

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

Interpretation and implementation of the Convention

Species trade and conservation issues

SAIGA ANTELOPE

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.

Background

2. At its 13th meeting (Bangkok, 2004), the Conference of the Parties adopted Decisions 13.27 to 13.35 on the saiga antelope (*Saiga tatarica*), which are to be implemented prior to its 14th meeting (CoP14) in 2007 (see Annex). These interconnected Decisions are intended to address grave concerns over the rapidly deteriorating conservation status of saiga antelopes.
3. The species was included in Appendix II in 1995. The numbers and range of the saiga antelope have declined considerably in recent decades. Poaching and illegal trade in meat and horns, uncontrolled hunting, destruction of habitats and construction of irrigation channels, roads and other obstacles preventing natural dispersion and migration have all contributed to the collapse of saiga antelope populations. Trade in this species was reviewed by the Animals Committee in 1998, resulting in recommendations in 2001 from the Standing Committee to suspend importation of specimens of this species from Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation. These are still valid.
4. The Decisions are directed to the range States of *Saiga tatarica* (Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Russian Federation, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and possibly China), Parties (specifically those that are important consumers of and traders in saiga products, and those that could act as financial donors) and other bodies, the Standing Committee and the CITES Secretariat.

Reporting issues

5. Decisions 13.27, 13.33 and 13.35 [in its paragraph h)] require that, respectively, important consumer and trading countries of saiga parts and derivatives, range States of *Saiga tatarica* and the Secretariat report to the Standing Committee and at CoP14 on the implementation of relevant parts of these Decisions.
6. The first meeting of signatories to the 'Memorandum of Understanding concerning Conservation, Restoration and Sustainable Use of Saiga Antelope (*Saiga tatarica tatarica*)', organized jointly by the Secretariats of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and CITES, is to be held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, on 25 and 26 September 2006. It will be preceded by a technical workshop on saiga management and conservation, to be held in the same location on 23 and 24 September 2006. Participants in the meeting will include representatives of all *Saiga tatarica* range States and China, while the workshop should be attended by the major organizations, institutions and other stakeholders involved in saiga antelope research, management and conservation.

7. For the meeting and workshop mentioned in paragraph 6 above, range States of *Saiga tatarica* and other participants have been requested to prepare detailed reports on their saiga antelope-related activities, policies and initiatives, which are to be shared amongst CMS and CITES. The event will thereby offer the opportunity to review and discuss much of the information and actions required in compliance with Decisions 13.27 to 13.35. The Secretariat will orally inform the Standing Committee about its main outcomes and results.
8. At the time of writing (August 2006), only Kazakhstan had submitted a report in compliance with Decisions 13.27 and 13.33. The Management Authority reported that counts of saiga antelopes in 2005 showed a population of 39,616 animals and that the prognosis for 2006 was 45,000 to 50,000 animals, corresponding to an annual increase of 10 to 15 %.
9. Kazakhstan reported that the preservation of the saiga antelope had become a national priority. The Committee on Forestry and Hunting of the Ministry of Agriculture has developed a programme for preserving the saiga antelope covering 2005 to 2007, which was adopted by the Government in March 2005. The protection measures, scientific work and monitoring of saiga antelopes provided for in the programme have been financed from the State's budget. Penalties for illegal trade in saiga antelope parts and derivatives have been strengthened. Since September 2005 and until 2011, the harvesting or capture of saiga antelopes from the wild, as well as the collection, purchase or selling of its horns and other products has been prohibited, with the exception of harvesting or capture for purely scientific purposes. The cooperation between the Committee and Customs and boundary control services has been enhanced to improve controls at international airports, railway stations and seaports, and to close any channels of illegal import to or export from Kazakhstan. Stocks of horns of saiga antelope for export were reported not to exist at present.

