments.

Outcome: In the decisions (CoP18 Com.II.12), the CoP directs:

- parties to ensure the timely reporting of seizures and submission of DNA samples to range states, and continuously review trends associated with the illegal killing of rhinoceroses and illegal trade in rhinoceros specimens, and report to the Secretariat by October 2021; and
- China, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, South Africa, and Vietnam to make every effort to pursue the initiation of joint investigations and operations aimed at addressing members of organized crime networks across the entire illegal trade chain, and to report to the Secretariat by October 2021.

Revisions to Resolution Conf. 9.14 (Rev. CoP17) on Conservation of and trade in African and Asian rhinoceroses and associated decisions: On Wednesday, 21 August, in Committee II, Kenya introduced CoP18 Doc.83.2. The US, Botswana, eSwatini, the EU, Japan, and others opposed the document, considering that many of the proposed revisions were covered by existing CITES provisions. The US noted that they shared Kenya's concerns regarding domestic markets for trade in rhino horn and proposed a draft decision. South Africa expressed support and proposed a minor amendment to include reference to illegal trade.

Committee II accepted the document including the draft decision proposed by the US, with the amendment suggested by South Africa.

Outcome: In the decisions (CoP18 Doc.83.2), the CoP directs parties, where illegal markets for rhino horn exist, to develop demand reduction programmes targeted at key identified audiences, taking advantage of the experience and expertise developed in other jurisdictions and by other organizations.

Helmeted hornbill (*Rhinoplax vigil*): On Tuesday, 20 August, in Committee I, Indonesia introduced CoP18 Doc.84 and recommended adopting the decision to implement the 10-year Conservation Plan and Action Strategy, noting that external funding for the Secretariat had not been made available for this work.

Malaysia requested all parties to adopt legislation and controls to eliminate poaching of helmeted hornbill and trade in parts, calling on consumer states especially to monitor markets and take enforcement action as needed. China expressed willingness to cooperate with range states, and to seek return of seized hornbill. The US welcomed Malaysia's proposal.

Committee I established a working group, chaired by the US, to review the proposed amendments to decisions in Annex 1 of the document, and to Resolution Conf. 17.11 on conservation of, and trade in, helmeted hornbill, taking account of Malaysia's suggestions.

On Monday, 26 August, the US introduced revised draft decisions, which the Committee accepted.

Outcome: In the decisions (CoP18 Com.I.12), the CoP directs:

- parties, especially range, transit, and consumer states, to provide information to the Secretariat on their implementation of Resolution Conf. 17.11; and
- the Secretariat, subject to the availability of external funding, assist relevant parties in their implementation of Resolution Conf. 17.11.

Tortoises and freshwater turtles (*Testudines spp.*): On Thursday, 22 August, in Committee II, the Secretariat introduced CoP18 Doc.88 noting that the proposed guide on categories of turtle parts and derivatives in trade had not been completed.

The US noted the guide would provide continued support for implementation and would help address illegal trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles.

Committee II agreed to the document and draft decisions.

Outcome: The decisions (CoP18 Doc.88), *inter alia*, direct the Secretariat, subject to available funding, to contract consultants to develop, in collaboration with relevant parties, experts and the ICCWC, a guide on categories of turtle parts and derivatives in trade.

Totoaba (*Totoaba macdonaldi*): On Monday, 26 August, in Committee II, CITES Secretary-General Higuero introduced CoP18 Doc.89 (Rev.1).

Mexico outlined its activities to conserve the species and stop illegal shipments of totoaba swim bladders, in cooperation with the US and China, and proposed hosting a second trilateral meeting to promote cooperation. She also highlighted activities to protect and enable the recovery of vaquita, including a permanent ban on fishing with gillnets. She supported the draft decisions with some amendments, including providing semi-annual rather than monthly updates to the Secretariat.

The US opposed a proposal to conduct a study on vaquita and totoaba, expressing concern that investing in a study will divert efforts and funds to take steps that are already needed. She also proposed holding, before the end of 2019, a meeting of range, transit, and consumer states of totoaba, and fully funding and expanding gillnet removal efforts to maintain the vaquita refuge area as a net-free zone. The Committee established a small drafting group to finalize text. Mexico objected to a mention of "compliance measures" that the SC may adopt if unsatisfied with progress, noting that such a deletion would still leave it open to the SC to adopt any measures it chooses.

The Committee adopted the text as amended.

Outcome: The decisions (CoP18 Doc.89 (Rev.1)), direct, *inter alia*:

- parties to communicate to the Secretariat and the CITES Authorities information on seizures of specimens of totoaba, arrests of those engaged in illegal trade, results of any prosecutions, and actions taken to implement this decision;
- Mexico to take immediate and effective actions by 1 November 2019 in response to the threats to totoaba and vaquita posed by illegal trade; and
- the Secretariat, subject to external resources, to convene before the end of 2019 a meeting of range, transit, and consumer states of totoaba, and selected stakeholders, to agree on urgent actions to combat illegal fishing of totoaba, eliminate supply and demand for illegally-sourced specimens of totoaba, and strengthen law enforcement measures to prevent and address their illegal trade.

Black Sea Bottlenose Dolphin (*Tursiops Truncatus Ponticus*): On Tuesday, 20 August, in Committee I, the AC Chair presented CoP18 Doc.90, which provides an update on implementation of CoP17 decisions regarding the use of genetic analysis by parties to confirm the origin of dolphin species prior to issuing export permits. He recommended adoption of the draft decision, which directs the CITES Secretariat to continue its collaboration with the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic area (ACCOBAMS) for effective conservation of CITES-listed species of cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea in the context of, and in accordance with, Resolution Conf. 13.3 on Cooperation and Synergy with CMS.

The US, Ukraine, Russian Federation, and Canada supported the document, with Canada requesting minor amendments to specify a time frame for reporting back to CoP19.

Committee I accepted the document.

Outcome: In the decision (CoP18 Doc.90), the CoP directs the Secretariat to continue its collaboration with ACCOBAMS in the context of the cooperation with CMS.

Conservation of vicuña (*Vicugna vicugna*) and trade in its fibre and products: On Thursday, 22 August, in Committee II, Argentina introduced CoP18 Doc.91 with some proposed changes aimed at establishing more effective synergies between CITES and the Convention for the Conservation and Management of Vicuña to regulate and control the trade in vicuña fibre and prevent its illegal trade.

The US noted that it does not have the resources to track stocks of vicuña wool and products. She provided some amendments inviting parties that trade in vicuña fiber to take enforcement measures and dispose of illegally traded and confiscated specimens in accordance with Resolution Conf. 17.8 on disposal of illegally traded and confiscated specimens of CITES-listed species.

Committee II accepted the draft resolution as amended.

Outcome: The amended resolution (CoP18 Doc.91), includes text inviting parties trading in vicuña fibre to take appropriate measures against illegal trade in the fibre, and to dispose of illegally traded and confiscated specimens, in accordance with Resolution Conf. 17.8.

Appendix I-listed species: On Tuesday, 20 August, in Committee I, the AC Chair introduced CoP18 Doc.92 and explained that no external funding had been secured for this work.

The US, China, and Peru supported the draft decision, and the US suggested criteria to narrow the list of species that would be assessed, focusing on species that are traded in high volumes.

Committee I agreed to the draft decision.

Outcome: The decisions (CoP18 Doc.92) direct the Secretariat to contract consultants to conduct a rapid assessment of the conservation status of, and legal and illegal trade in, species included in Appendix I.

Neotropical tree species: On Tuesday, 20 August, in Committee I, the PC Chair introduced CoP18 Doc.93, stating that the Secretariat has submitted proposed text for the mandate of this working group to continue its work. Committee I agreed to the document.

Outcome: The decisions (CoP18 Doc.93), *inter alia*, direct the PC to agree on a priority list of CITES-listed neotropical tree species, and decide on associated activities that will most significantly contribute to the implementation of the mandates in resolutions relating to neotropical tree species.

Conservation management of and trade in marine ornamental fishes: On Monday, 19 August, in Committee I, Switzerland presented CoP18 Doc.94, noting the sharp increase in trade in ornamental fishes, which now amounts to an estimated 1.5 billion marine and freshwater ornamental fishes traded annually. He added that more data is needed on, *inter alia*, exports, species traded, and conservation impacts of this trade.

