

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



Fifty-fourth meeting of the Standing Committee  
Geneva (Switzerland), 2-6 October 2006

Strategic and administrative matters

Review of the scientific committees

REPORT OF THE SECRETARIAT

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.
2. Under Decision 13.10, adopted at the 13th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP13, Bangkok, 2004), the Standing Committee is directed to:

*determine a process for the review [of the scientific committees] and proceed with the review based on the terms of reference produced by the scientific committees and report at the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.*
3. At its 53rd meeting (SC53, Geneva, June – July 2005), the Standing Committee agreed to the terms of reference set out in paragraph 3 of document SC53 Doc. 12 and to the suggestions set out in paragraph 4 of that same document. It also agreed that its External Evaluation Working Group would comprise the members of the Standing Committee and the observer from the United Republic of Tanzania. The Chairman of the Standing Committee requested the Secretariat to assemble basic background information to put the review in context and allow members of the scientific committees and the Standing Committee's External Evaluation Working Group to review the performance of the committees and make any necessary recommendations for improving and facilitating this performance.
4. The basic background information to put the review in context is provided in document SC54 Inf. 4. It describes the evolution of the terms of reference of the committees and of the duties and responsibilities of the committee members together with the results achieved in addition to the resources and support available to the committees.
5. The Chairman of the Standing Committee wrote to the Chairmen of the Animals, Plants and Nomenclature Committees on 6 April 2006, requesting them to have their committees carry out the envisaged self-evaluation during their meetings in July 2006. The results of their self-assessment are found in documents SC54 Doc. 13.2 and SC54 Inf. 5.
6. The Standing Committee agreed that it would complete the text for each of the sections in paragraphs a) to e) below for the assessment part of the review. On the basis of its own experience, the Secretariat indicates for each of them some comments for consideration by the Committee.
  - a) **Achievements of the scientific committees in relation to delegated duties**

Document SC54 Inf. 4 clearly shows that the scientific committees have undertaken a very considerable amount of work over recent years, to such an extent that they have found it necessary to prioritize instructions given to them by the Conference of the Parties, when in fact they should be able to treat them all equally. A number of these instructions are actually

proposed by the committees themselves in their reports to the Conference. Whatever their origin, the Standing Committee might wish to reflect on the need for the tasks assigned to be 'demand driven' and of broad value to the Parties as whole as well as being proportionate to the time and resources available to the committees.

Equally, if emerging issues arise from Scientific Authorities between CoPs, the committees currently have very little time or resources to address them.

The current terms of reference of the scientific committees, contained in Annexes 2 and 3 of Resolution Conf. 11.1 (Rev. CoP13), are long and detailed and include a repetition of some duties also assigned to the committees in other Resolutions. This is in contrast to those of the scientific bodies of other MEAs, which contain broad principles and refer to the requirement for the committees to carry out detailed instructions under these principles as periodically directed by the CoP.

**b) Gap analysis of duties performed and factors that could be compromising their performance, ways to improve or modify relevant procedures**

Members are appointed in an individual capacity which gives them independence, but this also means they often receive little support to undertake their committee duties from their employer or from the country which has proposed them as a member. There are few incentives for capable scientists to give up their time to volunteer for the scientific committees.

The breadth of expertise required by the committees is very considerable and as members are selected on a regional basis, no account is taken of this need. Comparison can be made with the Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, whose scientific bodies comprise a mix of regional representatives and taxonomic or thematic specialists. In document SC54 Doc. 13.2, the scientific committees suggest that nomenclature issues might best be covered by having the specialists on this subject work under the auspices of the Animals and Plants Committees.

Scientific committee members repeatedly complain about their inability to obtain input and guidance from their regions. Whilst some difficulties might be due to the members' lack of support (see above), much responsibility rests on the Parties in the regions to provide the necessary guidance to their regional member(s).

The committees currently meet twice between one CoP and the next. As noted above, with this level of meeting frequency, the committees have found it difficult to give adequate consideration to all of the matters referred to them by the Conference. No funds are provided by the Conference for intersessional activity, which has recently led to such activities being sponsored by Parties and NGOs outside the formal purview of Convention.

**c) Opportunities for efficiencies in the functioning of the Committees**

Comparison with other biodiversity-related Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) shows that CITES is unique in having three scientific subsidiary bodies, rather than one. This increases the direct cost to Parties and also consumes staff time in the Secretariat which could otherwise be used in more direct assistance to Parties. The scientific committees' meetings in July 2006 required over 70 documents with a total of around 1,000 pages.

The committee members have complained that restrictions on the length of documents hamper their deliberations. However as all documents for discussion are provided in translation in the three working languages of the Convention, allowing longer documents would increase costs. The Conference of the Parties could significantly increase the budget available for translations or agree that scientific committees' documents could be discussed even if only available in one language (normally English), as was the case before 1999.

The committees have repeatedly observed the difficulty for their chairmen to chair the meetings and represent their region at the same time. Indeed the role of a chairman is quite different from that of a regional representative. Additionally, this situation has resulted in all the chairmen so

far having long tenures and being drawn exclusively from developed countries. The chairmen of the scientific committees of other MEAs are selected by their Conference of the Parties or another supervisory body, in some cases on a regional rotation basis, which may be a more equitable solution. The CITES committee chairmen are called upon to attend meetings of the Standing Committee and sometimes other representational duties as decided by the CoP. At present there is no budget allocated to this.

