



THIRTEENTH CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA: 2-14 OCTOBER 2004

The thirteenth Conference of the Parties (COP-13) to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) opened on Saturday, 2 October 2004, and will continue until 14 October 2004 in Bangkok, Thailand. Delegates to COP-13 will consider over 60 agenda items and 50 proposals on a range of topics, including: reports and recommendations from the Animals and Plants Committees; the 2006-2008 budget and other administrative matters; implementation of the Convention; species trade and conservation issues; management of annual export quotas; the relationship between *in situ* conservation and *ex situ* captive breeding; trade control and marking issues; enforcement matters; cooperation with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO); and amendments to the CITES appendices.

Proposals to amend Appendices I and II cover such species as the humphead wrasse, great white shark, irrawaddy dolphin, ramin and yew trees, Southern white rhinoceros, yellow-crested cockatoo, minke whale and the African lion and elephant.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF CITES

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) entered into force on 1 July 1975 following growing concerns regarding over-exploitation of wildlife and the rapid decline of many plant and animal populations as a result of international trade. With 166 Parties, CITES regulates trade in wildlife through controls and regulations of the import and export of species listed under three appendices. Animal and plant species listed under Appendix I are considered highly threatened with extinction, and are excluded from trade, except in very special circumstances. Appendix II species are subject to strictly regulated trade on the basis of quotas and permits to ensure that trade does not compromise their survival. Appendix III lists species that are subject to domestic regulation, and for which a Party requests the cooperation of other Parties to control international trade.

In order to list a species on Appendices I or II, Parties submit proposals for COP approval, supported by scientific and biological data on population and trade trends. Proposals are adopted by a two-thirds majority vote of

Parties present at a COP. As the trade impact on a species increases or decreases, the COP decides whether the species should be transferred between, or removed from, the appendices. There are approximately 5,000 fauna species and 28,000 flora species currently listed under the CITES appendices.

CITES also regulates international trade of species through a system of permits and certificates, required before specimens enter or leave a country. Each Party is required to adopt national legislation and designate a Management Authority responsible for issuing these permits and certificates on the basis of advice provided by a designated Scientific Authority. These two national authorities assist CITES enforcement through cooperation with customs, police or other appropriate agencies, and maintain trade records that are forwarded to the CITES Secretariat, enabling the compilation of statistical information on the global volume of trade in listed species.

In addition to the CITES Secretariat, which is responsible for day-to-day operations of the Convention at the international level, and provides Parties with trade information and technical and capacity-building support, the operational bodies of CITES include the Standing Committee (SC), Animals Committee (AC), Plants Committee (PC), Nomenclature Committee (NC), and Identification Manual Committee.

COP-11: The eleventh Conference of the Parties (COP-11) convened in Nairobi, Kenya, from 10-20 April 2000. COP-11 considered 61 proposals to amend the CITES appendices, and addressed, *inter alia*: the procedure to review criteria for amending Appendices I and II; species quotas; conservation of, and trade in, rhinoceroses and elephants; trade in freshwater turtles, seahorses, bigleaf mahogany, hard coral, and bear specimens; bushmeat; transport of live animals; the relationship between CITES and FAO and the International Whaling Commission (IWC); national reports; law and enforcement; ranching; measures for the sustainable use of significantly traded plants and animals; a universal labeling system for sturgeon specimen identification; and the CITES information management strategy.

COP-12: COP-12 convened from 3-15 November 2002 in Santiago, Chile. Delegates considered 60 proposals and over 60 resolutions on a range of topics, including strategic and administrative matters, implementation of the Convention, and consideration of proposals for amendment of Appendices I and II. This included the listing of seahorses, basking and whale sharks and bigleaf mahogany in



Appendix II, and rejection of the proposals to downlist populations of minke and bryde's whales from Appendix I to Appendix II. A listing proposal for the Patagonian toothfish was withdrawn. A proposal for an Appendix I listing of all African elephant populations was also withdrawn, ceding to the COP's decision to allow three African States - Botswana, Namibia and South Africa - to sell a limited and strictly controlled amount of their registered ivory.

INTERSESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

THIRTEENTH MEETING OF THE PLANTS COMMITTEE: PC-13 met in Geneva, Switzerland, from 12-15 August 2003, to consider strategic planning, significant trade in plants, and evaluation of the Review of Significant Trade (RST). Delegates also followed-up on COP-12 decisions on *Harpagophytum* spp. (devil's claw), *Guaiacum* spp. (*lignum vitae*) and *Aquilaria* spp. (agarwood), and agreed on the terms of reference and schedule for the review of criteria for amending Appendices I and II.

