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## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE CITES PLANTS AND ANIMALS COMMITTEES: MONDAY, 11 DECEMBER 2000

On the first day of the 10<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Plants Committee and the 16th Meeting of the Animals Committee, held at the US Fish and Wildlife Service's National Conservation Training Center (NCTC) in Shepherdstown, West Virginia, delegates met in plenary sessions to hear opening statements, adopt regional reports and initiate technical discussions of agenda items.

### PLANTS COMMITTEE

Plants Committee Chair Margarita Clemente (Spain) welcomed participants and identified topics to be addressed by the Committee, including: implementation of strategic and action plans; provision of scientifically-based advice for drafting proposals; development of regional directories of botanists; implementation of new resolutions on significant trade and identification manuals; and review of the biological and trade status of listed plants. She called for budgetary caution and highlighted the need to increase regional cooperation. Several participants stressed that funding and communication problems hinder regional representatives from carrying out their duties. Members adopted the agenda (PC.10.3.1), and the rules of procedure (PC.10.3.2), admitted 15 observers, and accepted Malaysia's offer to host the next meeting, probably in early September 2001.

Willem Wijnstekers, CITES Secretary General, remarked upon the Committee's "serenity." He called for making CITES simple and for serious consideration of tropical timber species.

**REGIONAL REPORTS:** John Donaldson (South Africa) said Africa had held no regional meetings, but that a list of scientific authorities was being compiled. He highlighted the Southern African Botanical Network and a proposal to downlist *Styngeria* to Appendix II. He said South Africa was keen on updating plant listings, as they include many non-traded and non-threatened species. He noted a number of species in Appendix I continue to be illegally traded. Zulmukshar Shaari (Malaysia) reported on sub-regional Asian meetings, where ASEAN countries discussed CITES expertise, training and enforcement issues. He said a Southeast Asian Expert Group on Herbal and Medicinal Plants exists and an ASEAN expert group on plants and animals is being formed. Enrique Forero (Colombia) and Marga Werkhoven (Suriname) reported on the first South and Central American and the Caribbean meeting in Ecuador and an Andean sub-regional meeting, where proposals were discussed on vicuna, *Araucaria*, orchids and rain sticks. Bertrand von Arx (Canada) and Jan de Koning (the Netherlands) reported respectively on North American and European regional activities, the latter noting weak participation by Eastern European States. Greg Leach (Australia) stated that no

regional meeting had been held for Oceania and emphasized CITES implementation and capacity building problems in the region. He identified medicinal plants and orchids as priority issues.

**FOLLOW UP OF COP-11 DECISIONS:** The Secretariat introduced a document on establishing a Bigleaf Mahogany working group (PC.10.7.1), which will involve range and importer countries trading in *Swietenia macrophylla* in "considerable volumes" according to International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) statistics. Chair Clemente and Bertrand von Arx were selected as Plants Committee representatives to this group.

On Devil's Claw, (*Harpagophytum spp*) (PC.10.7.2), Germany described ongoing projects comparing the plant's distribution, population status and harvesting impacts in communal areas and commercial farms in Botswana, Namibia and South Africa. Namibia cautioned that artificial cultivation of Devil's Claw may adversely effect marginal Namibian communities. The Committee supported further Secretariat collaboration with the Africa region and Germany on Devil's Claw biological and trade status.

**TECHNICAL PROPOSALS:** The Secretariat presented on the definition of "artificially propagated" in relation to timber (PC.10.8.1). He said CITES should consider a new source category to reflect actual silvicultural techniques and trade regimes for timber species listed in the Appendices. The US, with the UK, Germany and the International Wildlife Coalition (IWC) questioned motives for, and implications of, creating intermediate source codes given non-detrimental trade criteria. She highlighted the risk of CITES protecting unsustainable timber harvesting and questioned assumptions that guided natural regeneration guarantees sustainable exploitation. Work on defining artificially propagated will continue with support from Chile, India, and the Europe and Oceania groups.

On standard exemptions for derivatives of species (PC.10.8.2), the Asia representative objected to exempting seeds. The Secretariat pointed out that seeds were previously exempted because of identification difficulties. Regarding the proposed exemption of seedlings and tissues transported in solid or liquid media, Austria called for rephrasing the text in view of changes in transporting practices. The Secretariat suggested that details be worked out at the next Committee meeting.

Regarding definitions of technical terms used in annotations for medicinal plants (PC.10.8.3), the North America representative suggested using existing definitions developed elsewhere. Austria emphasized that terminology should be understandable and botanically correct. TRAFFIC called for standardizing definitions used by importers and exporters. Mexico called for the classification of medicinal plants and their derivatives. Germany, the US and China expressed willingness to participate in a working group on the annotation of medicinal plants. In a discussion on funding, the Secretariat

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announced a US contribution for medicinal plant projects. Austria proposed, and the Committee agreed, to revise annotations before the next meeting.

**SIGNIFICANT TRADE IN PLANTS:** The Secretariat presented on significant trade in plants (PC. 10.10.1). Noel McGough (UK) was re-elected as coordinator on this topic. He noted problems in available trading data, notably the absence of data on many CITES-listed species where wild trade may or may not be occurring. He recommended the Committee prioritize a review of trade in cacti, cycad, aloe and euphorb species, and endangered plants in Madagascar such as orchids.

