

CITES COP14 HIGHLIGHTS: MONDAY, 4 JUNE 2007

The fourteenth Conference of the Parties (CoP14) to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) convened in plenary on Monday morning, 4 June 2007, and addressed: organizational matters; reports by the Animals Committee (AC), Plants Committee (PC), Standing Committee (SC) and Nomenclature Committee (NC), as well as a joint report of the AC and PC; and cooperation with other organizations. In the afternoon, delegates met in closed sessions with their regional groups.

PLENARY

SC Chair Cristian Maquieira opened the meeting and invited delegates to consider the proposed amendments to the Rules of Procedure for CoP14 (CoP14 Doc.1 (Rev.1)), presented by the Secretariat. He noted proposed amendments recommended by the SC relating to, *inter alia*, electronic voting and the appointment of an alternate President. The Rules of Procedure were then adopted with the proposed amendments.

Delegates were then invited to nominate the officers for CoP14. Gerda Verburg, Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, the Netherlands, was elected President of CoP14 and André van der Zande, Vice-Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, the Netherlands, as alternate President. Vice-Presidents, proposed by each region and elected by CoP14, are: Marshall Jones (US); Marcel Calvar (Uruguay); Greg Leach (Australia, Chair of Committee I); and C.S. Cheung (Hong Kong SAR, China, Chair of Committee II).

CoP14 President Verburg highlighted the human aspects of CITES, noting that species conservation must go hand-in-hand with the improvement of livelihoods in order to achieve the goals of halting biodiversity loss and eradicating poverty.

Youth representatives addressed the Conference, voicing their concern about the illegal poaching of elephants and urging CoP14 to implement a ban on ivory trade. Youth representatives also reported on the first student CITES CoP held in The Hague in May 2007. They said that during this simulation exercise participants considered issues on the CoP14 agenda, and called on other multilateral environmental agreements to follow suit in organizing student CoPs.

Delegates adopted CoP14's agenda and working programme (CoP14 Doc.3 (Rev.1) and CoP14 Doc.4) with an amendment by Uganda to address the issue of the African leopard under Committee I discussions on Appendix-I species subject to export quotas. Responding to a request by the US, SC Chair Maquieira noted that agenda items not covered by SC55 would be taken up at SC56 immediately following CoP14 on 15 June 2007.

Delegates elected the Credentials Committee with Sonja Meintjes (South Africa) as Chair and Cameroon, China, Germany and US as members.

The Secretariat introduced, and delegates adopted, the list of observers (CoP14 Doc.6), which includes 18 intergovernmental organizations and 147 non-governmental organizations.

COMMITTEE REPORTS: Animals Committee: AC Chair Thomas Althaus (Switzerland) presented the report (CoP14 Doc.8.2), highlighting in particular: draft decisions for consideration by CoP14 on the review of significant trade (RST) in specimens of Appendix-II species; progress on the first country-based RST in Madagascar; selection of new species to be subject to an RST; CITES-listed animal species selected for periodic review; completion of implementation of CoP decisions 13.96 and 13.97 relating to fossil corals; submission of an information document on sturgeons to SC54; and two recommendations to CoP14 on the periodic review of *Felidae* and the budget of the AC.

ARGENTINA stated that AC22's consideration of a proposed periodic review on fin whales had not allowed time for regional discussion, and that the vote of the Central and South America and the Caribbean representative did not accurately reflect country positions within the region. Supported by Germany on behalf of the EU, she said that a review of whale stocks should not take place under CITES as whale stocks are being examined by the International Whaling Commission. CoP14 President Verburg referred the matter to Committee I.

Standing Committee: SC Chair Maquieira presented an oral report. He lauded the work of the Strategic Plan Working Group chaired by Ghana, noting the sometimes controversial discussions on balancing conservation, sustainable development and MDGs. He said that the Working Group had succeeded in drafting the new strategic plan and that the Secretariat had also prepared a costed work programme, indicating the financial implications of the various proposals. On the definition of

“introduction from the sea,” he noted that discussions had hinged on defining maritime areas beyond national jurisdiction, and on the role of regional fisheries organizations, and suggested that these issues should be further addressed during CoP14.

SC Chair Maquieira welcomed improvements in institutional cooperation, including discussions on admitting CITES as an observer at the WTO. On species-specific issues, he noted, *inter alia*: the urgency of addressing the future of tigers and other Asian big cats; the outcome of lengthy discussions on elephants; and progress in addressing trade in bigleaf mahogany. He also noted: work on financial issues, emphasizing timely payment of financial contributions; and the Secretariat’s work on enforcement and implementation, including requesting a report from Egypt on trade in primates and ivory.

Plants Committee: PC Chair Margarita Clemente (Spain) presented the report (CoP14 Doc.8.3 (Rev.1)). She highlighted work undertaken on: the periodic review of CITES-listed plant taxa (CoP14 Inf.11); selection of species for an RST; and collaboration with CBD on the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (CoP14 Inf.10). She expressed the PC’s concern about the effective implementation of CITES relating to medicinal plants in the Himalayan region, and the lack of identification materials for plant species in general, and noted the PC’s proposal on updating annotations for medicinal plants.