Canada, although supporting the document, expressed concern about the growing workload. The EU responded to concerns noting that not enough is known about the trade impacts, and thus a study is needed to inform trade regulation and possible future listings of marine ornamental fish.

Committee I agreed to the draft decisions.

Outcome: The decisions (CoP18 Doc.94) include directing the Secretariat to convene a technical workshop to consider the conservation priorities and management needs related to the trade in marine ornamental fishes worldwide with a particular focus on data from importing and exporting countries.

Guidance materials, activities, and tools aimed at enhancing parties' capacity to regulate bushmeat trade: On Monday, 19 August, in Committee II, the Secretariat introduced CoP18 Doc.95. He noted that the Central African Bushmeat Working Group is no longer operational, as confirmed by Cameroon. The EU, Norway, China, and the CBD welcomed the adoption of the term "wild meat." The US emphasized that the issue of bushmeat emerged in CITES as a result of concern over international commercial demand driving illegal and unsustainable harvest, and did not want this origin to be lost in the change of wording.

Committee II accepted changes to Resolution Conf. 13.11 (Rev. CoP17), as amended by the EU.

Outcome: The amendments to the resolution (CoP18 Doc.95) include making use of the voluntary guidance for a sustainable wild meat sector in the tropics and subtropics.

African Carnivores Initiative (ACI): On Sunday, 18 August, in Committee I, the Secretariat presented the document on the African Carnivores Initiative (ACI) (CoP18 Doc.96), describing the planned joint work between CITES and CMS on four African carnivore species: lion, leopard, cheetah, and wild dog. CMS spoke in support of this joint work and highlighted its upcoming Conference of the Parties in India as well as plans for a new position to support the ACI.

The US raised questions about possible overlap between the ACI and the Big Cats Task Force proposed in document CoP18 Doc.76.1 (Rev. 1), as well as the involvement of the SC. The EU, supporting the ACI, added that the draft decisions could be better supported by a resolution. The Secretariat responded that there are potential plans for a CMS or CITES resolution on ACI work

in the future. Zimbabwe, Mali, Togo, and others supported the creation of the ACI and emphasized the importance of funding for implementation and capacity building.

The Secretariat recommended that the CoP adopt the draft decisions on the Joint CITES-CMS ACI.

Committee I agreed to the six draft decisions with the amendments proposed by the US, including the reference to submit the draft Programme of Work (PoW) to the SC for its review and appropriate revision.

Outcome: In the decisions (CoP18 Doc.96), the CoP, *inter alia*, directs:

- the Secretariat to include the ACI in its proposals for the new CMS-CITES joint work programme for the period 2021-2025; and develop a dedicated PoW for the Joint CITES-CMS ACI; and
- the SC to review the draft PoW submitted by the Secretariat and make appropriate recommendations or revisions and formulate guidance and recommendations, as appropriate, to range states and the Secretariat.

West African vulture trade and conservation management: On Tuesday, 20 August, in Committee I, Burkina Faso introduced CoP18 Doc.97. He outlined the factors contributing to the serious decline of populations, in particular, sentinel poisoning associated with illegal poaching activities. He highlighted the aim of increasing cooperation between CITES and CMS, noting the Multi-species Action Plan to Conserve African-Eurasian Vultures under CMS.

Senegal and Niger called on parties to support the document, noting that vultures have disappeared completely from some areas. Benin, Nigeria, Canada, Côte d'Ivoire, and the EU supported the document. Canada noted that illegal trade issues are more generally addressed in the agenda item on enforcement issues, and thus do not need to be addressed in this document. She also supported considering vultures as a case study in the proposed NDF workshop. The US supported the draft, with some amendments, including retaining the decision directing the AC to establish a working group on biological and trade issues highlighted in the CMS Action Plan, including trade in vulture parts, and sentinel poisoning by poachers.

Committee I accepted the document.

Outcome: The decision (CoP18 Doc.97) directs the AC to establish a working group to address key gaps in knowledge as it relates to the biological and trade issues highlighted in the CMS Action Plan.

Maintenance of the Appendices

Reservations with respect to amendments to Appendices I and II: The Secretariat introduced CoP18 Doc.98, which proposes amendments to Resolution Conf. 4.25 (Rev. CoP14), requesting depository governments not to accept reservations entered after the 90-day deadline, and agrees that the withdrawal of a reservation becomes operational on the date of the depository's notification to parties, unless a later date has been set by the party withdrawing the reservation. The EU, the US, Guyana, and others welcomed the proposal, noting that late notifications generate uncertainty and reduce the effectiveness of the Convention, potentially introducing loopholes for illegal trade.

The Committee accepted the document, with minor amendments from the US.

Outcome: The CoP adopted the amendment to Resolution Conf. 4.25 (Rev. CoP14) on reservations (CoP18 Doc.98).

Standard nomenclature: On Tuesday, 20 August, in Committee I, the UK introduced CoP18 Doc.99 and outlined the proposed decisions, including to develop an annotated CITES Checklist of Dalbergia.

Committee I continued the discussion on Wednesday, 21 August. The US expressed support for the draft decisions, and requested that historical references, when changed, are not “deleted from our memory” so that search can still be conducted.

Committee I accepted the draft decisions with the proposed changes.

Outcome: The CoP adopted the proposed revisions (CoP18 Doc.99) to the annex of Resolution Conf. 12.11 (Rev. CoP17) on standard nomenclature.

Inclusion of species in Appendix III: On Thursday, 22 August, in Committee II, the Secretariat introduced CoP18 Doc.100, inviting parties to adopt proposed draft revisions to Resolution Conf. 9.25 (Rev.CoP17) and associated draft decisions.

Several parties provided amendments on preambular language.

Committee II accepted the draft decision in Annex 1 with amendments by Canada and the US, and the draft resolution with additions by Canada and the EU.

Outcome: The CoP adopted the draft decisions (CoP18 Doc.100) and revised Resolution Conf. 9.25 (Rev.CoP17).

Annotations: On Thursday, 22 August, in Committee II, the SC introduced CoP18 Doc.101 on, *inter alia*, procedures for crafting annotations and developing recommendations for their improvement. She proposed amendments to Resolution Conf. 11.21 (Rev. CoP17) on use of annotations in Appendix I and II, and new draft decisions. Canada, the US, and the Republic of Korea proposed changes to new draft decisions.

Outcome: In the decisions (CoP18 Com.II.13 (Rev.1)), the CoP directs the SC to re-establish the working group on annotation and develop or refine definitions of terms used in current annotations.

Annotations for Appendix-II orchids: On Thursday, 22 August, in Committee II, the PC Chair introduced CoP18 Doc.102, focused on the conservation impacts of orchid exemptions.

Committee II accepted the proposed amendments.

Outcome: The CoP adopted the proposed change of the title of the draft decisions to “Products containing specimens of Appendix II orchids” (CoP18 Doc.102).

Guidance for the publication of the appendices: On Sunday, 25 August, in Committee II, Canada presented CoP18 Doc.103, noting that it provides guidelines for publications of the appendices to provide clarity, which also helps parties that have requirements to include the appendices into national legislation. The US suggested draft decisions directed to the PC and AC to review the draft guidance, provide comments, and make recommendations to the SC.

Committee II agreed to the document, as amended.

Outcome: The draft decisions (CoP19 Doc.103) include directing the Secretariat to develop guidance for improved clarity and predictability in the presentation of the appendices.

Review of Resolution Conf. 10.9 on consideration of proposals for the transfer of African elephant populations from Appendix I to Appendix II: On Tuesday, 20 August, in Committee I, Germany introduced CoP18 Doc.104. He conveyed the Working Group on Resolution Conf. 10.9’s recommendation that Resolution Conf. 10.9 was no longer necessary, as Resolution Conf. 9.42 (Rev. CoP17), on Criteria for amendment of Appendices I and II, provided enough direction on the issue.

China, the US, and Botswana supported the recommendation, with China noting the need to deal directly with specific elephant populations rather than at the species level.

Committee I agreed.

