

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



Fifty-eighth meeting of the Standing Committee  
Geneva (Switzerland), 6-10 July 2009

Interpretation and implementation of the Convention

Species trade and conservation

Elephants

REVIEWS OF THE STATUS OF THE ELEPHANT, TRADE IN ITS SPECIMENS  
AND THE IMPACT OF THE LEGAL TRADE

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.

Background

2. At its 14th meeting (The Hague, 2007), the Conference of the Parties adopted Decision 14.78 as follows:

***Directed to the Standing Committee***

*The Standing Committee shall conduct ongoing comprehensive reviews of the status of the elephant, trade in its specimens and the impact of the legal trade, based on data from MIKE, the Elephant Trade Information System and the implementation of the Action plan for the control of trade in elephant ivory and the African elephant action plan referred to in Decision 14.75.*

3. In connection with this Decision, Decision 14.75 was adopted as follows:

***Directed to African elephant range States***

*The African elephant range States shall continue their constructive elephant dialogue aiming to develop joint conservation policies and exchange of management experience in order to improve the management of elephant populations.*

*The African elephant range States through the African elephant dialogue process shall develop an overall African elephant action plan for improved elephant management aiming at:*

- a) *accessing and directing resources, towards strengthening enforcement capacity in African elephant range States to combat poaching and illegal trade in ivory;*
- b) *the implementation of the Action plan for the control of trade in elephant ivory; and*
- c) *enhancing capacity building, managing translocations, reducing human-elephant conflicts and enhancing community-conservation programmes and development programmes within or adjacent to the elephant range.*

*The elephant range States will report to the Standing Committee on progress made under this decision with a view to providing the information necessary for the reviews referred to in Decision 14.78.*

4. The Secretariat explained to the Standing Committee at its 57th meeting (SC57, Geneva, July 2008) that Decision 14.78 was unclear about the manner in which the "ongoing comprehensive reviews" were to be conducted because it did not mention in what form or format, how, when and by whom the data should be made available to the Committee. The Secretariat also pointed out that the Decision seemed to reiterate or duplicate a number of tasks regarding various aspects of the trade in elephant specimens that had already been assigned to the Standing Committee for its review. It indicated that the data sources mentioned in the Decision might not be adequate if the intention of Decision 14.78 was for the Standing Committee to undertake a wide-ranging examination of the conservation status of and trade in elephants. Finally, it reminded the Committee of the cost implications of implementing Decision 14.78 (see document SC57 Doc. 33.1).
5. The Standing Committee agreed at SC57 that the implementation of Decision 14.78 should not lead to duplicative reporting and reviews, and requested the Secretariat, in consultation with IUCN, TRAFFIC and UNEP-WCMC, to research and compile relevant information on the conservation status of and trade in elephants, and provide an overview thereof at the present meeting pending the availability of external funding.

#### Implementation of Decision 14.78

6. With difficulty, the Secretariat managed to secure limited external funding for implementing the Standing Committee's request, but this was insufficient and arrived too late for undertaking comprehensive research. The funds nevertheless allowed the Secretariat to engage UNEP-WCMC to compile recent, existing materials on the status of and trade in elephants. A summary of the work that UNEP-WCMC will undertake is provided in Annex 1 to this document. Owing to the difficulties in raising funds, the review has been delayed and the full report, entitled *Conservation status of and trade in elephants*, will not be ready until mid-June 2009. It will be presented as Annex 2 to this document as soon as it becomes available. The Secretariat is aware that this delay will give Parties less time to review the report, but thought it was important for Parties to have the opportunity to discuss its results at the present meeting.

#### Recommendation

7. The Standing Committee is invited to consider the information on the conservation status of and trade in elephants in the Annexes to this document and presented at the present meeting. It may also wish to agree that, hereby, Decision 14.78 has been complied with.