

CITES COP14 HIGHLIGHTS WEDNESDAY, 13 JUNE 2007

The fourteenth Conference of the Parties (CoP14) to CITES convened in two committees throughout the day. A high-level Ministerial Roundtable was held in parallel to the meeting, and informal ministerial consultations on African elephants took place throughout the day and into the evening. Committee I, *inter alia*, approved the listing of pink and red coral on Appendix II and adopted decisions on tortoises and freshwater turtles. Committee II, *inter alia*, adopted a partial resolution on budget and several decisions on tigers.

COMMITTEE I

LISTING PROPOSALS: Yew: The US withdrew its proposal to amend the listing of *Taxus cuspidata* (Japanese yew) in Appendix II (CoP14 Prop.36), replacing it with a draft decision to discuss issues of hybrids and cultivars in the PC, which was supported by consensus.

SWITZERLAND, as Depository Government, introduced a proposal to delete an annotation on yew species *Taxus chinensis*, *T. fuana* and *T. sumatrana* from Appendix II, and amend the annotation to *T. cuspidata* (CoP14 Prop.37). He explained that SC discussions had deemed that the earlier annotations contravened CITES, which does not allow the exclusion of any live or dead plant of a listed species, and that this proposal would solve the problem while retaining the original intent. Supporting the proposal, CANADA said the amendment would help develop *Taxus* plantations and reduce threats to wild species. THAILAND noted that all artificially propagated hybrids and cultivars should be exempted from CITES. JAPAN opposed the proposal, suggesting the PC discuss the issue. CHINA introduced an amendment referring to live plants. The proposal, as amended by China, was adopted by consensus.

TORTOISES AND FRESHWATER TURTLES: The EU presented two draft decisions finalized in the drafting group (CoP14 Com.I.12). The US, supported by CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL and IUCN, introduced two further decisions to contract the IUCN Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles Specialist Group to conduct a study on the implementation of Res. Conf.11.9 (Rev. CoP13) (Tortoises and freshwater turtles), subject to external funding, and instruct the AC to review the study and make recommendations for CoP15. All four decisions were approved by consensus.

CORALS: On its proposal to list all species in the genus *Corallium* (pink and red corals) in Appendix II (CoP14 Prop.21), the US further proposed: an annotation delaying the listing's

entry into effect by 18 months to permit implementation measures to be put in place; and an amendment allowing an exemption for personal and household effects of up to seven pieces per person weighing no more than one kilogram in total, including any ancillary mountings. The US also proposed a draft decision for two implementation workshops for parties involved in harvesting and trade of *Corallium* (CoP14 Com.I.15).

The EU supported the proposed listing and decision, adding a further amendment to exempt fossil corals. MEXICO supported the listing but opposed the weight and fossil coral exemptions. Many NGOs supported the listing, with SWAN INTERNATIONAL saying that the listing would encourage governments to take immediate action to regulate coral trade, and EARTHTRUST pointing out that *Corallium* harvesting in the Pacific is not currently monitored by regional fisheries management bodies or the FAO.

JAPAN opposed the listing and, with SAINT KITTS AND NEVIS, suggested holding the workshops first and considering the listing proposals later. Also opposing the listing, NORWAY emphasized that the FAO Expert Panel did not support the listing. MOROCCO said that Mediterranean coral is already protected, and IWMC and ASSOCORAL urged consideration of Italian craftsmen's livelihoods.

The proposal, with the annotation and the amendment on fossil corals, was adopted by 62 votes to 28. The Committee then adopted by consensus the amendment to the annotation on *Corallium* spp. contained in the draft resolution on personal and household effects referred from Committee II. The Committee also requested the Secretariat to issue a notification reflecting the recent change in taxonomy of *Corallium* and *Paracorallium* spp. to facilitate the implementation of the listing. IWMC argued that the listing proposal did not include *Paracorallium* spp., but the US clarified that their proposal listed all species falling under *Corallium* and *Paracorallium* spp. and is therefore not broadened by the taxonomic change.

ELEPHANTS: In the afternoon, Francis Nhembe, Minister of Environment and Tourism, Zimbabwe, updated Committee I on the status of negotiations on elephant proposals, expressing confidence that an agreement may emerge during the evening informal ministerial consultations. Chair Leach then adjourned the session.

COMMITTEE II

COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT: The UK introduced the revised draft decision and resolution (CoP14 Com.II.23), which were both accepted by consensus.

INSPECTION OF TIMBER SHIPMENTS: Italy, on behalf of the EU, introduced revised draft decisions (CoP14 Com.II.18), which were adopted by consensus.

PERSONAL AND HOUSEHOLD EFFECTS: CHINA introduced a revised draft resolution and decision (CoP14 Com.II.16). The US proposed amendments to the draft resolution regarding quantitative limitations for coral species which were contingent on approval of a coral listing in Committee I. Chair Cheung referred the matter to Committee I. The EU proposed: amending the draft resolution regarding quantitative limitations for caviar; and adding two paragraphs to the draft decision requesting the SC to evaluate if specific items require different treatment, and implementation effectiveness of Conf. Res.13.7 (Personal and household effects). The revised draft resolution and decision were adopted by consensus with the EU's proposed amendments.