#### ANIMALS COMMITTEE

Marinus Hoogmoed, Animals Committee Chair, welcomed participants and thanked former Chair Hank Jenkins for his work. Hoogmoed discussed meeting attendance, the role of regional representatives and NGOs, and the importance of a biological foundation for discussions. CITES Secretary General Wijnstekers stressed the need to strive for equal voice for all regions and to address implementation in both developing and developed countries. Wijnstekers said many species subject to the significant trade review process will be discussed during this meeting. Hoogmoed introduced, and delegates adopted, the rules of procedure (AC.16.2), the provisional agenda (AC.16.3.1), the working programme (AC.16.3.2), and admission of observers (AC.16.4).

**REGIONAL REPORTS:** Hoogmoed noted that within Europe, communications with other Parties had been largely unsuccessful. Susan Lieberman (United States) highlighted the North America regional group's coordination on, *inter alia*, the review of Appendices, trade in hard corals, and trade in freshwater turtles and tortoises in Southeast Asia. She added that there has been significant coordination on issues since COP-11, including the review of the criteria, animals bred in captivity, conservation of seahorses and trade in time-sensitive research samples. Rod Hay (New Zealand) noted the difficulties in coordinating with several regional Parties in Oceania, as well as establishing scientific authorities, particularly in developing countries that lack proper resources. He highlighted collaboration between Australia and Papua New Guinea on enforcement training, and added that New Zealand had instituted DNA testing of vertebrates proposed for export and completed a taxonomic review of *Cyanoramphus*.

Kim Howell (Tanzania) highlighted: communications problems among Africa group members; trade permits; monitoring of individual species; enforcement with regards to animals being exported; and the relationship between scientific and management authorities. He noted the Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants programme (MIKE) had been on schedule for monitoring ivory and that new populations of Appendix I species had been discovered, including a species of the spiny lizard in Eastern Africa. The Secretariat reported that the European Commission has provided significant funding to extend MIKE implementation in Africa.

Tonny Soehartono (Indonesia) said that there had been discussion on freshwater turtles and marine coral within the Asia group. Sixto Incháustegui (Dominican Republic) expressed hope that members of the South and Central America and the Caribbean group would participate more actively in the review process and proposed organizing a regional meeting before the next Standing Committee Meeting.

**STRATEGIC PLANNING:** On the role of the Animals Committee in implementing the CITES strategic vision, the Secretariat introduced the strategic planning document (AC.16.6.1). On enhancing the ability of parties to implement CITES, numerous delegates expressed support for listing regional botanists and zoologists with expertise in CITES species. The Bahamas requested stronger communication between countries regarding the effective use of databases. The North America representative suggested pooling and distributing data from each region's scientific authorities. IUCN reported that scientists can be contacted through the IUCN website. Hoogmoed observed that these communication initiatives should be a first priority.

On strengthening the scientific basis of decision-making processes, Chair Hoogmoed said CITES should not concentrate efforts on providing data on non-listed species. The Netherlands said the EU already has its own list of non-listed species which may be useful when taking future measures. On decisions to amend Appendices on sound and relevant scientific information, Chair Hoogmoed invited Parties to provide additional information. The Secretariat stressed the need to strengthen data reporting. The US proposed revising a resolution to standardize units of measure for reporting.

On improving the scientific basis for non-detrimental findings, Wijnstekers highlighted plans for a future workshop for top exporting countries on strengthening the exchange of information. The North America representative suggested using non-detrimental finding case studies to improve the exchange of views among scientific authorities.

On the development of innovative technologies and relevant research, Hoogmoed noted that DNA testing is not fully accessible to every region. On promoting a greater understanding of CITES, the Chair said that this is largely a public relations goal for each member to pursue as much as possible. The Secretariat proposed, and the Committee adopted, decisions directed to the Animals Committee (AC.16.6.2), which parallel the meeting's agenda. On the Animals Committee working programme priorities (AC.16.6.3 Annex), discussion focused on the potential for re-establishing an implementation committee, supported by several delegates including the representatives for North America, Central and South America and the Caribbean, Switzerland and the World Conservation Trust (IWMC). The Chair proposed a mission statement for the Animals Committee.

**CAPTIVE BREEDING:** Hank Jenkins, Creative Conservation Solutions, presented an overview of captive breeding types and assessment of current CITES source codes for Appendix II species. The Secretariat explained that this evaluation was prepared in response to the need to distinguish between captive breeding production systems. Jenkins explained different management systems, including ranching, captive rearing, wild harvesting, and farming. He noted that the present range of source codes do not adequately reflect the management approaches in use around the world and suggested further discussion of the report as a manual for exporting range countries.

The North America representative stressed that having a source code is not *in lieu* of a finding of non-detriment for a species. China asked for examples to clarify terms for captive breeding systems, while IWMC stressed a need to further define ranching. The US emphasized a focus on guidelines rather than codes for determining non-detriment findings. The UK and Germany called for further clarification of proposed source codes. Wijnstekers noted that source codes allow Parties to establish trends in wildlife trade.

#### IN THE CORRIDORS

Following the three-day Joint Committee Meeting, many delegates commented on the shortage of technical scientific expertise of delegates. A concern about the need for more biological background to participate in the Animals Committee has been repeated. Meanwhile, the Plants Committee is trying to shed its image as "a group of the unwilling picked from the unfit to do the unnecessary," as described by the *New York Times*. Committee members anticipate controversy around the status of Argentina's proposal to uplift their population of *Araucaria araucana* to Appendix I.

#### THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

**PLANTS COMMITTEE:** The Committee will meet in the Gymnasium at 8:45 am to address significant trade, *Guaiacum sanctum* and *Araucaria araucana*.

**ANIMALS COMMITTEE:** The Committee will convene in the Entry Auditorium at 9:00 am to address hard corals, significant trade, traditional medicines, the Scientific Authority and transport of live animals.