Outcome: The CoP agreed to repeal Resolution Conf. 10.9 on consideration of proposals for the transfer of African elephant populations from Appendix I to Appendix II (CoP18 Doc.104).

Proposals to Amend the Appendices

Proposals to amend the appendices (CITES CoP18 Doc.105) were discussed on 21, 22, 24, and 25 August in Committee I; and on 27 and 28 August in plenary.

Heptner’s markhor: This proposal was withdrawn (CITES CoP18 Prop.1).

Saiga antelope (*Saiga spp.*): On Thursday, 22 August, the SC Chair introduced the document on saiga antelope (CoP18 Doc.86), stating that it includes work programme results based on collaboration between CITES, CMS, and range states on the illegal trade in saiga species and strengthening cross border law enforcement. The US noted that her delegation is still concerned about stockpiles and their management, and thus proposed amended language to encourage range states to establish controls on stockpiles and report information on this document to the SC and AC.

Committee I and the CoP agreed on the document as amended, directing, *inter alia*, range states to establish controls on stockpiles and report information to the SC and AC.

Outcome: In the decisions (CoP18 Doc.86), the CoP directs:

- the range states and important consumer and trading countries of saiga parts and derivatives, to fully implement the measures directed to them in the Medium-Term International Work Programme for the Saiga Antelope for 2016-2020 and for 2021-2025, developed to support the memorandum of understanding concerning Conservation, Restoration and Sustainable Use of the Saiga Antelope and its Saiga Action Plan; and establish internal market controls for saiga parts, including registration of stockpiles, labelling of parts and products, and registration of manufacturers and traders, and report such information to the CITES Secretariat; and
- the AC to consider any findings and recommendations submitted by the Secretariat and make recommendations to the SC.

Saiga proposal: On Thursday, 22 August, Mongolia introduced the proposal to transfer Saiga antelope (*Saiga tatarica*) from Appendix II to Appendix I (CoP18 Prop.2). She noted that Mongolia wished to list all species of saiga to avoid creating a major loophole in trade. The US supported Mongolia to ensure that commercial trade will not lead to further declines. The US clarified the confusion over the taxonomy in the proposal as it originally referred to the IUCN taxonomy, and under Rule 24.2 requested to amend the proposal to make it more precise by including both *S. tatarica* and *S. borealis*.

The Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, the EU, and China opposed the proposal if it were to include all populations of saiga, and some mentioned growing numbers of the species in some regions and national moratoria on hunting. Bahrain, Côte d’Ivoire, Guatemala, and Qatar supported the proposal.

The US reiterated that the co-proponents would not be amenable to a split-listing, as this would hinder enforcement. She therefore proposed amending the scope as per Rule 24.2 to include an annotation stating that a “zero export quota is established for wild specimens traded for commercial purposes.”

She said this will ensure wild specimens are not internationally traded, giving the populations a chance to recover and time to study the mass die-offs.

South Africa opposed this amendment, stating that CITES is not the correct tool for strategies for this species. The Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, the EU, and Uzbekistan supported this proposed amendment of an annotation with a zero-export quota on all saiga species. Senegal, Israel, and Afghanistan offered support.

Committee I agreed to the proposal by consensus as amended with a zero-export quota on all saiga species.

Outcome: The CoP adopted CoP18 Prop.2, as amended.

Vicuña (*Vicugna vicugna*): On Thursday, 22 August, Argentina introduced the proposal (CoP18 Prop.3) to transfer the vicuña population of the Province of Salta, Argentina, from Appendix I to Appendix II with annotation #1, highlighting successful national conservation and management measures, and the need to enable trade in traditional craft products from vicuña fiber. Peru, the US, Cuba, Japan, and others supported the proposal, with Cuba noting the case of vicuña demonstrates the possibility of sustainable use of a wild species by local communities.

Chile introduced its proposal (CoP18 Prop.4) to amend the name of the population of Chile from “population of the Primera Región” to “populations of the region of Tarapacá and of the region of Arica and Parinacota.” He explained the proposal would not change the scope of the current listing, and simply recognizes an administrative change in the name of the region mentioned. The Committee accepted the proposal by consensus.

Outcome: The CoP adopted CoP18 Prop.3 and 4, as amended.

Giraffe (*Giraffa Camelopardalis*): Chad introduced the proposal (CoP18 Prop.5), co-sponsored by the Central African Republic, Kenya, Mali, Niger, and Senegal. Explaining the proposal for listing in Appendix II, he noted the 40% decline in populations over 30 years, the “critically endangered” status of some giraffe sub-species, and evidence of increased international demand for giraffe parts and derivatives, including through online trade. The Central African Republic’s giraffe specialist noted that the legal trade is likely providing cover for trade in giraffe populations that are under threat of extinction. New Zealand and the US also supported the proposal.

Botswana, with several southern African countries, opposed the proposal, arguing that populations are stable in many countries, and countering the claim that international trade is affecting their numbers. He proposed that specific populations should be excluded from the listing, namely, in the range countries of Botswana, eSwatini, Namibia, Mozambique, Somalia, South Africa, Tanzania, and others. Chad, with other proponents of the proposal, rejected the possibility of a split-listing. Kenya noted that an Appendix II listing would allow for monitoring measures, and would not prevent trade from taking place.

Committee I proceeded to vote, with 106 in favor and 21 against the Appendix II listing for giraffes. Tanzania expressed disappointment that the decision failed to recognize some countries’ conservation achievements, ignoring the views of range states that have more than 70% of the world’s giraffe population.

Outcome: The CoP adopted CoP18 Prop.5.

Small-Clawed Otter: On Sunday, 25 August, the Philippines introduced CoP18 Prop.6 to transfer small-clawed otters (*Aonyx cinereus*) from Appendix II to Appendix I, including a minor clarifying amendment to the nomenclature (*Aonyx cinerea*). Noting growing population decline exacerbated by illegal trade in wild specimens, she suggested that an Appendix I listing would

provide further legal instruments for pet trade in countries where the species is not endemic.

Indonesia opposed this proposal, arguing that the small-clawed otter does not meet the criteria for an Appendix I listing and proposed an amendment to the proposal to add a zero export quota for wild specimens for commercial purposes to the current Appendix II listing, as well as the establishment of a working group on the conservation of small-clawed otter. The Chair suspended discussion to allow for consultation between Indonesia and the proponents.

On Monday, 26 August, the Philippines and co-proponents India and Nepal indicated that they were not able to reach consensus and requested a vote.

The Committee voted to reject Indonesia’s proposed amendment with 30 in favor and 79 against. Committee I voted to accept the original proposal, with 96 in favor and 16 against.

On Tuesday, 27 August, Indonesia expressed concern that implementing the otter and Tokay gecko listings will require national processes that will involve time and resources, with up to 18 months required to implement the decision.

Outcome: The CoP adopted CoP18 Prop.6.

Smooth-Coated Otter: On Sunday, 25 August, India introduced the proposal to transfer smooth-coated otter (*Lutrogale perspicillata*) from Appendix II to Appendix I (CoP18 Prop.7), highlighting the emerging threat posed by the international pet trade. Co-proponents Bangladesh and Nepal, as well as, Singapore, Sri Lanka, the EU and others, supported the proposal.

Indonesia expressed its opposition, questioning whether the proponents had made sufficient use of CITES review mechanisms and argued that international trade data suggests a low level of trade in wild specimens.

Committee I voted to adopt the proposal, with 102 in favor and 15 against.

Outcome: The CoP adopted CoP18 Prop.7.

Southern white rhinoceros: On Sunday, 25 August, eSwatini introduced the proposal to remove the existing annotation on the Appendix II listing of eSwatini’s southern white rhino (*Ceratotherium simum simum*) population (CoP18 Prop.8), permitting the regulated legal trade in eSwatini’s white rhinos, their products including horn, and derivatives.

Nigeria and Kenya opposed the proposal. The EU, opposing, noted that the proposal would undermine demand reduction strategies. Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Japan supported the proposal, noting it aims to support the conservation of the species.

eSwatini requested a secret ballot and Committee I rejected the proposal, with 25 in favor and 102 against.

Outcome: The CoP rejected CoP18 Prop.8.