NINETEENTH MEETING OF THE ANIMALS COMMITTEE: AC-19 met from 18-21 August 2003 in Geneva, Switzerland, to consider: strategic planning; RST; review of criteria for amendment of Appendices I and II; periodic review of animal species included in the Appendices; transport of live animals; conservation of, and trade in, tortoises and freshwater turtles, seahorses, sea cucumbers, sharks, and hard coral; and trade in alien species.

FOURTEENTH MEETING OF THE PLANTS COMMITTEE: PC-14 convened from 16-20 February 2004 in Windhoek, Namibia, to discuss, *inter alia*: the review of resolutions on plants and plant trade; definition of technical terms used in the annotations for medicinal plants; significant trade in plants; review of the appendices; follow-up of decisions from COP-12; and species proposals for COP-13. Working groups were set up to further address specific issues, including: RST; plants and plant trade resolutions; annotations for artificially propagated hybrids; annotations for CITES-listed medicinal plants; regional representation and communication; and review of criteria for amendment of the appendices.

TWENTIETH MEETING OF THE ANIMALS COMMITTEE: AC-20 met from 29 March to 2 April 2004 in Johannesburg, South Africa, to discuss, *inter alia*: RST in specimens of Appendix II species; review of criteria for amendment of Appendices I and II; periodic review of animal and plant *taxa*; transport of live animals; budget; trade in hard coral; trade in alien species; sea cucumbers; seahorses; and sharks. In addition, ten working groups were convened, many continuing from AC-19, to address the: RST; relationship between *ex situ* production and *in situ* conservation; process for registering operations that breed Appendix I animal species for commercial purposes; transport of live animals; trade in hard coral; control of captive breeding, ranching and wild harvest production systems; improvement of regional communication and representation; sea cucumbers; and sharks. A drafting group was also set up to review the criteria for amending Appendices I and II.

FIFTY-FIRST MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE: SC-51 met prior to COP-13 on 1 October 2004 in Bangkok, Thailand, to discuss, *inter alia*: financial and administrative matters; nominations for COP-13 chairs; the 2006-2008 budget; credentials; contributions in arrears; a Memorandum of Understanding with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and FAO; and a cost-benefit analysis for relocating the CITES Secretariat.

OPENING OF COP-13

Natural Resources and Environment Minister of Thailand Suwit Khunkitti noted that Thailand is the first country in Southeast Asia to hold a CITES COP, and emphasized his country's commitment to implement CITES. He stressed the importance of regional cooperation within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to ensure the conservation of one of the world's richest biodiversity regions, and supported regional implementation and enforcement efforts, and the promotion of public awareness and education.

CITES Standing Committee Chair Kenneth Stansell (US) noted the meeting's ambitious agenda, highlighting proposals regarding whales, elephants and timber species, and agenda items relating to implementation, particularly financing. He stressed the Convention's importance for conservation, noting that not a single species protected by CITES has become extinct since CITES' entry into force 30 years ago.

UNEP Executive Director Klaus Töpfer welcomed Thailand's commitment to fighting illegal trade in endangered species, and acknowledged the role of NGOs in successfully implementing the Convention. Noting that CITES has direct impacts on wildlife, local communities and economic development, Töpfer stressed its link to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), its role in mainstreaming biodiversity into major economic sectors, including trade, fisheries, agriculture, forestry and tourism, and in achieving the 2010 target, adopted by the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), to halt the rate of biodiversity loss. Töpfer stressed the need for partnerships and cooperation with FAO, the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), the World Trade Organization (WTO) and biodiversity-related conventions, and noted the importance of increasing financial support.

CITES Secretary-General Willem Wijnstekers expressed gratitude to the Government of Thailand for hosting COP-13, and underscored CITES' contributions not only to wildlife conservation, but also to sustainable development and poverty reduction. He said CITES should be involved in the conservation of economically important species covered by other international agreements only where its instruments and tools can have an added value. Wijnstekers called for increased political will and financial support to meet CITES obligations, noting that simplifying CITES' procedures will lead to savings and better enforcement related to wildlife trade.

Prime Minister of Thailand Thaksin Shinawatra stressed the need for global cooperation to fight organized criminal activities related to international trade in wildlife, and highlighted the importance of regional efforts to ensure effective enforcement and implementation of CITES. Prime Minister Shinawatra proposed holding a meeting in Thailand in 2005 to establish a new Southeast Asian law enforcement network to combat illegal trade in wildlife. He then declared COP-13 open.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

PLENARY: Plenary will meet throughout the day to consider: strategic and administrative matters; hear reports from the SC, AC, PC and NC; the identification manual; strategic vision through 2010; cooperation with other organizations; and reports of the dialogue meetings on the African elephant and the wider Caribbean hawksbill turtle.