

FOURTEENTH CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO CITES: 3-15 JUNE 2007

The fourteenth Conference of the Parties (COP-14) to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) opened in The Hague, the Netherlands, on Sunday, 3 June 2007, and will continue until 15 June 2007. Delegates to COP-14 will consider 70 agenda items and 37 proposals to amend the CITES appendices. Discussions will take place in plenary and two committees, as well as in a Ministerial Roundtable on 13 June.

The agenda covers a wide range of topics, including: reports and recommendations from the Animals and Plants Committees; administrative matters, including the budget for 2009-2011; strategic matters, including the CITES Strategic Vision 2008-2013; implementation of the Convention, including compliance and enforcement issues; trade control and marking issues, including the management of annual export quotas; exemptions and special trade provisions, including the relationship between *in situ* conservation and *ex situ* captive breeding; and species trade and conservation issues, including trade in elephants, cetaceans, Asian big cats, sharks and sturgeons. The proposed amendments to the CITES appendices include proposals to list marine species such as the porbeagle shark and red and pink corals, as well as timber species such as cedar and rosewood.

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, United States, on 3 March 1973, and entered into force on 1 July 1975. There are currently 171 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 on species listed in three appendices. Appendix I lists species endangered due to international trade. Trade in such species is permitted 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 that species.

In order to list a species in Appendix I or II, a party needs to submit a proposal for approval by the 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 5,000 fauna species and 28,000 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 these permits and certificates based on the advice of the second national body, the 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 CITES, thus enabling the compilation of statistical information on the global volume of international trade in appendix-listed species.

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

CONFERENCES 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 related to 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. A list of all resolutions in effect can be found at <http://www.cites.org/eng/res/index.shtml>

CITES COP-13: COP-13 met in Bangkok, Thailand, from 2-14 October 2004. Delegates addressed a range of topics, including 50 proposals to amend the CITES appendices. COP-13 approved the listing of ramin, agarwood, 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 crack down on unregulated domestic ivory markets. Namibia and South Africa were allowed an annual quota of five black rhinos each for trophy hunting, and Swaziland was also allowed to open up strictly controlled hunting of white rhinos. Other decisions focused on synergies with the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), while enforcement issues received considerable attention.

INTERSESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

AC-21/PC-15: AC-21 and PC-15 convened from 17-25 May 2005, in Geneva, Switzerland. A joint session of the scientific committees was held on 20-21 May 2005, to discuss issues of common interest to both the AC and PC. The main task completed by AC-21 was a new review of significant trade (RST) process for a large number of species. PC-15 referred the issue of bigleaf mahogany to an intersessional working group, which was charged with presenting its findings at PC-16 for further consideration at COP-14.

SC-53: Held in Geneva, Switzerland, from 27 June-1 July 2005, SC-53 discussed issues including: the rules of procedure; the Strategic Vision; agreement in principle on a memorandum of understanding between the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the SC; the RST; financial matters; and budgetary matters. Other decisions focused on: synergies between CITES and CBD; cooperation with the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS); cooperation with FAO; conservation of and trade in great apes, tigers, and African and Asian rhinoceroses; and control of trade in African elephant ivory.

AC-22/PC-16: AC-22 and PC-16 convened from 3-13 July 2006, in Lima, Peru. A joint session of the scientific committees was held on 7-8 July. Among other items, PC-16 agreed not to subject bigleaf mahogany to an RST, established an intersessional working group on *Prunus africana*, and discussed a proposal on timber export quotas to be presented at COP-14. AC-22 adopted six recommendations on: RST in Appendix-II species; production systems for specimens of CITES-listed species; transport of live specimens; trade in sea cucumbers; conservation and management of sharks; and the periodic review of animal species included in the Convention's appendices.

SC-54: SC-54 was held in Geneva, Switzerland, from 2-6 October 2006. Over 20 decisions and recommendations were adopted and the Memorandum of Understanding between CITES and FAO was signed. The SC also agreed, *inter alia*, to: defer

consideration of trade in tigers to COP-14; review timber trade in Peru and Malaysia at future SC meetings; and designate Japan as a trading partner for the one-off sale of ivory stockpiles from Botswana, Namibia and South Africa, but not to proceed with the sale at this point.

SC-55: Held in The Hague on 2 June 2007, SC-55 addressed substantive and organizational matters for COP-14. The SC, *inter alia*, approved the baseline information on elephant poaching and population levels and confirmed Japan's status as trading partner, thereby allowing the one-off sale of 60 tonnes of ivory from Botswana, Namibia and South Africa, agreed at COP-12, to proceed.

OPENING OF COP-14

Welcoming delegates to The Hague, Gerda Verburg, Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, the Netherlands, and COP-14 Chair, underscored that CITES has a contribution to make to the global target of halting biodiversity loss by 2010 and the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of halving poverty by 2015. She highlighted the inaugural Ministerial Roundtable at COP-14 as an opportunity to strengthen the authority of CITES and its support base through political leadership and new alliances, and to discuss CITES' role with regard to economically valuable resources such as fisheries and timber.

Rabin Baldewsingh, Deputy Mayor of The Hague, noted the history of the city, and highlighted its importance as an international center of peace, justice and security.

Shafqat Kakakhel, Deputy Executive Director, UNEP, linked species conservation to sustainable development, and added that only robust species populations will be able to adapt to a changing climate. Underlining UNEP's continuing commitment to support CITES, he called on governments and the private sector to give CITES the full backing and resources needed to make its mission and new Strategic Vision a success.

Amb. Cristian Maquieira, SC Chair (Chile), highlighted the new Strategic Vision, noting the need to place the Convention within the wider framework of global environmental developments, and to contribute to ongoing UN discussions on international environmental governance. He also emphasized the need to address key issues such as the definition of "introduction from the sea" to determine which State is in charge of issuing permits related to certain marine species. In addition, he voiced grave concern for the situation of tigers, expressing hope that an agreement would be reached at COP-14 on a concrete plan to prevent this species' extinction.

Willem Wijnstekers, CITES Secretary General, stressed the adaptability of CITES, noting that the Convention has learned to balance conservation and sustainable use. Emphasizing linkages between conservation and poverty reduction, he referred to the recent WWF report entitled "Species and People: Linked Futures." He further highlighted proposals to list commercially-traded timber and marine species, saying that COP-14's Ministerial Roundtable should consider how CITES can be used at an earlier stage in conserving such species. In closing, he stressed that these developments and CITES' expansion into new policy areas requires adequate financing.

Following live vocal and musical performances, and sound and light shows, the meeting was declared open.