

CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA



Twentieth meeting of the Animals Committee

Johannesburg (South Africa), 29 March-2 April 2004

Conservation of and trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles [Resolution Conf. 11.9 (Rev. CoP12) and Decisions 12.41, 12.42 and 12.43]

REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP

Members of the working group

Regional representative of Africa, Michael Griffin (Chair);

Observers from Parties: China, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Korea, Malaysia, United Republic of Tanzania, United States of America;

Observers from inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Herpetologie und Terrarienkunde, Humane Society of the United States, International Wildlife Coalition, IUCN – the World Conservation Union, IWMC – World Conservation Trust, Midwest States Fish and Wildlife Association, Pro Wildlife, TRAFFIC, Wildcare Africa Trust.

The zoologist of the Nomenclature Committee; and

The CITES Secretariat.

Summary of the discussions and recommendations

The CITES Animals Committee Working Group on Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles met on the afternoon and evening of 1 April 2004.

Asian Turtle Trade [Resolution Conf. 11.9 (Rev. CoP12)]

The Working Group considered AC20 Inf. 25, which resulted from deliberations at AC19 and intersessional work. Inf. 25 contains a wide variety of topics and views, which were not universally shared by all participants in the Working Group.

After extensive consideration, the Working Group felt that, while essential for turtle conservation, formulating general recommendations for the functioning of CITES would be beyond the focus of the Working Group.

Consequently, the Working Group drafted 8 recommendations which could be forwarded as Decisions to be proposed for CoP13:

Recommendations directed to the Secretariat:

- To facilitate, where necessary, the compilation and provision of information on Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles for the use by enforcement officers, including facilitation of translation of the information in local languages. This information primarily concerns identification, local names, distribution and illustrations, and compilation can draw on existing identification guides;
- To contact the World Customs Organisation in order to be informed about the possibility of obtaining specific Harmonised Codes for turtles and turtle products in trade; if such is possible, then to facilitate development and adoption of such codes;
- To facilitate the development of Non-Detriment Finding Guidelines specific to Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles, building on the existing IUCN guidelines, in consultation with IUCN, Scientific and Management Authorities, and others;
- To facilitate development of partnerships between interested organisations or other bodies to, in co-operation with range States, develop and operate rescue centres for confiscated Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles;
- To encourage Non-Governmental Organisations to develop, produce and distribute appropriate posters and other materials for public education and awareness of Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Conservation;
- To make available the Proceedings of the Kunming Workshop.

Recommendations directed to Parties:

- To develop proposals to include threatened species of Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles in the appropriate CITES Appendices, with reference to Res. Conf. 9.24 and 9.25 (rev) and the recommendations contained in the results of the Kunming Workshop (AC19 Doc15.3) and AC19 Doc.15.1 Annex 1. Non-Governmental Organisations are strongly encouraged to assist Parties in these endeavours, where appropriate;
- To ensure that transport of live Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles is in compliance with IATA guidelines.

Pancake Tortoises (Decision 12.43)

A subgroup of the Working Group then considered progress on Decision 12.43 regarding Pancake Tortoises (*Malacochersus tornieri*). The group considered available and new information and identified 4 priority actions:

- An investigation of genetic variability among wild populations and farm stock;
- Verification of occurrence in States that are not currently understood as Range States;
- Inspections of farms with regard to captive management conditions;
- Completion of the desktop review of the species.

The Secretariat will work with Management and Scientific Authorities of all known and unconfirmed Range States, as well as with technical specialists, to implement these actions as soon as possible within the available resources.