Regarding timber species, PC Chair Clemente outlined intersessional activities on, *inter alia*, bigleaf mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla*), agarwood (*Aquilaria* spp), and *Prunus africana*, noting that the PC focused on the issue of non-detriment findings. She also expressed hope that new timber species listings proposed by the PC will be approved by CoP14.

Joint Report of the AC and PC: AC Chair Althaus and PC Chair Clemente reported on the joint work of their Committees (CoP14 Doc.8.4). AC Chair Althaus said that both joint sessions were useful but presented some logistical challenges for host countries, and recommended that arrangements for future meetings be considered by the CoP. On the issue of review of the scientific committees, he noted that a summary of the self-evaluation was forwarded to the External Evaluation Working Group and suggested that the CoP take into account the joint AC and PC working group’s recommendations on the issue. He also noted the need for field-testing of the manual for regional representatives, and that both AC and PC Chairs were *ex officio* members of the Export Quota Working Group and were kept abreast of the group’s work and report (CoP14 Doc.36). On the RST, he congratulated Madagascar on its progress in implementing its CITES Action Plan.

PC Chair Clemente completed the joint report, noting the results of discussions on the transport of live animals and the draft decision on the Master’s course on Management, Access and Conservation of Species in Trade, and stating that the potential for CITES to contribute to the alien invasive species issue is limited.

Nomenclature Committee: NC Co-Chairs Noel McGough (UK) and Ute Grimm (Germany) presented the report (CoP14 Doc.8.5). On the review of the scientific committees, NC Co-Chair McGough highlighted the NC’s recommendation that in the future, the NC could best function as a working group of the AC and PC, but that independence of decision making on nomenclature issues and consistency of approach should be maintained. On flora nomenclature, he outlined proposals for adoption of checklists on: *Hoodia*; *Guaiacum*; orchid genera

Aerides, *Coelogyne*, *Comparettia* and *Masdevallia*; *Aloe* and *Pachypodium*; and *Bulbophyllum* and allied taxa (Orchidaceae). On the proposed flora workplan, he highlighted a revision of the cacti checklist and an update and expansion of the orchids checklist.

On fauna nomenclature, NC Co-Chair Grimm highlighted proposals for adoption of checklists on, *inter alia*; birds; mammals; turtles and tortoises; *Cordylus* spp; amphibians; and Iguanidae genera *Amblyrhynchus*, *Brachylophus*, *Conolophus*, *Cyclura*, *Iguana*, and *Sauromalus*. On the proposed fauna workplan, she emphasized that the development of a checklist for corals is a priority.

COOPERATION WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS: The GLOBAL TIGER FORUM stressed the importance of tiger conservation and called on CITES and others to support capacity building for enforcement. The INTERNATIONAL TROPICAL TIMBER ORGANIZATION (ITTO) noted that ongoing cooperation with the CITES Secretariat will be further strengthened by a capacity-building project, and that the proposal on cooperation with CITES was received favorably at the 42nd session of the International Tropical Timber Council. The RAMSAR CONVENTION ON WETLANDS stressed the importance of the Biodiversity Liaison Group that works to enhance cooperation between five biodiversity-related Conventions.

The UN OFFICE ON DRUGS AND CRIME noted its recent resolution on combating illegal trafficking of forest products and highlighted the role that the UN Conventions Against Corruption and Against Transnational Organized Crime can play in combating illegal wildlife trade.

IN THE CORRIDORS

On Sunday the hustle and bustle generated by besuited and tie-wearing CITES CoP14 delegates at The Hague’s World Forum Conference Center starkly contrasted with the relaxed locals strolling and biking through the lush parks nearby. The weekend activities included the 55th meeting of the Standing Committee, characterized by one participant as “full of suspense and bold moves.” Some delegates commented that the “sustainable trade team” has taken the lead in the elephant debate, with the “green light” given to the one-off sale of ivory from Botswana, Namibia and South Africa to Japan. Tension was reported to be very high during the tied vote on whether to designate China as a second trading partner for this sale. One observer wondered if the issue may be reopened at CoP14, while others, caught unawares by the decision, pondered how this would play off *vis-à-vis* the proposed 20-year moratorium on ivory trade by the “conservation team.” Meanwhile, the African elephant range states dialogue, which is a major locus of this debate, has not yet resulted in an agreed communiqué. The “sustainable trade team” also considered it had made a head start following the dismissal of moves to ban trade in bigleaf mahogany, arguing that this may become a leading case for CITES’ regulation of timber trade.

Returning to the topic of large charismatic mammals, Japan’s “bold move” to request the review of cetaceans in the CITES appendices is expected to generate whale-sized ripples during the week. But as SC Chair Maquieira observed, the international community always comes to The Hague, a renowned center of international justice, in the hope of resolving the most contentious of matters.