Southern white rhinoceros: On Sunday, 25 August, Namibia introduced its proposal to transfer the Namibian southern white rhinoceros (*Ceratotherium simum simum*) population from Appendix I to Appendix II (CoP18 Prop.9), with an annotation limiting trade to live animals and hunting trophies, with all other specimens to be considered as Appendix I. DRC, South Africa, Botswana, Japan, and others expressed support for this proposal, highlighting the need to offset the high costs associated with rhino conservation.

Benin and Kenya expressed their opposition, stressing that the population of Namibian southern white rhinoceros does meet the criteria for inclusion in Appendix I and noted that trophy hunting and trade in live animals is already allowed under Appendix I.

By secret ballot, Committee I rejected the proposal, with 39 in favor and 82 against.

Outcome: The CoP rejected the proposal (CoP18 Prop.9).

African elephant: On Thursday, 22 August, Zambia presented the proposal (CoP18 Prop.10) to transfer its elephant (*Loxodonta africana*) population from Appendix I to Appendix II, allowing trade in ivory only for parties who will not re-export. He stated this was for the benefit of conservation and local communities. Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Botswana supported the proposal stating that the population met the requirements for Appendix II. Nigeria, Gabon, Kenya, and Ethiopia opposed the document stating that this will lead to an increased trade in ivory. Japan added that they could support this proposal if the stocks sold were only government-registered stocks and if the funds were used exclusively for elephant and community conservation programmes. Zambia proposed an annotation limiting the trade only to non-commercial hunting trophies and hides from elephants controlled as a result of human elephant conflict, ivory, and all other specimens remaining subject to Appendix I requirements. He then requested a vote by secret ballot, which was rejected as it did not secure the votes required.

The Chair then moved to a vote, which Zambia challenged, as he preferred the debate to continue on the proposed amendment. The Committee then voted whether to reopen debate, which failed, not receiving a two thirds majority. Committee I then voted on the proposal, which was rejected with 22 in favor and 102 against.

Outcome: The CoP rejected CoP18 Prop.10.

African elephant (*Loxodonta africana*): On Thursday, 22 August, in Committee I, Botswana introduced its proposal (CoP18 Prop.11) to amend annotation #2 for the populations of Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe to allow for two “one-off” sales of raw ivory from government-owned stocks. He stated that the countries had waited patiently for the nine-year ban on new proposals to end, and further that these sales will benefit communities and conservation efforts.

Gabon and the EU opposed, stating that this could lead to an increase in poaching for ivory. eSwatini argued it would benefit long-term sustainable conservation of wildlife as well as local communities. Botswana called for a vote.

Committee II rejected the proposal by secret ballot, with 101 against and 23 in support. The US and the EU noted they had opposed the proposal. Antigua and Barbuda expressed support for the proposal.

Outcome: The CoP rejected CoP18 Prop.11.

African elephant: On Thursday, 22 August, in Committee I, Gabon introduced the proposal (CoP18 Prop.12) to include all African elephant (*L. Africana*) populations in Appendix I, a step that would mean transferring the listing of the elephant populations of Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe from Appendix II to Appendix I. He noted the proposal was a response to a crisis of poaching, and was supported by 32 countries.

The EU stated that the populations of African elephants in Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe do not meet the criteria for inclusion in Appendix I, and furthermore that the views of range states should be taken into account. South Africa expressed deep concern that the listing would hamper current conservation efforts, noting that elephant populations have increased in the countries concerned.

Committee II voted on the proposal, which was not accepted, with 51 in favor and 67 against.

Outcome: The CoP rejected CoP18 Prop.11.

Woolly mammoth: On Sunday, 25 August, Israel introduced the proposal to include the woolly mammoth (*Mammuthus primigenius*) in Appendix II (CoP18 Prop.13), highlighting that

trade in mammoth ivory provides a cover for illegal trade in elephant ivory.

Gabon and Ethiopia expressed support. The Russian Federation, as a range state, opposed the proposal, noting that the Convention strictly regulates species threatened with extinction, not extinct species, and that tools are available to distinguish the two. Canada, the EU, and the US opposed the proposal, noting that there is no evidence on the scale of the problem.

In absence of consensus, Israel proposed to reduce the scope by including only woolly mammoth carvings in the proposal. The Secretariat objected to that as well, noting that the Convention does not provide for the inclusion of extinct species.

On Monday, 26 August, Israel announced that it would withdraw the original listing proposal and proposed instead two draft decisions, including a proposal to commission a study, subject to external funding, on trade in mammoth ivory and its role in illegal trade in ivory. The Russian Federation and Canada expressed differing opinions for the record.

Committee I adopted the draft decisions.

Outcome: CoP18 Prop.13 was withdrawn, but the CoP agreed to the draft decisions related to mammoth ivory.

Greater stick-nest rat, Shark bay mouse, False swamp rat, and Central Rock Rat: On Sunday 25 August, Australia introduced proposals to transfer from Appendix I to II the Greater stick-nest rat (*Leporillus conditor*), Shark bay mouse (*Pseudomys fieldi praeconis*), False swamp rat (*Xeromys myoides*) and Central rock rat (*Zyromys pedunculatus*) (CITES CoP18 Props.14-17).

Committee I adopted the proposals.

Outcome: The CoP adopted CoP18 Props.14-17 by consensus.

Reeves's pheasant: On Monday, 26 August, China introduced the proposal to include Reeves's pheasant (*Symaticus reevesii*) in Appendix II (CoP18 Prop.18), highlighting that despite strict domestic regulation, wild populations are still declining due to threats such as poaching and smuggling.

Mali, India, and Qatar supported the proposal, while the US suggested an Appendix III listing would be more appropriate. The EU proposed to limit the scope of the listing to China's population, pointing to the large number of feral and captive specimens in EU member states. China opposed this suggestion, arguing that distinguishing between populations would be difficult, making management more challenging for range states.

Committee I adopted the proposal by consensus.

Outcome: The CoP adopted CoP18 Prop.18.

Black-crowned crane: On Monday, 26 August, Senegal introduced the proposal to transfer the black-crowned crane (*Balearica pavonina*) from Appendix II to I (CoP18 Prop.19), noting rapid decline due to habitat loss, domestication, and both legal and illegal trade.

Committee II adopted the proposal by consensus.

Outcome: The CoP adopted the CoP18 Prop.19.

Lesser rufous bristlebird and Long-billed bristlebird: On Monday, 26 August, Australia introduced proposals to transfer from Appendix I to II the lesser rufous bristlebird (*Dasyornis broadbenti litoralis*) and long-billed bristlebird (*Dasyornis longirostris*), noting the first is likely extinct and the latter endangered but is not found in trade, and suggesting that in keeping with the precautionary principle, both deserve protection.

Committee II accepted the proposals.

Outcome: The CoP adopted CoP18 Props.20 and 21.

American crocodile: On Monday, 26 August, Mexico introduced the proposal to transfer from Appendix I to Appendix II the American crocodile (*Crocodylus acutus*), including a zero quota for exports of wild specimens.

Canada, Cuba, and others expressed support for the proposal.

Committee II agreed to the proposal, as amended by Mexico.

Outcome: The CoP adopted CoP18 Prop.22 with an annotation to include “zero export quota for wild specimens for commercial purposes.”

Garden lizards, Horned lizards, Pygmy lizards, and Hump-nosed lizards: On Monday, 26 August, Sri Lanka introduced proposals to include in Appendix II with a zero quota the horned lizards (*Ceratophora* spp.) and in Appendix I the pygmy (*Cophotis ceylanica* and *C. dumbara*) and hump-nosed lizards (*Lyriocephalus scutatus*) (CoP18 Props.24-26). CoP18 Prop.23 to list garden lizards (*Calotes nigrilabris* and *C. pethiyagodai*) was withdrawn.

Fiji supported the proposals. The EU supported approaches on Proposals 24 and 25 but not on Proposal 26, noting that the biological criteria are not met, and suggested listing under Appendix II with a zero quota for exports of wild specimens for commercial purposes. Sri Lanka suggested adding “captive bred specimens” as well.

The US, supported by Sri Lanka, suggested draft decisions on Proposals 24 and 26 asking the AC to look at these species in the frame of the captive breeding decisions.