The Secretariat suggested at CoP12 (Santiago, 2002) in document CoP12 Doc. 13.3 that if there were just one scientific committee, this would contribute to an improved coordination and greater overall understanding of scientific matters in the area of international wildlife trade and therefore to a better implementation of the Convention. In recent meetings of the committees, where Animals and Plants Committee meetings have been held consecutively, more than half of the agenda items for each committee have been identical and the committees have met in joint sessions for a substantial proportion of their meetings. The Nomenclature Committee has always met in the margins of meetings of the Animals and Plants Committees and in document SC54 Doc. 13.2 the scientific committees themselves have suggested that nomenclature issues might best be handled through a permanent working group of the Animals and Plants Committee.

**d) Means and mechanisms to deliver the products of the revision**

The main mechanism through which any changes to the structure, terms of reference and *modus operandi* of the scientific committees could be effected is through amendment to the relevant part of Resolution Conf. 11.1 (Rev. CoP13). Should the Standing Committee wish to recommend any such changes, the Secretariat could prepare a proposal for the necessary text on the basis of principles agreed by the Committee.

**e) Options for ongoing or periodic review of the Committees and indicators to monitor the improvement of the performance**

Given the resources required to undertake them, it does not appear that there is a need to establish any scheduled or ongoing review process for the scientific committees.

7. Taking full account of the self-evaluation by the committees themselves, the Standing Committee is requested to finalize its review by formulating an opinion against paragraphs a) to e) above. The Secretariat suggests that this assessment, with any proposals for consequent revision of relevant Resolutions, together with document SC54 Inf. 4, could then serve as a basis for the Standing Committee document to be submitted at the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

## COMPARISON OF THE STRUCTURE AND OPERATION OF THE SCIENTIFIC SUBSIDIARY BODIES OF THE BIODIVERSITY-RELATED MEAS

	Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)	Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)	Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar)	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)
Scientific body or bodies	Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA)	Scientific Council	Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP)	Animals Committee (AC) Nomenclature Committee (NC), Plants Committee (PC)
Mandate and duties	Established by Convention text	Established by Convention text.	Established by CoP Resolutions.	Established by CoP Resolutions and Decisions.
Reporting line	CoP	CoP	Standing Committee STRP Oversight Committee.	CoP
Composition	10 members, 2 from each region.	ca. 75 members. Any Party may appoint a member. In addition there are 8 taxonomic / biogeographic experts.	13 appointed members. 6 regional members, 7 thematic experts (including 1 communications, education & public awareness expert, 5 NGO (International Partner Organizations) partner representatives, plus 25 CoP-approved observer organizations.	10 members drawn from each region weighted by number of Parties in each region. (AC and PC). 2 members (NC).
Appointment	Chair and other members elected by CoP, following proposals by UN regions. Chair is on a rotational basis.  Ad hoc Technical Expert Groups (15 members) appointed by Parties.	Party members appointed by Party concerned. Experts appointed by CoP. Chair chosen by Party-appointed members.	Members nominated by Parties, STRP National Focal Points or STRP members and observers. Appointed by Oversight Committee. Chair and vice-chair appointed by Oversight Committee.	Proposals for candidates to be supported by the relevant Governments. Members nominated by regional caucuses, appointed by CoP. (AC and PC) Members nominated by Parties, appointed by CoP. (NC). Chairs selected by Committees.
Network	National focal points designated for each Party.		National Focal Points designated by each Party.	Designated Scientific Authorities in each Party.

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Meetings	2 meetings (of 5 days each) in 2 year period between two successive CoP meetings. Open meetings.  Average participation: 350.	2 meetings (of 3 days each) in each 3 year period between each CoP.  Limited number of permanent observers plus Chair invitees.  Average participation: ca. 60.	Annual meetings (4-5 days each).  Closed meetings. Specified observer bodies and organizations can participate.  Average participation: 50.	2 meetings (of 5 days each) in 3 year period between each CoP.  Open meetings.  Average participation: 125 (AC), 75 (PC), 15 (NC).
Agendas	ca. 10 items, mandated by CoP	ca. 10 items	ca. 15 items	ca. 25 items for each Committee.
Meeting documentation	ca. 25 documents. Recommendations drafted by Secretariat.  Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Spanish and Russian.	ca. 13 documents prepared by Secretariat.  English, plus French and Spanish to the extent possible.	Number of documents depends on stage of triennial cycle. Documents prepared by the Secretariat, Chair, Working Group leaders and invited experts.  English only.	Committees meet sequentially. ca. 70 documents for each suite of meetings prepared by Secretariat, members and observers.  English, French and Spanish.
Outputs	Recommendations to CoP and sometimes requests to Secretariat and establishment of Ad hoc Technical Expert Groups for assessments.	Recommendations to CoP and Parties	Resolutions and technical guidelines to CoP. Published Technical Reports and Handbooks	Recommendations to CoP and Parties
Funding	Developing country members are supported to attend meetings by voluntary funds. Other meeting costs are funded by the core budget.	Developing country members and thematic experts supported to attend meetings from core CMS budget (55,000 USD) and voluntary contributions.	Delegate support, website / intersessional support and some task implementation from core Ramsar budget. Some activities funded by donors.	Core budget pays for meeting costs and participation of members other than developed countries.
Direct cost	525,000 USD per year from core budget, 1.3 million USD per year from voluntary funds.	ca. 150,000 USD per meeting	166,000 USD per year.	Delegate support, logistics and interpretation 174,000 USD per non-CoP year.