

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

Sturgeons and paddlefish

CONCLUSIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL STURGEON ENFORCEMENT WORKSHOP
TO COMBAT ILLEGAL TRADE IN CAVIAR

1. This document has been submitted by the Czech Republic and Germany.

Background

2. The 'International Sturgeon Enforcement Workshop to Combat Illegal Trade in Caviar' was organized and hosted by the European Commission from 27 to 29 June in Brussels on behalf of CITES and with assistance of the CITES Secretariat, TRAFFIC and WWF.
3. The aim of the workshop was to bring together law enforcement authorities from caviar producing States, consumer and transit countries, and representatives of relevant international organizations, to identify the main problems relating to the illegal trade in caviar and to outline possible approaches to combat poaching and illegal trade in caviar. The workshop was attended by more than 120 participants from 34 key caviar trading countries and organizations such as the CITES Secretariat, Interpol, the World Customs Organization, Europol and the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF).
4. These conclusions are the result of discussions during the workshop and proposals formulated by working groups that were discussed during the final plenary session of the workshop. In discussing key measures to tackle illegal trade in caviar, participants acknowledged that the conservation of sturgeon species needs to be approached in a holistic way, addressing trade, habitat and management of the species whilst also taking into account livelihood issues. Furthermore, many participants highlighted the need to avoid, where possible, total prohibitions of legal trade in order not to encourage illegal trade in caviar and other sturgeon products. In addition, participants underlined the importance of measures agreed under CITES to improve the control and monitoring of the trade in caviar and to combat illegal trade.

Improve cooperation and strengthen enforcement of caviar trade controls

5. The Interpol General Secretariat would send a briefing note to relevant National Central Bureaux to alert them to the significance of illegal trade in caviar and to encourage them to identify and liaise with the relevant law enforcement agencies in their countries that are responsible for investigations. A number of European Union (EU) countries, the World Customs Organization and Europol also volunteered to assist in gathering information regarding relevant national contact points. A list of contact points would then be made available.

6. The World Customs Organization would send a message to its members to inform them about the outcomes of this workshop, to raise awareness on the illegal trade in caviar and to urge them to take practical measures.
7. The CITES Secretariat would establish, via its website, a restricted-access Internet forum for information sharing among law enforcement officials on illegal trade in caviar. The Secretariat would post on the forum copies of relevant Alerts and other information regarding illegal trade in caviar. Members of the forum would be encouraged to submit similar information, which could help in targeting caviar criminals.
8. Law enforcement agencies and CITES Management Authorities should make as much use as possible of the Ecomessage in reporting seizures of illegal caviar and in supplying information regarding investigations and persons suspected or convicted of illicit commercial trade in caviar. Where appropriate and relevant, agencies should also submit data to the World Customs Organization's CEN database and to EU-TWIX.
9. Joint cross-border operations with a multi-agency approach (including non-law enforcement agencies) should be established to tackle illegal trade in caviar. These could be sub-regional, regional or international and could be instigated by individual States or in conjunction with and assisted by organizations such as Interpol, the World Customs Organization, Europol or the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) and others.
10. Relevant countries and agencies should contribute to Europol's 'Centre of knowledge', which records sources of expertise in relation to criminal investigations.
11. Further opportunities should be provided for relevant law enforcement officials from both range and consumer States to meet together in order to exchange information and establish the contacts necessary to facilitate communication, cooperation and coordination of investigations and intelligence gathering. Therefore CITES Parties should consider the establishment of a permanent venue such as a working group to facilitate the exchange of information among operational enforcement personnel.

Fully implement the caviar labelling and registration system

12. All caviar producing and trading countries that have not yet done so should implement the universal labelling system agreed on under CITES, register all caviar producing, processing, trading and re-packaging companies and ensure the labelling system is supported by accurate and detailed records and book-keeping checks to allow for the traceability of the caviar along the entire chain of custody in order to confirm legality.
13. CITES Parties should make use of food safety traceability systems applied in the food hygiene sector.
14. When establishing operating systems for the effective control of caviar trade and undertaking research on possible tracking techniques, CITES Parties should involve the industry/traders and should ensure that they cover a fair share of the costs involved in developing such systems in as much as they stand to benefit from legal trade.
15. CITES Parties should assess the need for and the feasibility of supplementing the newly-developed CITES caviar trade database with information on labels to ensure that information on the movement of labelled caviar tins is available to Management Authorities and enforcement agencies involved in tracing or authorizing further movements of the goods.
16. CITES Parties should ensure that the labelling system is adequately enforced and that trade records held by authorized producers, processors, traders and re-packagers of caviar are regularly monitored and checked.

Propose amendments to Resolutions Conf. 12.7 (Rev. CoP13) and Conf. 13.7 at CoP14

17. Resolution Conf. 12.7 (Rev. CoP13) should be amended to:
 - reduce the period of validity for re-exports to, for example, 12 months, in order to limit the number of re-exports that may take place; and
 - clarify the meaning of “non-reusable labels” so that it is clear that this refers to labels which seal the caviar containers.
18. Resolution Conf. 13.7 should be amended to:
 - clarify that the personal effects exemption for caviar only applies to caviar labelled in accordance with Resolution Conf. 12.7 (Rev. CoP13); and
 - reduce the quantity of caviar exempted for personal use from 250 grams to 100 grams.

Additional recommendations

19. CITES Parties should consult the UNEP-WCMC caviar trade database prior to the issuance of permits / certificates.
20. CITES Parties should ensure that their national legislation does not provide loopholes for laundering caviar in Customs free zones.
21. CITES Parties, especially caviar producing countries, should control domestic trade of caviar and combat illegal trade at the national level.
22. CITES Parties should monitor and regularly check aquaculture operations that produce caviar and other sturgeon products to avoid that illegally sourced caviar is laundered through these operations.
23. Meetings should be organized at the regional level to deal with the problems linked to illegal caviar trade specific to each region.
24. CITES Parties should share best practice examples regarding enforcement and management of the caviar trade in order to assist other Parties involved in regulating and controlling the production of and trade in caviar.
25. The result of this workshop should be made widely available electronically and translation into relevant languages should be considered.
26. Efforts to distribute the outcomes of this workshop more widely should be aimed at enforcement officers and local communities.