Committee II agreed to amended Proposals 24 (transfer to Appendix II with a zero quota for exports of wild specimens for commercial trade), 25 (transfer to Appendix I); and 26 (transfer to Appendix II with zero quota for exports of wild specimens for commercial trade).

On Proposal 24, the US proposed draft decisions asking the Secretariat to review trade in horned lizards.

The Committee agreed to the draft decisions.

Outcome: The CoP adopted CoP18 Props.24-26, as amended.

Leopard geckos, tiger geckos, and cave geckos: On Monday, 26 August, China introduced the proposal to include leopard gecko, tiger gecko, and cave gecko (*Goniurosaurus* spp.) populations of China and Vietnam in Appendix II (CoP18 Prop.27), highlighting the small number of wild individuals and the threat posed by the international pet trade. Co-proponents Vietnam and the EU, supported by India, noted that an Appendix II listing of all species would reduce challenges associated with split listings. Japan expressed support for the proposal but clarified that the species endemic to Japan would not be included in the listing. Canada suggested an amendment to the proposal to include a clarifying annotation concerning Japanese species. The EU opposed this amendment, pointing to an upcoming taxonomic revision. Following consultation with the nomenclature specialist and discussions with the EU and Canada, China proposed an annotation to clarify that the listing includes *Goniurosaurus* spp., “except the species native to Japan.”

Committee I adopted the proposal, as amended by China.

Outcome: The CoP adopted CoP18 Prop.27, as amended.

Tokay gecko: On Monday, 26 August, the EU introduced the proposal to include tokay gecko (*Gekko gecko*) in Appendix II (CoP18 Prop.28), highlighting the high levels of international trade and reports of local extinctions caused by over-collection. Co-proponents India and the Philippines supported the proposal, noting that a listing would help to monitor the impact of international trade of tokay geckos.

China, Vietnam, and Thailand opposed the proposal, arguing that the species does not meet the criteria for an Appendix II listing, given that it is common in many Asian range states and that captive breeding has been successful in meeting demand for the species. The US stressed that an Appendix II listing would still allow for sustainable and legal trade.

Committee I voted to adopt the proposal, with 103 in favor and 17 against.

Outcome: The CoP adopted CoP18 Prop.27, as amended.

Grenadines clawed gecko: On Monday, 26 August, St. Vincent and the Grenadines introduced the proposal to include in Appendix I the Grenadines clawed gecko (*Gonatodes daudini*) (CoP18 Prop.29), noting the acceleration of illegal collection, including through social networks in UK and Europe.

India, Cuba, and Japan supported the proposal. Brazil, on behalf of several Central and Latin America countries, also supported the proposal.

Committee I adopted the proposal by consensus.

Outcome: The CoP adopted CoP18 Prop.29.

Grandidier’s Madagascar ground gecko: On Monday, 26 August, Madagascar introduced the proposal to include in Appendix II Grandidier’s Madagascar gecko (*Paroedura androyensis*) (CoP18 Prop.30), highlighting habitat loss and demand from the international pet trade.

Senegal and Mali supported the proposal. South Africa, supporting, expressed concern over the number of reptile proposals coming from range countries, noting that appendix listings alone are not enough to protect them and that the role of social media platforms in exacerbating demand and illegal trade in these species needs to be better addressed.

Committee I adopted the proposal.

Outcome: The CoP adopted CoP18 Prop.30.

Spiny-tailed iguanas: On Monday, 26 August, Mexico introduced the proposal (CoP18 Prop.31) to include in Appendix II spiny-tailed iguanas (*Ctenosaura* spp), noting that imports to US quadrupled in 2018-19.

Mali, the US, and Chad supported the proposal.

Committee I adopted the proposal by consensus.

Outcome: The CoP adopted CoP18 Prop.31.

Spider-tailed horned viper: On Monday, 26 August, Iran introduced the proposal (CoP18 Prop.32) to include in Appendix II the spider-tailed horned viper (*Pseudocerastes urarachnoides*), highlighting the need to apply the precautionary approach and protect the species despite limited information on its biology and the extent of impact of illegal trade. He further stressed that some specimens have been illegally traded in Europe through social media platforms.

Committee I adopted the proposal by consensus.

Outcome: The CoP adopted CoP18 Prop.32.

Bourret’s box turtle, Indochinese box turtle, and Annam leaf turtle: On Monday, 26 August, Vietnam introduced proposals to transfer from Appendix II to I the Bourret’s box turtle (*Cuora bourreti*), Indochinese box turtle (*C. picturata*) and Annam leaf turtle (*Mauremys annamensis*) (CoP18 Proposals 33-35), noting demand from the international pet trade.

Committee I adopted the proposals by consensus.

Outcome: The CoP adopted CoP18 Props.33-35.

Star tortoise: On Monday, 26 August, India introduced the proposals to transfer from Appendix II to I the star tortoise (*Geochelone elegans*) (CoP18 Prop.36), citing low density and high exploitation.

Committee I adopted the proposal by consensus.

Outcome: The CoP adopted CoP18 Prop.36.

Pancake tortoise: On Monday, 26 August, Kenya introduced the proposal to transfer from Appendix II to I the pancake tortoise (*Malacochersus tornieri*) (CoP18 Prop.37), citing its critically endangered status.

Gabon supported the proposal. Tanzania opposed it, noting it would not help conservation.

In absence of consensus, Committee I voted on the proposal and accepted it, with 105 in favor and 10 against.

Outcome: The CoP adopted CoP18 Prop.37.

Glass frogs: On Monday, 26 August, Costa Rica introduced the proposal (CoP18 Prop.38) to include in Appendix II glass frogs (*Hyalinobatrachium* spp., *Centrolene* spp., *Cochranella* spp., and *Sachatamia* spp.), noting that their exotic and unique nature makes them coveted in the pet trade.

Honduras and other countries supported the proposal, highlighting the need for trade regulation.

In absence of consensus, Committee I voted on the proposal and rejected it for failure to receive the required majority, with 75 voting in favor and 40 against.

On Tuesday, 27 August, Costa Rica moved to re-open the debate. Supported by India, Mali, Kenya, and Qatar, he expressed concern that many parties had not been present when the vote was taken. Guyana and the EU opposed reopening the discussion. Guyana called for the listing to be supported “by the strength of the science, not the strength of the lobby,” expressing concern that some range states had not been consulted. The EU argued that the listing would not be enforceable, as there are more than 104 species, and they are morphologically indistinguishable.

The CoP rejected the proposal, with 75 in favor and 40 against, failing to reach the two-thirds majority required.

Outcome: The CoP rejected CITES CoP18 Prop.38.

Spiny newts, Asian warty newts, and Crocodile newts:

On Monday, 26 August, China introduced proposals to include chinhai spiny newt (*Echinotriton chinhaiensis*) and mountain spiny newts (*Echinotriton maxiquadratus*) (CoP18 Prop. 39), Asian warty newts (*Paramesotriton* spp.) (CoP18 Prop.40) and crocodile newts (*Tylosotriton* spp.) (CoP18 Prop.41) in Appendix II. She suggested that an Appendix II listing of the two *Echinotriton* species would help to combat poaching and smuggling, while listing the entire genera of *Paramesotriton* and *Tylosotriton* would facilitate implementation, given that species under both genera are often indistinguishable and would provide additional controls against illegal trade.

Committee I adopted the proposals by consensus.

Outcome: The CoP adopted CoP18 Props.39-41.

Shortfin Mako Sharks and Longfin Mako sharks: On Sunday, 25 August, Mexico introduced the proposal (CoP18 Prop.42) to include Shortfin mako shark (*Isurus oxyrinchus*) and Longfin mako shark (*Isurus paucus*) in Appendix II. Co-proponents Gabon, Costa Rica, EU, Senegal, Samoa, and others, stressed that the current scientific evidence available makes clear the urgent need for regulation, recognizing that existing voluntary sustainable use measures, including those of RFMOs, are ineffective.

