

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

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Fiftieth meeting of the Standing Committee  
Geneva (Switzerland), 15-19 March 2004

Interpretation and implementation of the Convention

STURGEONS

The attached document has been prepared by the Management Authority of Kazakhstan. It is available in English only.



## Progress Report

To:  
CITES Secretariat  
Geneve, Suisse

From:  
Management Authority  
CITES – Kazakhstan

For consideration at the 50<sup>th</sup> session of the Standing Committee

Distinguished Members, Ladies and Gentlemen!

This past year has been remarkable and full of accomplishments for the CITES National Management Authority in Kazakhstan. A fisheries committee was created on July 18 2003, affiliated with the Ministry of Agriculture, charged with management, regulation, and control of conservation and responsible use of fish and other aquatic bioresources. The Committee is chaired by Murat Mussataev, who has a long experience with wildlife conservation issues.

The structure of the management ladder has undergone a complete overhaul. From a top heavy structure, where all decision making authority was concentrated on the top, the management model has been transformed into a pyramid, where the top is charged with formulating policy and medium and long term strategy, and where decision making has been brought as close to the grass roots level as possible. With this aim in mind, three intraregional units have been created, whose primary responsibility is regulating conservation and use of aquatic bioresources in transboundary regions, i.e. Ural-Caspian, Zaisan-Irtysh and Balkhash-Alakol units.

In order to facilitate the day-to-day work of the Fisheries committee, four regional zonal departments have been organised, in the West, South, North and East-Central regions of the country. Among their many responsibilities it would be worthwhile to point at their role in distributing quota allocations via competitive mechanisms, and assembling ad hoc working groups, with active participation by researchers, scientists and fishers themselves, for dealing with various problems of their respective region.

In December 2003, the Republic of Kazakhstan signed, together with the other Caspian riparian states, *The Regional Programme for Joint Management*,

*Preservation and Sustainable Utilisation of Bioresources of the Caspian*, as well as the Programme of international ad hoc sea surveys to estimate the numbers of the sturgeon population. Principles and criteria of management and conservation of marine bioresources, developed and approved by FAO, serve as a basis for these Programmes.

In many ways, the successful conclusion of the strenuous negotiations on the aforementioned Programmes could not have transpired without an invaluable contribution made by the scientific establishments in the field of fisheries research, primarily the Fisheries Research Centre. It has seen its state financing increase eighteen fold in recent years, which is a reflection on an ever growing understanding of impossibility of formulating and implementing sound and efficient fisheries conservation and management policies without a corresponding scientific input.

The Centre's mission is to spearhead fundamental and applied research into the creation of sound scientific bases of the sustainable use and increased productivity of regional fisheries.

Main directions of research:

- eco monitoring of biodiversity and habitats of marine organisms in the main fisheries of Kazakhstan;
- development of scientific bases of promoting biodiversity preservation and sustainable utilisation of straddling fish stocks;
- development of scientific principles of preservation of the genetic diversity of rare and high value species, as to avoid creating genetic bottlenecks;
- development of an annual forecast report on the biological conditions of fish stocks;
- development of environment protection measures formulating recommendations on fisheries development policy and long term strategy;
- development of scientifically sound principles of preservation and growth of fish stocks;
- development of regulatory recommendations with respect to fisheries;
- development of suggestions and advisory recommendations for habitat protection and species preservation purposes to be used in fisheries and aquaculture management;
- development of comprehensive biological principles of responsible fish and other marine resources utilisation;
- development of schemes of introduction and acclimatisation of new high value species into the wild.

Overall, the fisheries management authority has been on a virtual spending spree. State budget allocation for the Committee for the purposes of capacity building has been increased 13.3 times. This has allowed, among many other things, to equip the central authority and its territorial units and departments with state of the art

computers and up-to-date communication devices, without which the work of a complicated management organism in the modern world cannot be fathomed.

It is crystal clear that people who are on the forefront of a fight against poaching and smuggling of CITES regulated species must be accordingly remunerated. It is worth noting, that in the past, efforts to dam the flow of illegal fishing and trade in fish was hampered and attenuated, if not altogether negated, by the low level of pay among fishing inspectors and other specialists working on the ground. With this aim in mind, acting according to the principle of *ex equo et bono*, the body of fishing inspectors has been granted collectively the status of civil servants. That means a four fold increase in salaries. Moreover, as of January 1 2004, all civil servants have seen their salaries go up twice, in some cases more. And more hikes are in the offing.

Our experience has proved beyond any doubt the wisdom and benefits of organising joint task force programmes with the Customs Agency, the Ministry of the Interior and the Financial Police with the rationale of stemming, *in situ*, illicit trade and cross border smuggling of CITES regulated species, sturgeon in particular. As a result of these measures, *inter alia*, 1233 instances of violations of fisheries regulations were detected, out of which 1154 were instances of illegal catches. 80.683 kg of fish were seized, including 12.914 kg of sturgeon, as well as 567 kg of caviar. 1.506 objects of fishing gear and equipment, as well as 128 boats and other floating devices were seized from the violators.

178 cases were passed on to the law enforcement agencies for review as to the feasibility of indictments being issued. Law courts sentenced 982 persons to administrative punishments, with hefty fines. These facts exemplify admirably the success that Kazakhstan has had in its effort to diminish, if not altogether halt, illegal fishing and trade, notwithstanding some well publicised instances of caviar smuggling abroad, whose very occurrence gave some ammunition, using the fallacy of *post hoc ergo propter hoc*, make spurious arguments and specious allegations of inefficiency and gross incompetence among the personnel of various fisheries regulating authorities in Kazakhstan.

Undoubtedly, the most momentous event of the past year was the adoption by the Cabinet of the Programme of Fisheries Development to the year 2006. This medium term programme truly gives the Fisheries Committee its *raison d'être*. Not only does it serve as an indispensable tool for creating a strategic vision and outlook for the fisheries industry up to the year 2020, but also provides guidance and regulatory foundation for any short and medium term policy considerations. The Programme makes a prominent stress upon the necessity of aquaculture development, not only in the Caspian, where it is probably the last and only hope of the sturgeon to remain a viable, commercially fished species, but in the many fresh water reservoirs of Kazakhstan, as well, with the aim of acting through the supply side lever, to provide a more equitable access to fish and fish products to a wider segment of a more and more health conscious population.

Part and parcel of the aforementioned Programme has always been the conservation and sustainable use of sturgeon stocks in the Caspian. The Fisheries Committee, ahead of schedule, has completed the drafting of a proposed legislative act, provisionally entitled *The Sturgeon Conservation and Sustainable Use in the Caspian Act*, which outlines the measures necessary for conservation of the sturgeon for use not only for the present, but for the future generations as well. The Act purports, in particular, to create a favourable climate to attract investments into the hatcheries farm business, as well as into sturgeon aquaculture, whose commercial viability has been economically proven. This Act is now under review by the Cabinet, and after some inevitable, but, hopefully, minor changes, will be sent to the Parliament for passing.

In conclusion, I would like to make a point that in today's interconnected world, no country, however big and powerful, can solve problems on its own, especially when it comes to management of straddling stocks of fish in transboundary waters. Behind the routine bickering of hard negotiations the real issue must not be overlooked, that we must preserve our bioresources for posterity. It is of course easy to say, "It is the way the world works, there is nothing to be done." But our actions make the world we live in, and that is what should always be kept in mind.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.

Murat Mussataev,  
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Chairman, Fisheries Committee, Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of  
Kazakhstan