

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

Fifty-third meeting of the Standing Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 27 June-1 July 2005

INFORMAL MEETING ON SAIGA ANTELOPE

Wednesday 29 June, Geneva

An informal, open meeting of interested governments and organizations was convened from 13.00 to 14.30. The participants list is at the end of this summary record. The meeting Chair was Dr. H. Dublin, IUCN SSC and the rapporteur Dr. S. Lieberman, WWF.

The main objectives of the informal meeting were to:

- Exchange information on the different saiga-related activities that are planned or being undertaken by IUCN, CMS, CITES, CITES Parties, and interested NGOs;
- Discuss collaboration in implementing CITES Decisions 13.27-13.35 on the saiga antelope;
- Review possibilities for joint actions to be undertaken in 2005-2007.

CITES Secretariat:

The CITES Secretariat reported on its workplan to implement Decisions 13.27-35 of COP13, in particular 13.35, which is directed to the Secretariat. The CITES Secretariat is in discussions with the European Commission regarding possible funding, and is working on 6 key actions/activities:

1. The CITES and CMS Secretariats have met recently to discuss activities, common dates, reporting, etc. for their individual undertakings with regard to saiga antelope. A joint progress report may be submitted by the two Secretariats to SC54, as well as to the CMS Standing Committee.
2. A CITES Enforcement Workshop will take place in August 2005 in Western China (Urumqi), which will involve range State enforcement officials, the CMS and CITES Secretariats, TRAFFIC and other invited NGOs. It will cover species and issues of regional concern, and will definitely include saiga on the agenda. This will be the first time for many enforcement officials to meet each other, and understand the concerns of other range countries.
3. The Secretariat will undertake missions as per Decision 13.35. The first may be after the Urumqi Workshop; the majority are scheduled for 2006. If appropriate, joined missions of the CITES and CMS Secretariats could be envisaged.
4. The Secretariat is working on trade issues as a high priority, working in collaboration with TRAFFIC. The work will focus on key markets, quantifying and understanding demand, improving trade controls, and identifying products. Target countries are now being identified, and research priorities are being developed collaboratively with TRAFFIC.
5. The CITES Secretariat hopes to organize with the CMS Secretariat a first meeting of the signatories in mid-2006, assuming that the CMS MOU is signed in November 2005. This meeting will involve all range States of Saiga, including Mongolia, China and range States of *Saiga t. tatarica* that may not have signed the MoU.

6. Technical and financial support to range States is also needed for communications, reporting, and translation. The project will provide some assistance to range States in this regard.

The European Union has agreed to provide the Secretariat with approximately EURO 70,000 (less than 70% of the anticipated costs) and Germany is looking to see if it can contribute matching funds.

CMS Secretariat

1. The CMS Secretariat reported on progress in the ratification or signature of the *Memorandum of Understanding on Saiga Conservation, Restoration, and Sustainable Use and its accompanying Action Plan* by the four relevant range States (Kazakhstan, Russian Federation, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan).
2. The Secretaries General of CMS and CITES co-signed a letter to the four saiga range States reminding them of the need to sign the MoU, and asked them for a letter of intent on signature of the MoU by 15 July 2005. The CMS Secretariat hopes to be able to have the MoU open for formal signature at the CMS COP in the hopes of bringing the MOU into force. This will require that at least three of the four range States sign.
3. Several side meetings in saiga range countries have been organized by the CMS.
4. Many of the above-mentioned CITES activities are joint with the CMS Secretariat.
5. CMS COP8 in Nairobi (November 2005) will be an opportunity to have a side meeting or event to focus attention on this species. The nature, focus and content of this meeting will depend on the progress of the MoU by that time.

