

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



Twenty-first meeting of the Plants Committee
Veracruz (Mexico), 2-8 May 2014

Regional matters

Regional reports

OCEANIA

1. This document has been submitted by the regional representative for Oceania (Dr Greg Leach, Australia) *.
2. As it was received by the Secretariat after the deadline for submission of documents, it is provided herewith in English only (the language in which it was submitted).

General Information

3. a) Representative: Greg Leach (Australia)
b) Alternate: Marika Tuiwawa (Fiji)
c) Number of Parties in the region: 8 (Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu). The following 9 countries in Oceania are not Parties to the Convention: Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Tokelau, Tonga and Tuvalu.
d) Parties responding to communications: Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, Vanuatu
4. Directory

The Australian Management Authority continues to maintain a regional directory of contacts and experts in the region. A version dated January 2014 is available and will be provided to the Secretariat.

Communication with Parties in the region since CoP 16 (Bangkok, March 2013)

5. Each day during CoP16, the delegates from the Oceania region met to discuss forthcoming agenda items, and occasionally had presentations from proponents or opponents of proposals to amend the Appendices following consensus decisions to receive such presentations. The CoP provides one of the few opportunities for AC, PC and SC representatives to meet their counterparts in such a far-flung region.

* *The geographical designations employed in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the CITES Secretariat or the United Nations Environment Programme concerning the legal status of any country, territory, or area, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The responsibility for the contents of the document rests exclusively with its author.*

6. Contacts in the region were advised of the forthcoming PC meeting and provided with the agenda of PC21 and views or comment was sought. Australia, Fiji, New Zealand and Vanuatu responded to this advice.

Relevant CITES implementation issues in the region

7. As has been reported regularly to PC, capacity remains the over-riding issue for CITES implementation in the region. There is a small population size in relation to area administered, and for island states the government departments are small. CITES is normally but a small part of the wide range of environment and conservation responsibilities of a small number of government officials. Often just one or two people deal with all of the Multilateral Environmental Agreements, and staff turnover rates are often high in the small public services of island nations. Some Parties have very low levels of trade in CITES species and so attending to CITES requests for information is a low priority. Electronic communications to registered MAs and SAs often fail.
8. In a region dominated by the marine environment and with numerous Small Island Developing States, the marine CITES listings attract a significant amount of attention. Conversely, plant issues have received very little attention in this period and have not been a specific component of any regional workshops. Regional workshops have been hosted in Australia on sea cucumber trade, in Australia on the shark & ray listings and in Fiji on the shark and ray listings. Details are provided in the Regional report to AC.

Vanuatu

9. Vanuatu responded with 3 concerns around implementation of CITES, especially for small island countries like Vanuatu:
 - a) Lack of financial support for CITES implementation at the national level. This has been a long-term issue.
 - b) Lack of training and support to Border Control agencies i.e. Department of Customs, Quarantine, Airport Securities and Police. Training on identification of plants (and animals) is needed by these agencies.
 - c) Lack of legal expertise in the region to assist with the amendments of the national laws on CITES. Vanuatu finds it extremely difficult to get the right kind of legal advice and support as the local legal fraternity know nothing about CITES. This makes things difficult to amend areas or improve the national legislation, especially in the areas of compliance and enforcement, including penalties. In addition, Vanuatu reports a lack of access to expert advice in the country to assist in developing clear processes and procedures in developing NDFs, forms such as export permit, import permit, re-export permit, introduction from the sea permit, etc..
10. Vanuatu regards a specialist workshop for lawyers in the region on how to work or improve on CITES compliant legislation as the highest priority. Vanuatu would welcome financial support for such a workshop.

