

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



Twenty-sixth meeting of the Animals Committee  
Geneva (Switzerland), 15-20 March 2012 and Dublin (Ireland), 22-24 March 2012

Sturgeons and paddlefish

SECRETARIAT'S REPORT

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.
2. In Resolution Conf. 12.7 (Rev. CoP14) on *Conservation of and trade in sturgeons and paddlefish*, the Conference of the Parties "directs the Secretariat to provide at each meeting of the Animals Committee a written report, including references to relevant documents, on its activities related to the conservation of and trade in sturgeons and paddlefish". The present document is the fourth such report and covers the period from July 2011 to January 2012. The Secretariat will give an oral update of relevant activities, if any, that were undertaken after this period.

Export quotas

3. The second RECOMMENDS of Resolution Conf. 12.7 (Rev. CoP14) concerns the establishment, submission and communication of catch and export quotas, and the role of the Secretariat in that regard.

Quotas from 1 March 2011 to 29 February 2012

- a) Concerning the information required under paragraph a) in this second RECOMMENDS, the Secretariat did not receive the required information from any range State, with the exception of Ukraine which notified the Secretariat of zero export quotas for caviar and meat of stocks of *Acipenseriformes* that it shared with other range States, as well as for fertilized eggs and fingerlings. Consequently, the Secretariat published zero export quotas for all shared stocks in compliance with subparagraph a) v) of the Resolution.

In the course of 2011, voluntary sturgeon export quotas were published for the Islamic Republic of Iran (for caviar and meat of captive-bred origin) and Romania (for fertilized eggs of source code "F").

Quotas from 1 March 2012 to 29 February 2013

- b) By 31 December 2011, no range State had submitted the information required under paragraph a) in the second RECOMMENDS. The Secretariat therefore published zero export quotas for all shared stocks in accordance with subparagraph a) v) of the Resolution.

In December 2011, Canada advised the Secretariat that it had continued to work with the United States of America on the development of a regional conservation strategy for *Acipenser oxyrinchus*, which was hoped to be finalized very soon. At the same time, Canada would be undertaking a joint review of the scientific assessment of its proposed annual export quota of 400 kg of caviar of wild origin for this species. The annual export quota starting 1 March 2012, together with the completed regional conservation strategy, would be communicated to the Secretariat in early 2012.

In accordance with subparagraph a) v) of the Resolution, in the second RECOMMENDS, Canada and the United States have a zero export quota for their shared stocks until such time as they communicate their quotas in writing to the Secretariat and the Secretariat in turn informs the Parties.

Up-to-date information on sturgeon export quotas is available from the CITES website at <http://www.cites.org/eng/resources/quotas/index.php>.

#### Evaluation of the assessment and monitoring methodologies used for shared stocks

4. This matter is dealt with in document AC25 Doc. 15.2.

#### Regional cooperation for shared stocks of sturgeons

5. The Secretariat was invited by the Russian Federation to an *International workshop on modern methods of sturgeon species stock assessment and TAC substantiation*, held in Astrakhan from 15 to 19 August 2011. Unfortunately, it was unable to attend because the workshop coincided with the 61st meeting of the Standing Committee (SC61, Geneva, August 2011). The Secretariat was not informed about the outcomes of this workshop.
6. The status of the Review of Significant Trade of *Huso huso* is addressed in document AC26 Doc. 12.3.

#### Trade controls and enforcement

7. At SC61, the Secretariat presented a progress report on the operation of the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre caviar trade database (document SC61 Doc. 48.1). It highlighted that the Committee might wish to consider whether regular reporting on this item as required under Resolution Conf. 12.7 (Rev. CoP14) was still needed. The Standing Committee agreed to the Secretariat's suggestion to propose the deletion of this requirement from the Resolution at the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.
8. The Secretariat continued to maintain the *Register of licensed exporters and of processing and repackaging plants for specimens of sturgeon and paddlefish species* called for in Resolution Conf. 12.7 (Rev. CoP14). It remains however impossible for the Secretariat to monitor whether the information recorded in the Register is current or accurate. Parties are again encouraged to review the data on the CITES website, ensure their accuracy, and advise the Secretariat of any necessary updates, additions or deletions.
9. The Secretariat received no pertinent intelligence relating to illegal trade in caviar. It commented previously that this may be explained by the radical changes to the international trade in caviar and other sturgeon specimens that has occurred in recent years (see document AC25 Doc. 16.1).

#### Conclusion

10. The Secretariat's conclusions are the same as for its previous report to the Animals Committee (see document AC25 Doc. 16.1). Despite the best efforts of the CITES community, it appears that the goal of legal and sustainable harvest of caviar from wild sturgeon stocks, especially in its historical centre of the Caspian Sea, to a level anywhere near what was achieved in the past, is now unattainable. The shift to aquaculture and captive breeding of sturgeons in an increasing number of countries all over the world may soon make it difficult for caviar from wild sturgeon populations to find a place in the international market. This reduces the incentives for conservation of wild stocks. Crime, corruption and a lack of political will have perhaps created bigger obstacles to sturgeon recovery than any physical obstructions which prevent fish accessing their traditional spawning grounds.

#### Action required from the Animals Committee

11. The Committee is invited to note this document and to consider whether it is necessary for it to continue receiving these reports at each of its meetings. If this were not the case, the Secretariat would propose the deletion of this requirement in Resolution Conf. 12.7 (Rev. CoP14) at the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.