Activities undertaken in compliance with Decision 13.35

10. In 2005, the Secretariat obtained funding from the European Commission to undertake activities in the context of the implementation of Decision 13.35. To date, these have included the following:
 - a) Organization of the Silk Road CITES implementation and enforcement workshop in August 2005 in Urumqi, China, attended by enforcement officials from all saiga antelope range States and invited NGOs, which covered species and issues of regional concern, including illegal trade in saiga antelopes;
 - b) Missions to China (Beijing and Hong Kong SAR) and Mongolia in September 2005, following the Urumqi workshop, to verify, among other things, species conservation and management efforts, enforcement actions, stockpiles of saiga specimens, implementation of the CMS Saiga Action Plan and compliance with recommendations of the Standing Committee;
 - c) Contracting TRAFFIC and the Asia Programme of the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) to investigate the trade in specimens of *Saiga tatarica* in selected markets, study markets patterns and trends, analyse the management and control of stockpiles of specimens of saiga antelopes, research socio-economic aspects of the utilization of saiga, formulate recommendations and provide targeted assistance to saiga range States and major consumer and trading countries;
 - d) Preparations for the organization, with the CMS Secretariat, of the first meeting of signatories to the 'Memorandum of Understanding concerning Conservation, Restoration and Sustainable Use of Saiga Antelope (*Saiga tatarica tatarica*)' in September 2006 to: a) determine key activities and target dates under the MoU and the associated saiga Action Plan; b) prioritize and update the recommended measures in the Action Plan; c) identify the practical needs of the signatories to deliver on the Action Plan targets; d) ensure coordination amongst all range States [China, Mongolia, and the potential signatory States], and determine how they can best collaborate in implementing the Action Plan; and e) identify stakeholders and organizations that can support the range States in implementing the saiga Action Plan;
 - e) Identification in collaboration with the UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Centre of the most important consumer and trading countries of saiga parts and derivatives as follows: China, Japan, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Korea and Singapore; and reminding these countries of Decision 13.27; and

- f) Coordination between the CITES and CMS Secretariats regarding all activities relating to saiga antelopes, and regular liaison with relevant experts, IGOs and NGOs, including IUCN and TRAFFIC [see also document SC53 Inf. 8 (Rev. 1)].
11. In the coming months, the Secretariat plans to undertake missions to Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation and Uzbekistan in conjunction with the saiga meetings in September 2006 in Almaty, mentioned in paragraph 6 above, in order to: a) assess the existing conservation and management efforts concerning *Saiga tatarica tatarica* and the participation in implementing the Saiga Action Plan (Decisions 13.29 and 13.31); b) verify stockpiles of specimens of saiga antelope products (if existing) (Decision 13.37); c) verify the controls of legal and illegal trade in parts and derivatives of saiga antelope, compliance with the recommendations of the Standing Committee, and enforcement efforts concerning trade in specimens of saiga antelope (Decision 13.27); d) assess the need for technical and other assistance, and for helping to meet CITES reporting obligations (Decision 13.33); e) generate national commitment in support of saiga antelope conservation and the implementation of the CITES decisions; and f) discuss the participation in the first meeting of the signatories of the CMS 'Memorandum of Understanding concerning Conservation, Restoration and Sustainable Use of Saiga Antelope (*Saiga tatarica tatarica*)' in Kazakhstan in September 2006. Missions to the Republic of Korea and Singapore are also envisaged, be it that they would be undertaken later in the year.
12. The research by TRAFFIC and WCS is scheduled to be completed by the end of the year. WCS, which works in close collaboration with and is financially supported by the Management Authority of China, focuses its work on saiga trade and markets in China. TRAFFIC is undertaking research on saiga antelope trade in Southeast Asia (specifically Malaysia and Singapore), Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation (concentrating mainly on trade in meat and the management of saiga horn stockpiles where existing); assisting range States in collecting up-to-date information on their saiga management, conservation efforts, enforcement actions, trade and implementation of the Saiga Action Plan and is collaborating with the IUCN/SSC Antelope Specialist Group on saiga research issues. The interim results of both projects will be presented at the saiga meeting and workshop in September 2006, and orally reported at the present meeting.

Issues to be considered

13. The saiga antelope has recently become the focus of specific attention in several range States and by national and international institutions and NGOs. Various field projects are being conducted in Kazakhstan, Mongolia, the Russian Federation and Uzbekistan. Arguably, from all threatened antelope species, the saiga antelope now benefits from the most concerted and substantial conservation effort. It is however also clear that these efforts will have to be considerably expanded at national and regional levels, and be sustained for many years. Furthermore, to date, only Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have signed the CMS 'Memorandum of Understanding concerning Conservation, Restoration and Sustainable Use of Saiga Antelope (*Saiga tatarica tatarica*)'.
14. It became apparent during the mission of the Secretariat to China that saiga horn remains an important ingredient for the production of traditional Asian medicines that seems practically impossible to be replaced. Representatives of the traditional Asian medicine industry in Beijing, who were all aware of the plight of the saiga antelope, expressed great interest in setting up breeding programmes for the species, assisting in rebuilding viable wild populations in Kazakhstan, and exploring ways to reduce the consumption of saiga horn.