New Zealand, Antigua and Barbuda, Malaysia, Japan, and others opposed this listing on the basis that global Mako shark populations are more robust than suggested by the proponents, pointing to the conclusions of a recent FAO report and arguing that RFMOs are best suited to implement shark conservation measures. FAO confirmed that its expert panel report suggested Mako shark populations do not meet the criteria for an Appendix II listing and underlined that the likelihood of a positive conservation impact of such a listing would depend on implementation, which has proven challenging for previous shark listings.

In a secret ballot, Committee I adopted the proposal, with 102 in favor and 40 against.

Outcome: The CoP adopted CoP18 Prop.42.

Guitarfishes: On Sunday, 25 August, in Committee I, Senegal introduced the proposal (CoP18 Prop.43) to include guitarfishes (*Glaucostegus* spp.) in Appendix II, given declines caused by widespread and largely unmanaged fisheries, which yield large valuable fins that enter international markets.

Fiji, Nigeria, Comoros, Chile, the US, the EU, and Australia supported the proposal, highlighting the need for regulation of trade. St. Kitts and Nevis, Japan, and Malaysia opposed it, with Malaysia and China asking for a secret ballot.

In a secret ballot, Committee I adopted the proposal, with 109 in favor and 30 against.

Outcome: The CoP adopted CoP18 Prop.43.

Wedgefishes: On Sunday, 25 August, in Committee I, Sri Lanka introduced CoP18 Prop.44 to include wedgefishes (*Rhinidae* spp.) in Appendix II, arguing that an Appendix II listing would raise awareness of the species’ vulnerability and facilitate greater regional cooperation to ensure sustainable use.

Egypt, Fiji, Kenya, the US, and other co-proponents argued that an Appendix II listing would have important conservation benefits given the high value of wedgefish fins in international trade. Indonesia, Malaysia, and Japan opposed the proposal, pointing to the inconclusive data on the status of global wedgefish stocks, as found by an FAO expert panel report, and the significant implementation challenges implicated by an Appendix II listing.

In a secret ballot, Committee I voted to adopt the proposal, with 112 in favor and 30 against.

Outcome: The CoP adopted CoP18 Prop.44.

Teatfish: On Sunday, 25 August, Seychelles introduced the proposal to list teatfish (*Holothuria (Microthele) fuscogilva*, *H. (Microthele) nobilis*, *H. (Microthele) whitmaei*) (CoP18 Prop.45), also known as sea cucumbers, under Appendix II, noting their high commercial value and vulnerability.

Senegal, as co-sponsor, supported the proposal. The US provided an amendment requesting an implementation delay of 12 months. Solomon Islands, Chile, and Australia supported the listing. Papua New Guinea and China opposed the listing, highlighting the information used as basis for listing is not accurate. The FAO highlighted the difficulties in managing sea cucumber fisheries and the need for significant investment to implement an Appendix II listing.

In a secret ballot, Committee I voted to adopt the amended proposal, with 108 in favor and 30 against.

Outcome: The CoP adopted CoP18 Prop.45, as amended.

Ornamental spiders: On Monday, 26 August, Sri Lanka introduced the proposal (CoP18 Prop. 46) to include ornamental tarantulas (*Poecilotheria* spp.) in Appendix II, citing their popularity in the pet trade, as well as their vulnerability to deforestation and commercial exploitation, as reasons for inclusion in Appendix II.

Committee I adopted the proposal by consensus.

Outcome: The CoP adopted CoP18 Prop.46.

Mindoro peacock swallowtail: On Monday, 26 August, the Philippines introduced the proposal (CoP18 Prop.47) to include the Mindoro peacock swallowtail (*Achillides chikae hermeli*) in Appendix I, as well as a proposed amendment to the nomenclature of the current Appendix I listing of *Papilio chikae* to *Achillides chikae chikae*, noting that such a listing would avoid the split-listing of two sub-species.

China opposed the new proposed nomenclature, arguing that it is contrary to standard nomenclature in Asia and would pose a challenge for implementation. The nomenclature specialist suggested that the proposal be accepted as presented and to refer this issue to the nomenclature working group of the AC.

Committee I adopted the proposal by consensus.

Outcome: The CoP adopted CoP18 Prop.47.

Riverside swallowtail: On Monday, 26 August, Brazil introduced the proposal (CoP18 Prop.48) to list on Appendix I the riverside swallowtail (*Parides burchellanus*).

Committee I accepted the proposal.

Outcome: The CoP adopted CoP18 Prop.48.

Trumpet trees: This proposal was withdrawn (CoP18 Prop.49).

Mulanje cedar: On Wednesday, 21 August, Malawi presented the proposal (CoP18 Prop.50) to list Mulanje cedar (*Widdringtonia whytei*) in Appendix II, stating that it is critically endangered and it will be further threatened by international trade.

Mali, Nigeria, the US, Senegal, Myanmar, Egypt, and others supported the proposal.

Committee I agreed to the proposal by consensus.

Outcome: The CoP adopted CoP18 Prop.50.

North Indian rosewood: On Wednesday, 21 August, India introduced the proposal (CoP18 Prop.51) to remove North Indian rosewood (*Dalbergia sissoo*) from Appendix II, citing its abundance in country, strict management, and benefit to livelihoods through the handicraft trade in the species.

Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal, as co-proponents, and Qatar, South Africa, and Japan supported the proposal. Nigeria, the US, Chad, Switzerland, and the EU opposed the proposal because of the look-alike issues that arise in identifying the species.

In a vote, the proposal was opposed by a two-thirds majority.

Outcome: The CoP rejected CoP18 Prop.51.

Rosewoods, Palisanders and Bubingas: On Wednesday, 21 August, Canada introduced the proposal (CoP18 Prop.52), and the EU introduced the revised definitions. They explained that the revision maintains an exemption for small finished products, while addressing the implementation challenges associated with differentiating commercial and non-commercial exports, and applies the maximum weight of wood for small finished products to single items rather than to shipments.

Senegal, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Russian Federation, Tanzania, Republic of Korea, and Indonesia supported the revisions. Several countries expressed concern about the introduction of an exemption for finished products to a maximum weight of 500g per item. Kenya stated that the change does not take into consideration the local communities whose livelihoods depend on woodcarving, and preferred the previous formulation of “non-commercial exports of a maximum total weight of 10 kg per shipment.” Guatemala, supported by Mexico, called for deleting this exemption, arguing that it introduced an unacceptable loophole. Mexico expressed concern that the exemption for musical instruments would benefit just one sector, and has no scientific basis.

Committee I Chair Hay established a drafting group, including representatives of orchestras, to develop revisions and agree on guidelines.

On Monday, 26 August, Canada introduced the proposed annotation #15 (CoP18 Com.I.11) with definitions for musical instruments and shipments. Brazil, the EU, Kenya, and the US provided additional text.

Committee I accepted the document as amended.

Outcome: The CoP adopted a revised annotation #15 (CoP18 Prop.52), which exempts, *inter alia*: finished products to a maximum weight of wood of the listed species of up to 10 kg per shipment; and finished musical instruments, finished musical instrument parts, and finished musical instrument accessories.

African teak, Afrosomia: On Wednesday, 21 August, in Committee I, Côte d'Ivoire and the EU introduced the proposal (CoP18 Prop.53) on African teak and Afrosomia (*Pericopsis elata*) to revise the current annotation #5 to include plywood and “transformed wood.” Both co-proponents noted that not including these types of wood has led to exploitation of minimally processed wood and thus this proposal would enhance

enforcement and conservation efforts. The EU added that, to avoid confusion, this change would create a new annotation #17 and she would include “transformed wood” under the interpretation section. Nigeria, Thailand, Tanzania, DRC, Malawi, and Liberia supported the proposal. ITTO supported the proposal, noting the increased number of exports of processed wood of this species from Africa.

Committee I accepted the proposal by consensus.

Outcome: The CoP adopted CoP18 Prop.53.

African padauk, mukula: On Wednesday afternoon, 21 August, in Committee I, Malawi introduced the proposal (CoP18 Prop.54) on African padauk and mukula (*Pterocarpus tinctorius*) to list this species in Appendix II, noting increased pressure due to international demand for rosewood, and that many range states have already put regulatory measures in place. The DRC, Mozambique, Gabon, Nigeria, and others supported the proposal.

Committee I accepted the proposal by consensus.