ASIAN BIG CATS: INDIA introduced the document prepared jointly with Nepal, China and the Russian Federation (CoP14 Inf.50), highlighting seven draft decisions on measures to address trade in Asian big cats, their parts and derivatives (CoP14 Com.II.19), including: actions by all parties, such as strengthening efforts to implement Res.Conf.12.5 (Tigers) and reporting on progress at SC57; and actions by range states, such as participating in a tiger trade enforcement meeting.

CHINA stressed that its national tiger trade ban policy review is in line with the Secretariat's recommendation to assess a new approach for addressing illicit trade in Asian big cats (CoP14 Doc.52). He referenced 2005 research demonstrating that captive breeding reduces the illegal market for tiger bone and provides a fundraising tool for conservation of wild populations. NEPAL, as Chair of the Global Tiger Forum, emphasized that tiger population numbers in captive breeding should not endanger wild populations.

Many delegates noted the alarming decline of wild tiger populations. Tiger range states reported on continued efforts in addressing tiger conservation and illicit trade. The EU urged parties to strengthen enforcement of Res. Conf.12.5. The US, supported by many, proposed a new decision whereby parties take into consideration Res. Conf.12.5 when, *inter alia*, evaluating domestic tiger trade control policies. He expressed concern about pressure within China to reopen the commercial trade in tiger parts and derivatives. Referring to his country's review of its tiger trade ban, CHINA emphasized that changes to the policy will only occur if a positive effect on wild tiger populations can be demonstrated. US traditional Chinese medicine institutions, supported by INDIA, said that traditional Chinese medicine has embraced the development of viable alternatives to tiger bone.

On captive breeding, the US proposed amending the draft decision limiting it to "intensive" captive breeding operations and specifying that tigers should not be bred for trade in their parts and derivatives. Emphasizing state sovereignty, CHINA proposed that the decision should apply only to "international" trade. The EU proposed addressing the decision to "range states" instead of "parties," opposed by the RUSSIAN FEDERATION, INDIA, NEPAL and THAILAND, who stated that captive breeding outside range states would not be addressed. The Committee approved the US-proposed amendments on captive breeding, but dismissed those proposed by the EU and China following a vote.

Agreeing on amendments to consider Res. Conf.12.5, and others by BHUTAN, to strengthen the decisions, and the RUSSIAN FEDERATION, to ensure consultation with tiger range states on monitoring illegal trade in Asian big cats, delegates approved the decisions by consensus.

BUDGET: Budget working group Chair O'Criodain presented a draft budget for the triennium 2009-2011 (CoP14 Com.II.31), noting that agreement had not been possible in the working group regarding a budget increase compared to the past triennium. He presented a document with options for a 0% or a 21.56% nominal increase in the budget, explaining that the latter option would entail the suppression of two staff posts, and reducing office maintenance and CoP15 costs, but would increase funding for activity-based work. The 0% option would entail maintaining the CITES website in English only, suppressing five staff posts, reducing CoP15 costs, and allocating minimal funds for activity-based work, such as scientific support, capacity building and enforcement.

Several Caribbean countries, ZIMBABWE, the EU, SWITZERLAND and SOUTH AFRICA supported the budget increase. TRAFFIC, IUCN and WWF urged greater emphasis on looking for additional funds for the new strategic vision goals.

CHINA and the EU urged parties to agree by consensus, while CITES Secretary-General Wijnstekers noted that there has never been consensus on the budget, and clarified that a three-quarters majority is needed in this case.

Chair Cheung proposed a 10% increase as a compromise, opposed by JAPAN and the US. Secretary-General Wijnstekers, supported by NIGERIA, TANZANIA, ZAMBIA, SENEGAL and BELGIUM, suggested a 15% increase, which he said could be achieved by suppressing three staff posts.

Delegates voted on the 15% increase but did not arrive at the required 75% majority, with 47 votes in favor and 28 against. They then voted on a 10% increase, which did not achieve the required majority, with 50 votes in favor and 30 against. Finally, they voted on a 3% increase, which did not achieve the required majority either, with 35 votes in favor and 49 against. Delegates then decided to defer the decision on the budget increase to plenary, and went on to address the proposed resolution on budget and terms of reference for the Trust Fund (CoP14 Com.II.31 Annex 8). The Committee adopted amendments strengthening SC oversight of budgetary matters and proposals with budgetary implications. A clause on arrears amended by BRAZIL and ARGENTINA was also adopted by consensus. The resolution was then agreed by consensus, with the exception of the paragraph stating the specific amount of increase in budget, which was referred to plenary.

IN THE CORRIDORS

As CoP14 headed into the final lap, many delegates reported heightened anxiety about the outcome of the protracted negotiations on both budget and elephant proposals. The elusive agreement among African range states on the latter continued to dominate discussions in the corridors, as negotiators tested yet another format – an informal ministerial consultation facilitated by Zimbabwe's Environment Minister – that continued past midnight.

Meanwhile, the Ministerial Roundtable provoked a lively discussion on CITES' role with respect to enforcement, sustainable use and livelihoods, with participants debating the stage at which the Convention should become involved in these issues. The idea of a Ministerial Declaration did not garner enough support, with one high-level participant commenting that it contained good ideas but was too much of a *fait accompli* for his government to accept. Many others, however, stressed that the ministerial-level meeting was an important first step, with Dutch Environment Minister Verburg expressing hope that another will be held at CoP15, which rumors suggest may be held in sunny Qatar.