Recommendations

15. The Standing Committee should ask Japan, Malaysia, the Republic of Korea and Singapore, which are not expected to participate in and prepare detailed reports for the CMS and CITES saiga meeting in September 2006, to report to the Standing Committee at the present meeting concerning their implementation of Decision 13.27.
16. The Standing Committee is invited to note the progress with the implementation of Decisions 13.27 to 13.35 regarding *Saiga tatarica*, and to consider any actions it deems necessary to ensure full implementation of these Decisions.

Decisions of the Conference of the Parties to CITES concerning saiga antelope

Directed to Parties and others

- 13.27 Important consumer and trading countries of saiga parts and derivatives [as identified by the Secretariat pursuant to Decision 13.35, paragraph g)] should report to the Secretariat, for transmission to each meeting of the Standing Committee between its 53rd meeting and the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties, and in their biennial reports on:
- a) stockpiles in their country; and
 - b) steps they are taking to control any legal and illegal trade in parts and derivatives of the saiga antelope.
- 13.28 Donor Parties, aid agencies, businesses using and producing saiga products, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations are urged to assist all range States and consumer countries in any way possible with the conservation of this species, including:
- a) the provision of funding;
 - b) the provision of assistance with enforcement, anti-poaching and anti-smuggling;
 - c) the provision of capacity building;
 - d) the provision of equipment, particularly for undertaking anti-poaching and anti-smuggling activities;
 - e) the provision of assistance with education and public awareness;
 - f) the provision of assistance with population monitoring;
 - g) analysis and monitoring of stockpiles in key consumer countries;
 - h) gathering and exchange of scientific, technical and legal information and expertise; and
 - i) supporting missions of the Secretariat, as specified in Decision 13.35, paragraph c).

***Directed to all range States of Saiga tatarica
(Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Russian Federation, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan)***

- 13.29 All relevant range States are urged to complete their internal consultations and processes, making the necessary arrangements with the Secretariat of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), to sign as soon as practicable the 'Memorandum of Understanding concerning Conservation, Restoration and Sustainable Use of the Saiga Antelope (*Saiga tatarica tatarica*)' drafted at the workshop in Elista, Kalmykia, in May 2002, and to implement the Saiga Action Plan in order to restore the habitat and populations of the saiga antelope, and enhance transboundary and international cooperation through *inter alia* a regional conservation and management strategy.
- 13.30 Mongolia is urged to participate in the implementation of those elements of the Saiga Action Plan that are of relevance to the conservation of its saiga population.
- 13.31 All saiga range States should address the problems they have in implementing CITES and ensure the conservation and management of *Saiga tatarica* in close cooperation with the Secretariat, other countries, other competent authorities, intergovernmental organizations, and non-governmental organizations.

- 13.32 Recognizing that there is uncertainty as to the occurrence of *Saiga tatarica* in China, China is encouraged to investigate and report on the status of the wild population of *Saiga tatarica* and its habitats in China, and undertake any necessary conservation activities.
- 13.33 All range States should report on the activities outlined above, through the Secretariat, to the Standing Committee at each of its meetings between its 53rd meeting and the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

Directed to the Standing Committee

- 13.34 The Standing Committee shall discuss the conservation of and trade in *Saiga tatarica* at its meetings between its 53rd meeting and the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties and recommend appropriate action.

Directed to the Secretariat

- 13.35 The Secretariat shall:
- a) assist the Parties with the implementation of the CITES-relevant aspects of the Saiga Action Plan of the Memorandum of Understanding Concerning Conservation, Restoration and Sustainable Use of the Saiga Antelope;
 - b) facilitate technical and other assistance, as required, and work with all range and consumer countries as appropriate on trade-related aspects of the conservation of saiga, with particular focus on China, Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation;
 - c) undertake missions to range and consumer Parties to verify, among other things, species conservation and management efforts, enforcement actions, stockpiles of saiga specimens, implementation of the Saiga Action Plan and compliance with recommendations of the Standing Committee;
 - d) include the issue of saiga trade and conservation in an enforcement workshop in the Asian region to be held before the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties;
 - e) cooperate with the Secretariat of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) on issues pertaining to saiga including, but not limited to, the implementation of the Saiga Action Plan and the Memorandum of Understanding between the two conventions;
 - f) if requested, assist the range States in meeting the reporting requirements referred to in Decision 13.33;
 - g) identify important consumer and trading countries of saiga parts and derivatives, and encourage them to take the actions required under Decision 13.27; and
 - h) report on progress in implementation of the Decisions regarding *Saiga tatarica* to the Standing Committee at each of its meetings between its 53rd meeting and the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties, as well as at the latter meeting.