IUCN

1. IUCN reported on several activities of the past few months. The IUCN/SSC's Antelope Specialist Group is very focused on this species. The IUCN World Conservation Congress, in November 2004 (Bangkok) adopted Recommendation 3.113, "Conservation of Saiga Antelope *Saiga tatarica tatarica* and *Saiga tatarica mongolica*", which contains 7 operative paragraphs with priority actions.
2. The IUCN/SSC Chair is now in regular dialogue with the CMS and CITES Secretariats on saiga.
3. Saiga was discussed informally at the February 2005 IUCN Council and with SSC members, and agreement on more formal actions was taken by the IUCN/SSC Steering Committee. A letter, signed by the IUCN Director General and the SSC Chair, is ready to be sent to the four range States of *Saiga tatarica tatarica*, Mongolia and China, urging cooperation with the CMS MoU.
4. There has been considerable discussion on the Action Plan attached to the MoU within IUCN.
5. IUCN shared the information that the intended UNEP/GEF regional project for saiga has been superseded by a plan for UNDP/GEF to develop a project with Kazakhstan on saiga.
6. IUCN is willing to bring its convening power and expertise to a proactive action planning process, and to actively engage in implementing this.

China

The government of China reported on some significant developments:

1. The upcoming enforcement workshop in Western China is very important, and will focus on tortoises, Asian big cats, saiga, musk deer, Tibetan antelope and sturgeon.
2. Immediately after both the CITES COP and the IUCN World Conservation Congress, China convened two workshops which involved WCS and TRAFFIC, government officials, and traditional medicine experts, to review the saiga situation. For both saiga and musk, a new labelling system has been introduced. Significantly, no new medicines containing saiga antelope will be approved by the government, effective September 2005. Any existing medicines containing saiga horn will be phased

out and efforts will commence to find synthetic alternatives. Stockpile quantities are being confirmed with traditional medicine companies across China.

3. China stated to be committed to fully implementing Decision 13.27.
4. In terms of law enforcement, there is an MoU with Customs of China and the Chinese CITES Management Authority. Each China Branch Office of the Management Authority has an MoU with local Customs as well. Public education and awareness-raising is a high priority.
5. China shares the concerns about saiga population declines due to hunting for meat, poaching for horn (for traditional medicines) and habitat loss. China looks forward to improved communications, particularly on enforcement, with range countries.
6. It is China's intention to become a signatory to the CMS soon.

WWF

1. WWF reported on both its field activities in range countries on saiga and on the work of TRAFFIC on trade issues.
2. WWF is working on saiga both in Mongolia and Kazakhstan, with some involvement in the Russian Federation as well.
3. The focus of WWF's work is on all threats to the species - both from international trade as well as poaching and domestic (meat trade). The key issues are poverty alleviation, poaching for meat, the breakdown of systems and infrastructure in the former Soviet Union, the need to provide sustainable livelihoods for local people, and habitat protection. WWF is placing significant attention on anti-poaching, habitat conservation, and livelihood issues (as well as scientific issues, monitoring, etc.).
4. TRAFFIC is working on demand and trade issues (in collaboration with the Secretariat), noting that China is important as a key consumer country, but there should also be increased attention on other consumer countries in both East and Southeast Asia.

Some key consensus points from the group's discussion included:

1. CMS will inform the participants of the outcome of their query to the relevant range States as regards to the CMS MoU.
2. Signing the CMS MoU is a priority, and opportunities need to be found to encourage the relevant governments to sign it and ensure that it is put into effect.
3. A meeting of MoU signatories and saiga range States in mid-2006 is important, but conservation efforts or action planning should not wait for this event.
4. Conservation actions for this species must continue under any circumstance and therefore, depending on the outcome of the query, next steps will need to be discussed in light of the fact that urgent action is needed for this species in many parts of its range. If urgent action is not taken, this species might not survive another wave of poaching.
5. The upcoming regional enforcement workshop in China in August 2005 should be seen as separate from any other potential political processes. It is a good opportunity to make progress on enforcement issues, but political commitment and attention must come in other fora.
6. IUCN and relevant NGOs should be invited to bring their expertise into the further evolution and implementation of the Action Plan, and be engaged in a process for revision of the Action Plan, working with all range States, consumer governments and stakeholders.
7. International trade is a threat to this species, but there are other major threats as well that must be addressed (e.g. poaching for meat, habitat loss).

8. Attendees at this informal meeting commit to staying in contact and to share information, progress, and activities.
9. Key dates identified are:
 - a) CMS COP and its Scientific Council in November 2005
 - b) CITES Standing Committee 54 in the second half of 2006
 - c) CITES COP14 in June 2007

Participants (alphabetical by surname)

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