Outcome: The CoP adopted CoP18 Prop.54.

Bitter aloe: On Wednesday, 21 August, in Committee I, South Africa presented the proposal (CoP18 Prop.55) to amend annotation #4 for Bitter aloe (*Aloe ferox*), including a provision to exempt parts and finished products from CITES control, noting that the species is classified as having “least concern” conservation status, and that an NDF would soon be published. He explained that local communities tap the bitter sap, and that exports are making efficient use of leaves, which would otherwise be discarded, for use in creams, gels, and cosmetics.

The EU expressed support to amend the listing, and proposed a draft decision inviting parties to report on impacts of the amendment one year after CoP18, and for the PC to review the responses. Tanzania, DRC, Lesotho, Kenya, Switzerland, China, and the US supported the proposal.

Committee I accepted the proposal by consensus, as amended by the EU.

Outcome: The CoP adopted CoP18 Prop.55.

Grandidier's baobab: On Wednesday, 21 August, in Committee I, Switzerland introduced the proposal (CoP18 Prop.56) on Grandidier's baobab (*Adansonia grandidieri*), which sought to revise annotation #16 by deleting the reference to living plants, to avoid redundancy and confusion, so that it reads “seeds, fruits, and oils.”

Committee I agreed to this proposal by consensus.

Outcome: The CoP adopted CoP18 Prop.56.

Cedars: On Wednesday, 21 August in Committee I, Ecuador introduced the proposal (CoP18 Prop.57) on cedars (*Cedrela spp*) citing the particular threat to some species within Ecuador, but that the proposal seeks to list the genus due to look-alike issues. India, Myanmar, and Nepal opposed the proposal because of the potential to burden other exporting countries. The EU, with the US, suggested an amendment to add annotation #6 to better restrict the trade to non-plantation species and only neotropics range species. The US, with the EU and WWF, requested the 18-month delay to implementation be shortened to three months, as implementation delays in past tree listing proposals had led to increased interim logging and stockpile buildup. China, the Republic of Korea, and Switzerland added that they could support this proposal if annotation #6 is included.

Ecuador agreed to the amendments of inclusion of annotation #6 (referring to “logs, sawn wood, veneer sheets, and plywood”) and restricting population to the neotropics. She stated that parties will need time for implementation and that a 12-month delay would be preferable.

Committee I agreed to the proposal as amended in session.

Outcome: The CoP adopted CoP18 Prop.57.

Conclusion of the Meeting

On Wednesday, 28 August, in their closing remarks, several observers praised the CoP for its “collegial spirit” and for adopting decisions that will strengthen global wildlife conservation, while others expressed concern that diverging views on conservation and sustainable use had been inadequately reconciled, highlighting the deepening divisions within the African region, as an example. Many delegates expressed their condolences to Sri Lanka on the terrorist attacks that had made it impossible to host CoP18 there, and their thanks to Switzerland and the Secretariat for the arrangements made at short notice to host the meeting in Geneva.

Tanzania, on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries, expressed “grave concern” regarding implementation of the Convention, stating that it is not aligned with other international agreements and is working in contradiction to its founding principles, including those that relate to national sovereignty, inclusive and equitable development, and the rights of local communities living with wildlife to use those resources. He regretted that divisions had resulted in the invoking of a dispute mechanism for the first time at a CITES CoP.

China expressed its support for the Convention and its increased prioritization of conservation objectives, noting that his country is “on the road towards ecological civilization.” The EU and the US also expressed full support, and the US recalled that CITES was created to ensure that trade does not negatively impact the survival of wild species.

CITES Secretary-General Higuero closed by highlighting CoP18’s accomplishments, noting that “this 45-year-old convention is now on a stronger path” with the collaborative work on the CITES Strategic Vision, to ensure CITES is a leader in transformative change into the future and that it aligns with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

She noted the collaborative discussion from over 100 parties about how CITES might better engage indigenous peoples and local communities and ensure they benefit from trade and conservation, as CITES will struggle to succeed without them. She also noted that lesser known species should be given equal consideration to that paid to megafauna.

CoP Chair Jemmi thanked all participants for their passion and commitment and gavelled the meeting to a close at 11:30 am.

A Brief Analysis of CoP18

“Business as usual is no longer an option”

The 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES CoP18) opened on a sobering note. In her welcome speech, Ivonne Higuero, the newly minted CITES Secretary-General, cited the Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services of the Intergovernmental Platform for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) and how it has brought to the fore the urgent need for transformative changes in the way people relate to natural resources. The Assessment emphasizes nature’s unprecedented decline and the millions of species on the brink of extinction. Higuero stressed that “business as usual is no longer an option” and highlighted CITES’s important role in combating over-exploitation, one of the key threats identified in the IPBES assessment. She called on parties to work together to ensure that international trade in wild flora and fauna is legal, sustainable, and traceable.

So how did parties respond, as they diligently worked through 57 listing proposals and 104 agenda items? CITES was designed as an instrument to support the conservation of species through trade regulation, but the definition of what constitutes a sustainable level of exploitation is increasingly called into question. This CoP highlighted the increasing pressures on CITES as an instrument to counter the rising scale of biodiversity loss, as parties struggled to address pressures other than trade on wildlife populations, including habitat loss, disease outbreaks, and human-wildlife conflict—issues that CITES is not designed to regulate, but must be taken into account when considering what “sustainable use” means.

This brief analysis will discuss how CITES CoP18 brought to the fore the changing nature of demands on this 45-year-old Convention, and how it demonstrated the extent to which the Convention remains “fit for purpose.”

“Vanishing Species”

Higuero’s call, rooted in the urgency of the IPBES findings, set the tone for the meeting, as she reminded the CoP that plants, birds, reptiles, and smaller animals are vital for the survival of life on earth and need just as much attention as megafauna.

This CoP saw a record number of listing proposals, in keeping with the trend at recent CoPs for increased numbers of listings. Whereas in the earlier years of the Convention, CITES listings were mostly of land-based animals, in the last seven years many marine species have also been listed.

While the “charismatic species” have often dominated the debates and the international headlines, a record number of reptiles, plants, and marine species, including the not so attractive sea cucumber and the unique spider-tailed horned viper, received protection at this CoP. The CoP also took decisions to further study the impacts of trade in both songbirds and ornamental marine fishes, and also saw substantive discussions concerning commercially important tree species, including cedar and rosewood.

Many parties expressed hopeful support for the increase of tree proposals from African range states for listing in Appendix II. One such example was that of the Mulanje cedar, often referred to as Malawi’s national tree, as very few mature trees remain because of over-exploitation. Even though the species is not heavily found in trade, due to the sheer lack of numbers, Malawi received overwhelming support from parties, including many African States, for its desire to increase support for restoration and protection of its national tree.

In many cases, there was considerable support for decisions where trade would remain prohibited or very conservatively regulated, demonstrating parties’ commitment to maintaining the precautionary approach integral to the Convention, and their increasing recognition of the role trade may play in undermining species conservation. For example, despite some measure of uncertainty about the robustness of global shark populations, a record number of parties were co-proponents of the multiple proposals to include Mako sharks, wedgefishes, and guitarfishes in Appendix II, acknowledging that, in the words of one delegate, “even the world’s fastest sharks can’t escape the threats that face them.”

The increase in listings introduced some tension to the debate, as several delegates questioned the ability of CITES and related bodies to implement listings. In the closing plenary, an African delegate called for “better listings, not more listings.” Some went as far as to propose an end to listing any more marine species, until it can be shown that previous listings have been effective in stemming population declines—a suggestion that was

firmly rejected by the majority of parties, demonstrating parties' continuing commitment to a precautionary approach under CITES.

Overall, Higuero noted that the listings, including of tree species, show the extent to which parties are relying on the Convention as "a vital safety net" to support conservation objectives. However, several parties noted that the increasing scale and scope of CITES listings places unprecedented pressure on the Convention to fulfil its intended role as a capacity-building instrument to support parties in implementing the measures required once a species is listed.

