



**Statement by  
Mr. Achim Steiner  
Executive Director  
United Nations Environment Programme**

**to the**

**54<sup>TH</sup> CITES Standing Committee Meeting**

**Geneva, Switzerland  
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Delivered by Ms. Elizabeth Maruma Mrema  
Chief, MEA Support and Cooperation Branch  
Division of Environmental Law and Conventions

**Distinguished delegates  
Ladies and Gentlemen**

1. It is a great honor to address you today on behalf of Mr. Achim Steiner, the Executive Director of UNEP.
2. Mr. Steiner sends his best wishes for a successful outcome of the fifty fourth meeting of the CITES Standing Committee. Due to unavoidable circumstances, Mr. Steiner regrets that he is unable to be with us here in Geneva at this occasion, however, he has asked me to deliver his statement and to stress that UNEP's commitment to providing support to CITES is stronger than ever before.
3. On behalf of Mr. Achim Steiner, I would like to deliver the following statement:

**Mr. Chairman,  
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

4. First of all I would like to thank the Government of Switzerland for hosting the fifty-forth meeting of the CITES Standing Committee. I am confident that your discussions here over the next few days will draw inspiration from the excellent facilities that have been made available to us and from the warm welcome we have received from the Swiss people.

**Mr. Chairman,  
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

5. Implementation of MEAs continues to be at the top of not only UNEP's agenda but also UN Reform process. In the past months, I constituted a Task Team that worked full time on re-defining UNEP's work at the national level in particular in the area of capacity building and technology support.
6. The preliminary results of the Team are promising and relates to MEAs implementation at the national and regional levels. These proposals are contained in our programme of work for the biennium 2008 – 2009 which will be presented for adoption at the 24<sup>th</sup> session of the UNEP Governing Council / Global Ministerial Environment Forum to be held in Nairobi in February 2007.
7. I am pleased to inform you that from October 2006 UNEP will co-host the CITES MIKE project in our offices in Nairobi.

8. Also, in its efforts to improve the flow of financial information to ensure that the UNEP-administered convention secretariats, including CITES have up-to-date and accurate information, UNEP has embarked on the installation of the United Nations Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) which is now complete in most of the UNEP-administered convention secretariats.

**Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

9. There are many reasons why CITES meetings such as this stand out as such important events on the international environmental calendar. CITES creates high levels of enthusiasm, excitement and expectations worldwide because this Convention is practical and has created positive impacts on wildlife management, on local communities and on economies. The commitment to science-based decision-making, the rigorous procedures for updating the Appendices, and the Secretariat's efforts to engage all stakeholders, to support capacity-building, enforcement and other aspects of implementation give this agreement both muscle and real teeth. All these initiatives have worked well even without the existence of specific formal compliance body as is in other MEAs. We applaud the Standing Committee for being able to play this role so effectively and encourage them to continue with this commitment.

10. But above all, CITES remains as fresh and vigorous as ever because it has moved with the changing times. The global environmental scene has changed almost beyond recognition over the past 30 years but you, the Parties and Observers to CITES, continue to keep it relevant by adapting to the new needs and circumstances.

**Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

11. The World Summit on Sustainable Development confirmed that biodiversity is a fundamental resource for the sustainable development of humanity. Without diversity of species and healthy ecosystems the MDG goals for alleviating poverty and achieving environmental sustainability cannot be achieved. But to conserve biodiversity resources we must not only protect vulnerable traded species, we must also mainstream sustainable management of biological resources into all the major economic sectors. Here I am talking about forestry, fisheries, agriculture, health and tourism, for example. This is the message from the Millennium Development Goals, the WSSD, as well as from the Ecosystem Approach adopted by the Convention on Biological Diversity.

12. CITES is clearly aware of this need to mainstream conservation and one of the exciting trends now taking place is the move to list economically valuable timber and fish species. I take this as a sign from governments that the degradation of oceans and forests has reached such proportions that all available mechanisms are being mobilized to deal with it. CITES indeed offers sharply defined ways of discouraging the unsustainable harvesting of vulnerable species of trees, fish and other species whose price tag could otherwise become their death certificate.
13. CITES demonstrates the interdependence of human needs and wildlife conservation. Some such interdependencies are complex and challenging for CITES. For example, the continuing problem of bushmeat consumption, where the international trade is dwarfed by local markets. At least by strengthening protection of our nearest relatives, the Great Apes, you can demonstrate that such animals are far more valuable alive than dead. Together with UNESCO, UNEP is doing all it can to work alongside you through our Great Apes Survival Project. Various outreach materials on this issue are available for your information at this meeting.
14. This focus on the species level is a great strength of your Convention. I believe it is vital for CITES to work alongside the other biodiversity-related conventions, contributing species knowledge where it is needed, for example in the implementation of the CBD's Global Strategy for Plant Conservation. UNEP has been pleased to support, together with CITES and other partners, an Expert Meeting on Knowledge Management for biodiversity-related MEAs in Cambridge, UK earlier this year. That meeting, whose report is before you for consideration, demonstrated many ways in which knowledge management for MEAs including CITES can and should enhance and complement implementation of MEAs for tackling the global biodiversity crisis.
15. In implementing new measures for conservation, we must also be prepared to demonstrate progress towards reducing the rate of loss of biodiversity. A target date of 2010 has been agreed by all CBD Parties and reconfirmed by nations at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, by which time we should know whether we are being successful. CITES is clearly contributing to this goal, and would perhaps benefit from recognizing its role and reflecting this contribution more explicitly in its own work and documentation.

**Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

16. I am fully aware that the administrative support services to the UNEP administered conventions/Agreements have not been up to the standards expected by the Secretariats and the Parties. The first step to improving the services is the recognition of this fact. The next step is to identify the solutions to the problem followed by implementation.
17. We have already moved from step 1 to step 2 and developed an Action Plan for Improving the Administrative Support Services to the UNEP Administered Conventions/Agreements. The Action Plan presents clear solutions on how UNEP can better provide efficient, effective and timely administrative services to these conventions based on convention specific administrative arrangements with UNEP and clearly defined delegated authority to MEA Executive Secretaries.
18. Meanwhile, UNEP is working actively to promote synergies amongst the biodiversity-related conventions. It also provides media and other support services. We are also assessing the potential benefits and uses of economic instruments for biodiversity conservation. As an organization, UNEP remains committed to achieving and ensuring regular improvements in the way we administer and service the CITES secretariat.
19. Finally, the issue of CITES-UNEP Memorandum of Agreement which has been outstanding for a while. I would like to emphasize that a new process established within the UN system is currently on going. The process aims to review the common support services that the United Nations organizations administering MEAs provide, in order to identify ways to improve coordination among, synergies between and the effectiveness of United Nations system-administered MEAs. The report will also focus on the potential for enhanced coordination and coherence in the field of international environmental governance. As you are aware, financial mechanisms available to these environmental agreements have been managed more and more on a sectoral basis and yet to be driven with a coherence. Another objective of the process is to identify major constraints on integrated implementation of the UN system-administered MEAs in administrative and budgetary terms. A set of common guidelines will then be produced which will include administrative and budgetary procedures to improve the provision of support services by the UN organizations administering MEAs, with the aim of improving coordination among, synergies between and effectiveness of UN system-administered MEAs in areas such as scientific assessment, monitoring, implementation review and compliance, advocacy and awareness raising. The system will

develop set of common management principles applicable to the UN system-administered MEAs on how to share and maximize resources available to them, as well as on how to fully benefit from the support services provided by the UN system organizations.

20. With these final words of support and encouragement, I would like to wish you a productive meeting and an enjoyable stay here in Geneva.

THANK YOU

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