



## SIXTEENTH MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA: 3-14 MARCH 2013

The sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP16) to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) opens today in Bangkok, Thailand, and will continue through Thursday, 14 March 2013.

During CoP16, participants will consider many issues, including: a proposal to improve transparency of voting during meetings of the CoP; a proposed amendment to Rule 25 on methods of voting, on the use of secret ballots; budgetary proposals for 2014-2016; the CITES Strategic Vision; cooperation between CITES and other biodiversity-related conventions; the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime; the relationship with the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES); the draft revision of Resolution Conf. 10.10 (Rev. CoP15) on trade in elephant specimens; introduction from the sea; non-detriment findings (NDF); a decision-making mechanism for a process of trade in ivory; Asian big cats; illegal trade in cheetahs; leopard quotas; monitoring the illegal killing of elephants (MIKE) and the illegal trade in ivory and other elephant specimens; rhinoceroses; tibetan and saiga antelope; and a draft resolution on implementation of the Convention for agarwood-producing taxa. Several proposals concern transfer of species from Appendix II to Appendix I, including polar bears. A number of other species are proposed for listing in Appendix II, including the porbeagle shark.

### 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, on 3 March 1973, and entered into force on 1 July 1975. There are currently 178 parties to the Convention. The latest to join was Lebanon, on 26 February 2013.

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, permitting such trade only

in exceptional circumstances. Appendix-II species are those that may become endangered if their trade is not regulated, thus 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 29,000 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, and a Scientific Authority, responsible for providing advice. 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 the CITES Secretariat, 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 two scientific committees: the Plants Committee (PC) and the Animals Committee (AC).

**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 the functioning of the Secretariat. The CoP also periodically reviews the list of resolutions and decisions, as well as the species listed in the appendices.

**CITES CoP13:** CoP13 met in Bangkok, Thailand, from 2-14 October 2004. Delegates addressed a range of topics, including 50 proposals to amend the CITES appendices. CoP13 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 curtail unregulated domestic ivory markets. Namibia and South Africa were each allowed an annual quota of five black rhinos for trophy hunting, and Swaziland was allowed to open up strictly controlled hunting of white rhinos. Other decisions focused on synergies with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Enforcement issues also received considerable attention.

**CITES CoP14:** CoP14 met in The Hague, the Netherlands from 3-15 June 2007. Delegates addressed a range of topics, including: the CITES Strategic Vision 2008-2013; a guide to compliance with the Convention; management of annual export quotas; and species trade and conservation issues, including Asian big cats, sharks and sturgeons. Delegates agreed that no cetacean species should be subject to periodic review while the International Whaling Commission (IWC) moratorium is in place. CoP14 approved the listing of: slender-horned and Cuvier's gazelles and slow loris on Appendix I; and Brazil wood, sawfish and eel on Appendix II. It also agreed to amend the annotation on African elephants to allow a one-off sale of ivory from Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe with a nine-year resting period for further ivory trade. The media spotlighted negotiations on the future of ivory trade and African elephant conservation, with many highlighting the consensus by African range states as a major achievement of this meeting.

**CITES CoP15:** CoP15 met in Doha, Qatar from 13-25 March 2010. The meeting considered 68 agenda items and 42 proposals to amend the CITES appendices. CoP15 adopted resolutions and decisions directed to parties, the Secretariat and Convention bodies on a wide range of topics including: electronic permitting; Asian big cats; rhinoceroses; bigleaf mahogany; and Madagascar plant species. Regarding species listings, CoP15 decided to list, among others: Kaiser's spotted newt; five species of tree frogs; the unicorn beetle; rosewood; holywood; and several Madagascar plant species.

### INTERSESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

**PC19:** The 19th session of the PC convened in Geneva, Switzerland from 18-21 April 2011. PC19 adopted the recommendations on the PC work-plan, NDFs, the periodic review and amendments to the appendices, the Review of Significant Trade (RST), orchids annotations, Madagascar and agarwood-producing taxa. Discussions on annotations, which prominently involved industry and civil society, proved more difficult and resulted in the PC taking note, rather than adopting, certain recommendations.

**AC25:** The 25th meeting of the AC convened in Geneva, Switzerland from 18-22 July 2011. AC 25 discussed seventeen substantive items, including: cooperation with other multilateral instruments; strategic planning; capacity building; NDFs; the RST in Appendix II species; the periodic review of animal species included in the appendices; amendments to the appendices; sharks; snakes; and sturgeon. AC 25 adopted recommendations on: the Biodiversity Indicators Partnership; the periodic review; RST; ranching; identification of CITES-listed corals in trade; progress on the Identification Manual; production systems; sturgeons; sharks; snakes; turtles and tortoises; and sea cucumbers.

**SC61:** The 61st meeting of the SC met in Geneva, Switzerland from 15-19 August 2011. SC61 agreed to a number of recommendations, including on: the Report on the Working Group on revising the agreement between the CITES SC and the Executive Director of UNEP; conducting a study on the rationale and history of the rules applying to votes by secret ballot within CITES' CoPs; the adoption of national laws for the implementation of the Convention; the RST; enforcement matters; elephant management and conservation; and Asian big cats.

**AC26 AND PC20 MEETINGS:** AC26 convened in Geneva, Switzerland from 15-20 March 2012. AC26 was followed by the Joint Meeting of the AC and PC, which took place in Dublin, Ireland from 22-24 March 2012. Finally, PC20 met in Dublin from 26-30 March 2012. During AC26, participants adopted recommendations on: the RST in specimens of Appendix-II species; the Periodic Review of animal species included in the CITES appendices; the reports from Caspian Sea range states on the evaluation of sturgeon stock assessment and Total Allowable Catch (TAC) determination methodology; the implementation of Resolution Conf. 12.6 (Rev. CoP15) on conservation and management of sharks; and the report of the Working Group (WG) on sea cucumbers. During the Joint Meeting, the AC and PC adopted recommendations on: the IPBES; the Report of the joint WG on Climate Change; the Evaluation of RST; and NDFs, including a draft guidance on the making of NDFs.

At PC20, participants adopted recommendations on: the progress report on strategic planning; the CBD Global Strategy for Plant Conservation; the review of Resolution 14.8 (Periodic Review of the Appendices); annotations; RST in seven species of medicinal and aromatic plants; timber issues; the Periodic Review of plant species included in the CITES Appendices; bigleaf mahogany and other neotropical timber species; timber species, medicinal plants and agarwood-producing species; annotations; and proposals for possible consideration at CoP16.

**SC62:** SC62 met in Geneva, Switzerland from 23-27 July 2012. The Committee addressed a heavy agenda, including: financial matters; relationship with UNEP, focusing on instances of non-compliance with its MoU with CITES; cooperation with other organizations; livelihoods; compliance and enforcement; and species trade and conservation, with discussions focusing on elephants, rhinos and tigers, among others. The SC made progress on a package of measures on elephant conservation, in an attempt to tackle the entire ivory trade chain and consider both short- and longer-term measures. The Committee also agreed on measures to address the rhino crisis and on reporting on captive breeding of tigers, and endorsed a draft recommendation on livelihoods and guidelines for cooperation with the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT). Delegates also made progress on introduction from the sea.

**SC63:** SC63 met in Bangkok, Thailand on 2 March 2013. The Committee addressed: potential conflicts of interest; RST; e-commerce of CITES-listed species; and elephant conservation, illegal killing and ivory trade. During the discussion on elephant conservation, the Secretariat, noting the high level of illegal ivory trade, requested China, Kenya and Tanzania to increase the level of enforcement at their ports. The SC took note of the report on elephant conservation, illegal killing and ivory.