

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



Sixteenth meeting of the Animals Committee
Shepherdstown (United States of America), 11-15 December 2000

Animal species bred in captivity (Decision 11.102 and Resolution Conf. 11.14)

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN *EX-SITU* BREEDING OPERATIONS AND
IN-SITU CONSERVATION PROGRAMMES (DECISION 11.102)

This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.

1. At its 11th meeting, the Conference of the Parties decided (see Decision 11.102) that:

The Animals Committee shall examine the complex issues related to the origin of founder breeding stock and the relationship between ex situ breeding operations and in situ conservation of the species and, in collaboration with interested organizations, identify possible strategies and other mechanisms by which registered ex situ breeding operations may contribute to enhancing the recovery and/or conservation of the species within the countries of origin, and report its findings at the 12th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

2. The Secretariat welcomes this Decision as it is timely to clarify a number of concerns held by certain Parties, about issues such as:
 - the unintended consequences of establishing *ex situ* breeding operations such as the risk of creating disincentives for habitat protection and *in situ* conservation, for example by requiring less strict controls over trade in specimens from captive breeding than from other production systems (and thus making it easier and cheaper to produce specimens for trade through captive breeding than maintaining wild populations and their habitat for a controlled offtake);
 - price contrasts between production systems based on wild populations versus captive breeding as well as production within range States compared to *ex situ* production in other countries (i.e. cheaper prices of specimens produced from wild populations, or within range States using any method, compared to prices achieved for specimens produced in other countries may suggest that some producers of wildlife in exporting countries are not able to realize the full potential value of the specimens that they produce);
 - the assumption held by the general public that captive-breeding operations, in the general understanding of the term, have no negative conservation impacts (and even worse, the assumption that captive-breeding operations by definition contribute to the conservation of species), when indeed captive-breeding operations that do not meet the criteria for registration may have considerable negative impacts;

- the continuing use of captive-breeding operations to launder unauthorized wild-caught or illegally traded specimens (also with reference to the sometimes obscure relationship between captive-breeding operations and wild populations within the country where the species concerned occurs);
 - the lack of sustainability of some *ex situ* breeding operations that do not meet the criteria for registration but claim to be contributing to species conservation in spite of their continued dependence on wild specimens;
 - the lack of support for *in situ* conservation and production systems involving wild populations by importers (i.e. commercial importers and major trade networks are not always adequately supporting the management of production systems in exporting countries to avoid over-utilization and subsequent closure of markets);
 - the economic importance, with particular reference to socio-economic impacts, of trade in specimens produced through various systems. Some of the world's most marginalized communities in economic terms account for a high proportion of trade in CITES-listed species. The vulnerability of such communities to unnecessary trade controls and unpredictable access to consumer markets – as may result from regulatory policies favouring captive-breeding systems - appears not to be fully appreciated;
 - the question of ownership of genetic resources (i.e. that the countries of origin should benefit from trade in CITES-listed species) and whether CITES can contribute to the handling of this issue in the forum of the Convention on Biological Diversity.
3. The Committee is therefore requested to consider how it wishes to approach this matter, taking into account the problems mentioned in paragraph 2. As so little is generally known about this historically contentious subject, and few case studies are readily available, the Secretariat is in favour of conducting a global survey to obtain information, notwithstanding its concerns about the low response rates to Notifications to the Parties. The Committee may wish to consider adopting a process that would include:
- requesting Management Authorities *inter alia* to provide information on the relationship between captive-breeding operations and *in situ* conservation programmes at national and international levels;
 - requesting other appropriate organizations, and in particular the IUCN/SSC Wildlife Trade Programme, the Conservation Breeding Specialist Group and the Reintroduction Specialist Group, to inform the Committee on this subject;
 - establishing a project for which external funds should be sought, to research the resource economics (which include the relative socio-economic importance) of trade in specimens from various production systems;
 - establishing a project, for which external funds should be sought, to research the relative conservation impact of various production systems, focused on a number of target species;
 - exploring potential cooperation with the Convention on Biological Diversity on this subject.
4. The Secretariat has been informed of an initiative by the IUCN/SSC Wildlife Trade Programme to organize a technical workshop on the conservation value of captive-breeding operations, which it considers to be a potentially important step on this subject also for species included in the CITES Appendices. It accordingly recommends that the IUCN/SSC Wildlife Trade Programme be invited to play an active role in work undertaken by the Committee on this subject.