Fiji

11. Fiji reported the following activities to support the implementation of CITES:
 - a) Review of the Endangered and Protected Species Act (EPS) 2002 and Regulation 2003. Fiji is currently reviewing the EPS Act and it is in the final stages. The review includes the review of the species listing both for Flora and Fauna. This includes the addition of species that are deemed to be of national importance or are on the verge of being endangered or extinct.
 - b) Registration of Companies. Fiji continues to register companies that are trading CITES and EPS Listed Species and this is renewed annually. For companies trading flora species, the Department of Environment works in collaboration with the Department of Forestry in terms of monitoring and setting up a code of logging for the sustainable harvesting of endangered and native tree species.
 - c) NDF Study. Fiji as part of its control in the trade of endangered species and also to monitor the harvesting of marine species from the wild has set up NDF guidelines by which companies have to carry out an NDF study upon renewal of registration to trade in these marine species. In this the Department of Environment is working in collaboration with Department of Fisheries to carry out monitoring.

Capacity-building activities and awareness campaigns

12. In March 2012, the New Zealand Management Authority ran CITES workshops in Samoa and the Cook Islands. The objective of these workshops was to build the capacity of respective agencies in Samoa and the Cook Islands on the national implementation, operation and administration of CITES or equivalent body. The workshops covered issues such as the background to CITES; implementation of CITES through national legislation; functions of the Management Authority; functions of the Scientific Authority; and inter-agency collaboration.
13. In June 2012, a CITES implementation/Prevention of Illegal Wildlife Trade workshop was held in Port Vila, Vanuatu, and extra CITES training was given to three staff members (Peer Educators) who could then help with other in-country training programmes.
14. In June 2012 a CITES implementation workshop was held in Honiara, Solomon Islands to follow-up on specific issues (legislation and permitting) identified at a December 2010 workshop. The June workshop was followed by a high-level seminar in December 2012 aimed at engaging senior officials in the prevention of the trans-national organised crime element of illegal trade.
15. In April 2013, CITES implementation/Prevention of Illegal Wildlife Trade workshop was held in Tonga. As a non-Party, the focus was on providing information on how they could ensure wildlife exports (e.g. coral) were consistent with the CITES obligations of importing countries.
16. Also in April 2013, the CITES Implementation / Prevention of Illegal Wildlife Trade training was extended to the north Pacific, and a workshop was held in Palau. The focus of this workshop was on clarification of and compliance with CITES permitting and legislative requirements.
17. In May 2013, a CITES implementation workshop was held in Nadi, Fiji. Roll-out to Fiji was important, given that it is a regional transport hub, it has high levels of species diversity (and species that are in demand in international markets), and poachers/smugglers are known to travel to Fiji. The Peer Educators who had been trained in Vanuatu in 2012 were also brought to Fiji to further build Pacific networks and capacity.
18. On 5 June 2013, the Australian Government Department of the Environment issued a media release warning consumers of the need to be vigilant when purchasing sports and health supplements online and which contain endangered plant species such as *Hoodia gordonii* (Hoodia) see: <http://www.environment.gov.au/mediarelease/environment-department-warns-consumers-against-internet-offers-free-sport-supplement>. Over 727 imports containing Hoodia were seized by Australian Customs and Border Protection Service officers. In addition to these seizures, the Department took the unprecedented step of writing to every person who had their sports supplements seized. This resulted in a number of follow-up phone calls from those clients apologising for the import and noting that they now have an increased awareness of CITES and will be more vigilant of this in the future. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service provided assistance to the Department in relation to this matter, for which Australia is appreciative.
19. The Fiji government is strengthening its enforcement for CITES and the EPS Act by carrying out CITES enforcement training to public officers that deal with the trade in endangered species or those officers that come across CITES cases. Three training workshops were conducted in 2013 and Fiji is aiming for 2 further training workshops in 2014.
20. A joint partnership with the Australian Commonwealth Department of the Environment and the Department of Foreign Affairs funded Pacific Horticultural and Agricultural Market Access programme is placing samples of illegal wildlife products on display on board three of P&O's cruise liners. The three cruise liners, which predominantly sail in the South Pacific, will remind curious holiday-makers about Australia's strict wildlife laws. Messages reminding travellers of the importance of knowing what souvenirs they purchase, together with a selection of illegal wildlife products previously seized by the Department of the Environment under Part 13 A of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, are now on display in the main foyers of three P&O vessels—the Pacific Pearl, Pacific Dawn and Pacific Jewel. These vessels carry between 1900 to 2100 passengers during each voyage and sail each week around the South Pacific and also to New Zealand.