"CITES in the selfie era"

Reptiles, giraffes, great apes, cheetahs, wild orchids, and other species have fallen prey to the internet and social network sites that have become hubs for trade in these coveted species, their parts and derivatives. Thus, South Africa warned that appendix listings alone were not sufficient protection even for "non-charismatic species," as increasingly social media platforms stimulate demand, calling for the countries where these species are sought to do their part to end this form of illegal trade. But, as echoed by many during the course of the CoP, what role can CITES play in addressing the spread of illegal wildlife trade online?

Increasingly aware of the complexities involved in addressing the role of the internet and social media platforms in spreading illegal wildlife trade, CITES is beginning to explore innovative solutions, for example, by drawing from the expertise of intergovernmental organizations such as INTERPOL or the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) through its partnership with the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC). The "cybercrime" decision adopted at CoP18 established a working group on capacity building to advise the Standing Committee on the actions for the development of an integrated framework to improve implementation of the Convention as it relates to internet-driven trade. The parties also decided to direct the Standing Committee to explore possibilities for CITES guidance on demand reduction strategies. This decision opens up the possibility for parties to work on strategies such as consumer education and working with moderators of online platforms, which could have an important role to play in mitigating "selfie-driven" online demand for CITES-listed species.

The Convention is also turning to new technologies. For example, parties reviewed the permit processes under the Convention, with the aim of improving efficiency and transparency in trade and contributing to capacity building for implementation.

"Grave concern"

An important feature of this CoP was the extended discussion on the role of local communities, which revealed differences of opinion about the definition of "sustainable use."

On this issue, the diverging views on the conservation of elephants, giraffes, and rhinos proved a trigger for emotional debates, with many parties and observers lamenting the deepening "African divide." Tanzania, on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries, argued that the Convention is working in contradiction to principles of national sovereignty and the rights and needs of local communities living with wildlife to use those resources. Others expressed concern that the Convention was moving away from the principle of sustainable use, becoming mostly a punitive tool through which

to restrict trade. While these debates are unlikely to go away, the greater recognition of rural, indigenous, and local communities could become an important bridge.

The CoP adopted an amended resolution on CITES and Livelihoods that encourages the empowerment of rural communities through engagement in national processes, such as preparation and consultations on listing proposals, draft resolutions, and draft decisions for consideration at meetings of the CoP. In keeping with this, Tajikistan withdrew its proposal to transfer the Heptner's markhor from Appendix I to II, based on Tajik local communities' concern that the transfer is premature and would undermine their fledgling conservation efforts.

The parties are also directed to compile case studies that demonstrate sustainable use and trade impacts to livelihoods and species conservation from participation of indigenous peoples and local communities who live alongside the wildlife. Some parties suggested that this recognition can temper the "grave concern" about the relationship between sustainable use and conservation in the Convention and, over time, help achieve a balance between conservation needs and the sovereign rights of nations in managing their natural resources.

"A Convention of Peace"

Despite the precautionary decisions taken and the large number of species listed at CoP18, one delegate argued that "CITES is the Convention of failure," recalling that the roughly 5,800 species of fauna and 30,000 species of plants are listed under the appendices precisely because of the collective failure to protect these "vanishing species" from over-exploitation. The recent IPBES findings, and the tragic terrorist attacks in Sri Lanka, which delayed CoP18, lent a sobering atmosphere to the start of this meeting. Yet, parties were able to draw on the collective energy in the room to highlight—in the words of Committee I Chair Rod Hay—that "our relationship to nature has to inform our decisions here." This energy ultimately translated into an efficiently-run CoP, with most decisions taken by consensus, and which stands to have an important impact on endangered species of plants and animals between now and the next CoP in Costa Rica in 2022.

As the world prepares for a landmark year in biodiversity agreements in 2020, with negotiations on a post-2020 framework for biodiversity currently underway, and the CBD convening CoP15 in China, several parties considered that CITES represents the sharp end of biodiversity policy frameworks, as it focuses on cooperation in enforcement. Whether or not it will receive the financial and political support that will be needed to ensure the Convention stays "fit for purpose," remains to be seen in the months and years ahead.

Upcoming Meetings

First Americas Regional Conference on the Illegal Trade in Wildlife: The Conference will be the first regional meeting of the Americas on illegal wildlife trade as a follow up to the London International Conference held in 2018. **dates:** 3-4 October 2019 **location:** Lima, Peru **www:** <https://www.cites.org/sites/default/files/notif/E-Notif-2019-020.pdf>

Eleventh meeting of the CBD Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Article 8(j) and Related Provisions: The Working Group will develop proposals for possible future work, including proposals for a second phase of work on the Plan of Action on Customary Sustainable Use, as well as institutional arrangements and their modus operandi in order to inform the development of

a fully integrated programme of work as part of the post-2020 framework. **dates:** 20-22 November 2019 **location:** Montreal, Canada **www:** <https://www.cbd.int/meetings/WG8J-11>

CBD SBSTTA 23: The 23rd meeting of the CBD Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA 23) will address, among other issues, scientific aspects related to the post-2020 framework. **dates:** 25-29 November 2019 **location:** Montreal, Canada **www:** <https://www.cbd.int/meetings/SBSTTA-23>

ITTC-55: The 55th Session of the International Tropical Timber Council (ITTC-55) and sessions of the associated committees will take place in Togo. **dates:** 2-7 December 2019 **location:** Lomé, Togo **www:** <http://www.itto.int>

CMS COP 13: The thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals will address a broad range of issues related to the objectives and implementation of the Convention. **dates:** 15-22 February 2020 **location:** Gandhinagar, India **www:** <https://www.cms.int/en/meeting/thirteenth-meeting-conference-parties-cms>

Second meeting of the CBD Open-ended Working Group on the Post-2020 Framework: This meeting will continue deliberations on the post-2020 framework. **dates:** 24-28 February 2020 **location:** Kunming, China **www:** <https://www.cbd.int/conferences/post2020>

CBD SBSTTA 24: The 24th meeting of SBSTTA will focus on scientific and technical matters in preparation for CBD COP 15. **dates:** 18-23 May 2020 **location:** Montreal, Canada **www:** <https://www.cbd.int/meetings/>

CBD SBI 3: The third meeting of the CBD Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI 3) will address matters related to the administration and implementation of the Convention and its Protocols. **dates:** 25-29 May 2020 **location:** Montreal, Canada **www:** <https://www.cbd.int/meetings/>

IUCN World Conservation Congress: The IUCN World Conservation Congress will bring together leaders and decision-makers from government, civil society, indigenous peoples, business, and academia, with the goal of conserving the environment and harnessing the solutions nature offers to global challenges. **dates:** 11-19 June 2020 **location:** Marseille, France **www:** <https://www.iucncongress2020.org>

Third meeting of the Open-ended Working Group on the Post-2020 Framework: This will be the third open-ended working group meeting aimed at developing the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. **dates:** 27-31 July 2020 **location:** Cali, Colombia **www:** <https://www.cbd.int/conferences/post2020>

CBD COP 15, COP/MOP 10 to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, and COP/MOP 4 to the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing: The 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 15) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the tenth Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (COP/MOP 10) and the fourth Meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing (COP/MOP 4) are expected to address a series of issues related to implementation of the Convention and its Protocols, and adopt a post-2020 global biodiversity framework. **dates:** October 2020 (tentative) **location:** Kunming, China **www:** <https://www.cbd.int/cop/>

UNEA-5: The fifth session of the UN Environment Assembly will be preceded by the fifth meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives from 15-19 February 2021. **dates:** 22-26 February 2021 **location:** Nairobi, Kenya **www:** <http://web.unep.org/environmentassembly/>

CITES CoP19: The 19th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora will meet in Costa Rica in 2022. **dates:** to be determined in 2022 **location:** Costa Rica **www:** www.cites.org

For additional upcoming events, see <http://sdg.iisd.org/>

Glossary

AC	Animals Committee
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
CMS	Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals
CoP	Conference of the Parties
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ETIS	Elephant Trade Information System
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN
ICCWC	International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime
IPBES	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
ITTO	International Tropical Timber Organization
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
Lao PDR	Lao People's Democratic Republic
NDFs	Non-detriment findings
NIAP	National Ivory Action Plan
PC	Plants Committee
RFMO	Regional Fisheries Management Organization
SC	Standing Committee
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature