

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

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Sixty-fifth meeting of the Standing Committee  
Geneva (Switzerland), 7-11 July 2014

Regional matters

Reports of regional representatives

NORTH AMERICA

This document has been submitted by the United States of America as the Regional Representative for North America<sup>1</sup>.

**1. GENERAL INFORMATION**

- Regional Representative: United States
- Alternate Regional Representative: Mexico
- Number of Parties in the Region: 3 (Canada, Mexico, United States)
- Number of Parties providing information for this Report: 3

**2. INTRODUCTION**

This Regional Report for North America covers the period from the 62<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee (July 2012) through early May 2014. It includes summaries of key measures taken by Canada, Mexico, and the United States in their implementation and enforcement of CITES during the reporting period. It is presented in the format provided in Document SC59 Doc. 23 at the 59<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee (March 2010) and adopted by the Standing Committee at that meeting.

At the 16<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES (CoP16; March 2013), the United States was elected to continue to be the North American Regional Representative to the Standing Committee. All three countries in the North American Region are in close contact. All three countries also regularly coordinate with NGOs within their respective countries, in preparation for meetings and on other CITES-related issues.

**3. OVERVIEW OF MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS**

**CANADA**

Canada continues to work on a new CITES web-based electronic permitting system. This system will eventually be incorporated into a broader wildlife e-permitting initiative that will enable Canadians to apply on-line for all wildlife permits issued by Environment Canada. Canada's current electronic system has increased the efficiency of permitting by compiling accurate and consistent information which in turn facilitates the production of annual reports on international trade in wildlife in Canada. Additional improvements were deployed in 2013. In an ongoing effort to improve the implementation of CITES for Canadians new service standards and performance indicators were set in 2013.

Canada continues to work towards the replacement of phytosanitary certificates by CITES permits for artificially propagated plants to address some concerns in Canada regarding quality control. We will notify the Secretariat

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<sup>1</sup> *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.*

as soon as this change is effected so that our name can be removed from the Reference List of countries and territories that use phytosanitary certificates as certificates of artificial propagation.

The Government of Canada places temporary "holding reservations" on decisions taken at the Conference of Parties. The Convention, written in 1975, allows 90 days for countries to update their regulations. Canada is unable to meet these short timelines for making the necessary regulatory changes. In October 2013, the CoP15 amendments to the list of CITES-regulated species were legally in force in Canada with completion of the regulatory process to update the Wild Animal and Plant Trade Regulations (WAPTR) of the Wild Animal and Plant Protection and Regulation of International and Interprovincial Trade Act (WAPPRIITA) and the CoP15 reservation was lifted. Canada has placed a holding reservation on decisions taken at CoP16 to allow time for implementation of regulatory changes. Completion of the regulatory changes is targeted for late 2014, at which time the holding reservation will be lifted. The Government of Canada is serious about protecting species at risk within its borders and internationally, and committed to our responsibilities to CITES. Canada continues to strongly support the decisions made by the 16th Conference of Parties to CITES.

## **MEXICO**

Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) (Decisions 16.13 to 16.16): In compliance with Decision 16.14 at SC64 (March 2013), the Standing Committee established an intersessional working group on IPBES chaired by Mexico. The Mexican Scientific Authority has been closely involved in assisting the implementation of Decision 16.4, and in particular with the development of CITES request [mentioned by paragraph d) of said Decision], which was summarized by the assessment on "Sustainable use of wild species" adopted by IPBES (IPBES-2; Antalya, 9–14 December 2013) in its 2014-2018 work programme. Additionally, the Mexican Scientific Authority collaborated with the Chairs of the Scientific Committees and the Secretariat in the development of the AC27/PC21 (Veracruz, 2014) working document on IPBES (AC27/PC21 Doc. 8.1). During AC27/PC21, the Committees agreed that the Animals and Plants Committees should incorporate information conveyed by the Animals Committee representative of Europe into the document for reporting to the Standing Committee at SC65, and to furthermore emphasize in their reporting that:

- a) Make sure that experts with good knowledge of CITES take part in the forthcoming assessment by the IPBES sustainable use Task Force;
- b) Parties should nominate CITES experts for participation in the assessment processes of IPBES;
- c) IPBES should seek fair regional representation, broad skills and a better gender balance;
- d) Expertise in areas in addition to biology and biodiversity management will be required, such as social and economic sciences, and rural development policies;
- e) The Standing Committee and Parties could consider experts who took part in the NDF Workshop (Cancún, 2008) for nominations; and
- f) Opportunities exist for better and more regular liaison between IPBES and CITES, and for facilitating the nomination of experts with CITES knowledge, through the Animals Committee active representative of Africa (Mr. Fouda) who is also a member of the IPBES Multidisciplinary Expert Panel for Africa.

On 19 December 2012, the Secretariat of the Economy (SE), together with SEMARNAT, published the "Agreement establishing the classification and coding of goods whose import and export is subject to regulation by the Secretariat of the Environment and Natural Resources," which subjects the importation and exportation (submission of CITES permits and authorizations) of species listed in the CITES Appendices and in national standards to non-tariff regulation. A joint SE-SEMARNAT review of that Agreement is to take place in the near future to identify new regulation needs.

The CITES law enforcement authority in Mexico, the Federal Environmental Protection Office (PROFEP), conducted 6,116 verifications in 2012 of which 1,310 correspond to wildlife exports and 4,806 to imports; 6,498 verifications (1,248 exports and 5,070 imports) in 2013 in compliance with legal and regulatory provisions applicable to cross-border movements of regulated wildlife, marine and forest species, thereby promoting the correct implementation of CITES.

PROFEPA, in collaboration with the General Customs Administration, SENASICA and CONAPESCA (Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries - SAGARPA), Federal Police, the Ministry of National Defence, and the Navy Ministry, aim to prevent and combat illegal trans boundary movement of specimens, parts and derivatives of protected wildlife specimens, by verifying compliance with current environmental legislation, both national and international, that regulate exports. More than 28 inspectors of PROFEPA in ports, airports and borders, had the support of at least of 50 officers of various departments of the Federal Government for such actions. Results in 2013 are as follows:

A. Results of Special Operatives in Ports, Airports and Borders:

- Verification of 31 m<sup>3</sup> of sawn Mahogany wood (*Swietenia macrophylla*) and 20,000 m<sup>2</sup> of Red Cedar wood veneer (*Cedrela odorata*).
- Seizures: 600 kg of vegetal charcoal and various parts of wild animals without prove of legal origin; 73 m<sup>3</sup> of Barcino wood (*Cordia alliodora*) and 17.77 m<sup>3</sup> of Samanea wood (*Samanea samana*); 1,356 m<sup>3</sup> of roundwood and squared; 27 tons of charcoal; 9 cargo vehicles; 9 tools.
- Closures and suspensions: 3 sawmills; 6 properties under logging for the misuse of documentation.

B. Permanent surveillance results:

- Seizures: 98 live reptiles to Japan; 898,660 specimens (686 kg) of sea cucumber (*Isostichopus fuscus*); 78,676 (197 kg) of dried specimens of seahorse (*Hippocampus ingens*); 108 kg of dry stomach, 21 boxes of dry bladder and 955 boxes of frozen bladder presumably of totoaba (*Totoaba macdonaldi*) to China that were mixed with other fisheries species; 27 white shark fins.

In 2013, the "Operation for Monitoring and Prevention of Illegal International Trafficking of Protected Species" was carried out in coordination with customs, agriculture and livestock health, police, military and migration authorities. Its objective was to prevent and combat the illegal cross-border movement of specimens, parts, and by-products of protected species by carrying out systematic monitoring actions and scheduled inspection, and by establishing control and inspection points at border crossings not usually covered by PROFEPA. The operation included three types of actions: a) sealing of the northern border (2,006 searches at U.S. border crossings); b) seaports (451 searches); and c) ongoing monitoring at airports with international flights.

In 2012 and 2013, PROFEPA participated in the international operations CAGE (with INTERPOL) and REPTILE, in which routine surveillance took place at airports with international flights.

The Mexican Scientific Authority was closely involved in the drafting process (since PC18; Buenos Aires, 2009) of the recently adopted Resolution Conf. 16.5 on "Cooperation with the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation of the Convention on Biological Diversity" (CoP16; Bangkok, 2013). Furthermore, the Mexican Scientific Authority contributed to the current meeting's working document on GSPC, which outlines next steps and recommendations addressed to the Plants Committee with regard to the implementation of Resolution Conf. 16.5. Additionally, in compliance with the collaboration encouraged by Resolution Conf. 16.5, and within the framework of the national implementation of CBD's GSPC, the Mexican Scientific Authority participated at the "Workshop on the conformation of the Coordination Committee for the Implementation of the Mexican Strategy for Plant Conservation (MSPC)", in Mexico City, 13 September 2013. Specifically, the Mexican Scientific Authority chaired the working groups on "Plant conservation" and "Threats to native flora", and "Use and management of flora" and provided general assistance for the workshop's coordination. The main result of the workshop was the successful establishment of MSPV's National Coordination Committee, which agreed to define a work program for the successful implementation of the MSPC.

PROFEPA signed an agreement with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), which aims to strengthen the fight against illegal wildlife trade offers. UNODC will deliver to Mexican authorities a report that allows making adjustments to their efforts and activities to combat crimes against wildlife. Regarding combat against trafficking in endangered species through the Internet, from 2010 to date PROFEPA has notified the federal courts on 500 probable cases of illicit sale which main results where the seizure of 424 specimens of wild fauna.

As part of the activities coordinated by the Mexican CITES Authorities, a pilot project on conservation, management and sustainable use of the Morelet's crocodile (*Crocodylus moreletii*), was presented to the Responsible Ecosystem Sourcing Platform (RESP) in November 2013. That project includes actions and

coordinated work between the relevant actors to strengthen the information on traceability of skins and captive breeding systems and to identify the conditions and possible sites for ranching activities in the future. The main goal will be to link local communities and Mexican producers (farms) with international companies in the fashion industry.

The initiative of the “Program to support the promotion of conservation and sustainable use of wildlife” of the Directorate General of Wildlife (in effect since 2010) (Mexico’s CITES Administrative Authority), supported nine UMAs (Management Units for Conservation of Wildlife) for Mexican crocodiles in 2013, and has contributed with financial resources for the development of the production industry for crocodile skins and products through the establishment of UMAs in rural zones and communities.

SEMARNAT will soon be publishing the "National Protocol for Handling Conflicts with Crocodilians in Mexico" in electronic form. The objective of this document is to identify and implement actions to prevent and address conflicts that may arise between crocodiles and persons within the distribution zones (geographic ranges) of crocodiles in Mexico.

In 2012, PROFEPA implemented the “Project to Strengthen Attention (Respond) to Potentially Invasive Species,” which seeks to identify exotic species associated with international trade, particularly imports, with the potential to invade wildlife, marine and forest species. As a result, a preliminary list of exotic species for priority attention was drafted, which is to be included in the reference list prepared by CONABIO. The request for financing to the *Global Environmental Facility* (GEF) for creating and building capacities to handle invasive species was authorized.

## **UNITED STATES**

Executive Order on Combating Illegal Wildlife Trafficking: On 1 July 2013, U.S. President Obama issued an Executive Order on Combating Wildlife Trafficking, elevating the issue of illegal wildlife trade as a national priority for the United States. The order mandated all U.S. Government agencies to “take all appropriate actions within their authority” to address this crime. It also called for the creation of a Presidential Task Force and Federal Advisory Council and the development and implementation of a national strategy for fighting wildlife crime. The Executive Order is available online at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/07/01/executive-order-combating-wildlife-trafficking>.

National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Trafficking and commercial ban on trade in elephant ivory: On 11 February 2014, the United States issued a National Strategy on Combating Wildlife Trafficking as mandated by U.S. President Obama’s 1 July 2013, Executive Order. This strategy commits the U.S. Government as a whole to addressing this issue through improved enforcement, efforts to reduce demand for protected wildlife, and continued partnering with other countries, international bodies (such as CITES), conservation organizations, and private sector stakeholders. The National Strategy is available online at: <http://www.fws.gov/home/feature/2014/trafficking/nationalstrategy-wildlife-trafficking.pdf>. See also: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/02/11/fact-sheet-national-strategy-combating-wildlife-trafficking-commercial-b>.

U.S. ivory crush: On 14 November 2013, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Office of Law Enforcement crushed approximately six tons of elephant ivory seized by its special agents and wildlife inspectors in connection with violations of CITES and U.S. wildlife laws. This event, which was covered by more than 1,800 online news outlets, sent a message to the world about the plight of African elephants and the global wildlife trafficking crisis.

Pelly Amendment: Iceland: On 4 February 2014, the U.S. Department of the Interior announced that Secretary Sally Jewell had certified to U.S. President Obama that she had determined that the continued commercial export by Icelandic nationals of whale meat and products diminishes the effectiveness of CITES. This determination was made in response to a petition submitted by several non-governmental organizations under the Pelly Amendment to the Fishermen’s Protective Act of 1967. In response to Secretary Jewell’s certification, on 1 April 2014, President Obama issued a Memorandum to his Cabinet directing them to take certain diplomatic actions in response to the certification. The instructions from President Obama include directing relevant agencies to raise concerns with Iceland’s trade in whale parts and products in appropriate CITES fora and processes and, in consultation with other international actors, to seek additional measures to reduce such trade and enhance the effectiveness of CITES.

Working group on implementation of the Convention relating to captive-bred and ranched specimens: At SC61 (August 2011), the United States and Hungary, on behalf of the European Union and its Member States,

submitted a document on implementation of the Convention relating to captive-bred and ranched specimens. The resulting discussion led to the creation of an intersessional working group, chaired by the United States. The United States introduced a document at SC62 (July 2012) describing the working group's activities and presenting a series of recommendations, including several draft decisions for CoP16. The Standing Committee accepted these recommendations and draft decisions, with some revisions. The Secretariat prepared a document for CoP16, and the Parties subsequently adopted the draft decisions in that document at that meeting.

Working group on development and application of annotations: At SC61, the Standing Committee formed an intersessional working group, under the chairmanship of the Regional Representative of North America (United States), to explore the shared understanding among Parties of annotations, and to explore the adoption of appropriate and reasonable procedures for crafting plant annotations. In October 2012, the United States, as Chair of the working group, submitted a document for CoP16 on the development and application of annotations that proposed amendments to six resolutions, adoption of three new decisions, revisions to one existing decision and the retention of one existing decision, and adoption of a definition of the term "extract" as it applies in existing annotations in the Appendices. These proposals were subsequently adopted by the Parties at CoP16, with several changes. Also at CoP16, the Parties adopted several Decisions related to continued work on annotations, including Decision 16.162 directing the Standing Committee to re-establish a working group on annotations at SC65. Given the extensive list of tasks directed to the working group in the Decisions adopted at CoP16, the United States, as Chair of the prior Standing Committee working group on annotations, with the consent of the Chair of the Standing Committee, reconvened the working group on an interim basis, with the membership and chairmanship as it was at SC62. The interim working group prepared a discussion document for SC65, which the United States submitted to the Secretariat in early May 2014.

Other Standing Committee working groups: In addition to the working groups discussed above, the United States was also an active member of the following intersessional Standing Committee working groups during the reporting period: 1) introduction from the sea; 2) timber identification and physical inspection; 3) CITES strategic vision; 4) review of resolutions; 5) purpose codes; 6) use of taxonomic serial numbers; 7) e-commerce of specimens of CITES-listed species; 8) personal and household effects; 9) humphead wrasse; 10) Asian snake trade management, conservation, and enforcement; 11) conservation of and trade in African and Asian rhinoceroses; 12) review of Resolution Conf. 10.10 (Rev. CoP15), *Trade in elephant specimens*; and 13) cooperation between CITES and FAO on forestry issues.

U.S. CITES online presence: USFWS undertook a content audit and review of CITES information contained on its International Affairs website (<http://www.fws.gov/international>) to identify text that needed to be updated, developed, and/or made more readily accessible to the public. In the fall of 2012, USFWS launched a redesign to its International Affairs website, focusing on the primary user groups of the site which include CITES permit applicants and non-governmental organizations, industry, and individuals interested in CITES developments. The site contains information on the CITES treaty and its implementation in the United States; permit applications and instructions for selected user groups; copies of recent U.S. CITES biennial reports; detailed information on U.S. proposals and priorities for CoP16; and links to the CITES Secretariat's website. USFWS has an on-going effort to identify additional user groups of our website and develop materials relevant to these audiences. To grow our reach on social media, USFWS International Affairs also shares information on CITES-listed animal and plant species, updates on U.S. permitting regulations, and other news on wildlife trade to its Facebook page and Twitter feed.

U.S. CITES export tagging program: The United States cooperates with its States and Indian Tribes in utilizing a tagging program for the export of skins of the following Appendix-II species: bobcat (*Lynx rufus*); river otter (*Lontra canadensis*); Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*); wolf (*Canis lupus*); brown bear (*Ursus arctos*); and American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*). USFWS currently cooperates with 48 States and 27 Indian Tribes that have instituted approved harvest programs. Each approved State or Indian Tribe applies CITES tags, provided by USFWS, to skins of approved species taken in that State or Tribe and intended for export from the United States. USFWS issued 775,000 tags during 2012 and nearly 764,000 during 2013.

U.S. CITES American ginseng program: In implementing the CITES Appendix-II listing of American ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*), USFWS works closely with other Federal agencies and the 25 States and single Indian Tribe that have approved American ginseng export programs. USFWS relies on those States, Tribes, and Federal agencies to provide information on legal and illegal harvest of American ginseng, the status of the species in the wild, and population trends. During the reporting period, USFWS regularly communicated with the States and the approved Indian Tribe on issues related to American ginseng, including revision of State/Tribal ginseng management regulations and administrative changes to the State/Tribal programs.

USFWS senior special agent/international attache program: The USFWS Office of Law Enforcement created the first-ever program for stationing wildlife special agents at U.S. Embassies as international attaches to coordinate investigations of wildlife trafficking and support wildlife enforcement capacity-building. The first posting was effective January 2014 at the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok. USFWS will hire and recruit four additional agent/attaches over the course of 2014. Plans call for two postings in sub-Saharan Africa; one in South America; plus one additional posting in Asia.

Wildlife detector dog program: In April 2014, the USFWS Office of Law Enforcement launched a wildlife detector dog program by stationing professionally trained inspector/handlers and “sniffer” dogs at four major U.S. ports of entry (Los Angeles, Miami, Chicago and express mail hub Louisville). The program is designed to enhance smuggling interdiction capacity; dogs can “sniff” cargo and mail packages in a fraction of the time that would be needed to open and inspect each container. To date, the inspector/dog teams have disrupted smuggling attempts involving elephant ivory, CITES-listed reptile leather products, rhino horn daggers, live birds, commercial shipments of seahorse medicinals and whale teeth, an ocean container full of sea turtle products and items made from other CITES wildlife, and 4,000 pounds of shark cartilage powder.

Operation Crash: Special agents with the USFWS Office of Law Enforcement continued their work on Operation Crash – a comprehensive nationwide investigation of trafficking in rhino horn that, by the close of the reporting period, had secured the arrests of 17 individuals, the successful prosecution of nine, and the disruption of two large-scale rhino horn smuggling networks. For additional information on Operation Crash, please visit our website at:

<http://www.fws.gov/le/pdf/3-31-14-Operation-Crash-Overview.pdf>

Totoaba trafficking: In the spring of 2013, the USFWS Office of Law Enforcement teamed with Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) and U.S. Customs and Border Protection to disrupt large-scale trafficking of swim bladders removed from totoaba fish – a CITES-listed species that lives off the coast of Mexico. Seven individuals were indicted on Federal charges in San Diego, California, in connection with these smuggling operations. The more than 550 swim bladders seized are worth an estimated 3.5 million USD in Asian markets where they are prized as a culinary delicacy with alleged medicinal properties. A lead player in this trafficking, who coordinated cross-border smuggling from Mexico with plans to market totoaba swim bladders in Asia, pleaded guilty to Federal charges and was sentenced to four months in prison and two years of probation.

Coral smuggler convicted: A three-year USFWS investigation into the mislabeling and smuggling of CITES-listed stony corals resulted in the successful prosecution of a co-owner of one of the largest live coral import businesses in the United States. The defendant, who pleaded guilty to one felony count of smuggling in March 2013, was sentenced in July 2013 to spend one year in Federal prison and was barred from possessing CITES species for three years following completion of that sentence. He was also fined 6,000 USD and ordered to forfeit 523,835 USD in illegal proceeds from coral trafficking.

Two-way reptile trafficker sentenced: In January 2014, a former reptile store operator in Washington State was sentenced to 12 months in prison and three years of supervised release in connection with a wide-ranging conspiracy to illegally traffic in protected reptile species. This man and five co-defendants operated a two-way smuggling network that was responsible for the illegal export of domestic species and the unlawful importation of foreign reptiles, all via Hong Kong. Trafficked wildlife included Eastern box turtles, North American wood turtles, and Gulf Coast box turtles from the United States; foreign CITES-listed species included a critically endangered Arakan forest turtles, black-breasted leaf turtles, Chinese striped-necked turtles, and big-headed turtles.

Ivory smuggler pleads guilty: On 18 September 2012, the owner of an African art store located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, who was arrested by USFWS special agents in July 2011, pleaded guilty to smuggling African elephant ivory. The defendant also agreed to forfeit 150,000 USD and one ton of seized elephant ivory worth an estimated 400,000 USD. Sentencing is scheduled for late May 2014.

Caviar cosmetics imported in violation of CITES: In August 2013, a Miami, Florida, Customs broker investigated by the USFWS Office of Law Enforcement pleaded guilty to a felony violation in connection with the illegal importation of 12 shipments of cosmetics made from Siberian sturgeon caviar which arrived in the United States without the required CITES permits and were not declared as wildlife. Another company involved in these transactions agreed to pay a 97,836 USD civil penalty so as to avoid criminal charges.

Arowana trafficking: Two men in Washington State, investigated in connection with the smuggling of endangered Asian arowanas, were ordered at sentencing to forfeit assets valued at over 150,000 USD and spend three months in home confinement and one year on probation. The property forfeited included four of

the highly prized and valuable endangered fish, 300 live marijuana plants, and commercial-scale drug production and processing equipment.

Bear gall smuggler sentenced: A foreign national from Canada who lives in Washington State was sentenced to 12 months in prison for felony obstruction of justice and wildlife trafficking. The defendant illegally purchased 18 CITES Appendix-II black bear gallbladders and smuggled them to China. He was also ordered to pay an 8,000 USD fine and spend five years on probation.

Indictment in reptile case: A U.S. reptile dealer was indicted in California in 2013 on multiple felony charges of conspiring to smuggle wildlife into and out of the United States. This individual is the first U.S. defendant to be prosecuted in Operation Flying Turtle – a USFWS investigation that already secured the successful prosecution of three Japanese nationals for smuggling thousands of CITES-listed turtles, tortoises, lizards, and snakes to and from the United States and Japan from 2004 through 2011.

International investigative liaison: During the reporting period, USFWS Office of Law Enforcement staff completed a 3-month detail focused on investigative coordination in Bangkok, Thailand; spent three weeks in Togo providing investigative assistance to enforcement authorities there; made multiple trips to the Philippines to help that nation develop a wildlife law enforcement database capability; and met with counterparts in South Africa and Namibia on investigative strategies and coordination.

CITES enforcement assistance to Viet Nam: In response to a request by Viet Nam's CITES Management Authority for assistance with wildlife trade enforcement, a forensic scientist from the USFWS Forensics Laboratory was selected by the U.S. State Department and USFWS for a Science Fellowship in Viet Nam during the summer of 2013 to work with Viet Nam's Management Authority to share the U.S. experience with wildlife trade enforcement, and to provide recommendations to increase the effectiveness of CITES enforcement in Viet Nam.

Targeting capacity enhanced: In March 2013, the USFWS Office of Law Enforcement expanded its abilities to target illegal wildlife shipments by joining 10 other Federal agencies with border management or import safety responsibilities as a member of the Commercial Targeting and Analysis Center in Washington, D.C. Two USFWS employees will be part of an interagency group of trade and intelligence analysts at the Center, which facilitates information sharing and collaboration across U.S. border enforcement agencies.

U.S.-Peru Trade Promotion Agreement: Since the U.S.-Peru Trade Promotion Agreement (PTPA) entered into force on 1 February 2009, the United States has worked very closely with Peruvian authorities in implementing the Environment Chapter and Annex on Forest Sector Governance ("Forest Annex"). The Forest Annex includes special focus on Peru's forest management with regard to CITES-listed tree species. In April 2012, the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA), an environmental NGO, petitioned the United States, asking that it request the Government of Peru to carry out audits and verifications of certain shipments, producers, and exporters of bigleaf mahogany and Spanish cedar (*Cedrela odorata*) in response to concerns about timber that may have been illegally harvested and exported to the United States. The United States undertook an extensive review of the information in the petition and determined not to request audits and verifications, but instead pursued a forward-looking five-point action plan with Peru targeted at addressing challenges highlighted during review of the petition. The United States is working closely with Peru on implementation of the action plan, including through the development of training workshops for environmental prosecutors.

The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) Peru Forest Sector Initiative (PFSI), funded by USAID, continues its extensive work in Peru with a team of staff based in Lima and Washington, D.C. In the past year, USFS jointly developed a timber tracing software prototype that was deployed to checkpoints along Peru's most complex timber corridor to undergo a year of intensive beta testing. At the end of the testing period, the Peruvians asked for additional functionality to be added in second version, which will deploy in mid-2014.

CITES Plant Rescue Center Program: USFWS established the CITES Plant Rescue Center Program in 1978 in response to the need to care for live CITES-listed plants legally abandoned or forfeited to the U.S. Government due to non-compliance with the import/export requirements of the Convention. USFWS administers this program in cooperation with APHIS, the U.S. inspection agency for live CITES-listed plants entering the United States. Currently, 84 institutions cooperate as volunteer plant rescue centers. All of the cooperating rescue centers are public botanical gardens, arboreta, zoological parks, or research institutions, and are either government entities or governmentally or privately funded non-profit entities. During 2012, APHIS confiscated 32 shipments of live plant material in violation of CITES. These shipments contained a total of 1,230 plants and 50 kilograms of seeds. The 31 shipments assigned to plant rescue centers contained 665 euphorbias, 201 aloes, 135 cacti, 51 orchids, 43 tillandsias, 25 podophyllums, and 10 plants of other taxa; plus 50 kilograms of palm seeds. During 2013, APHIS confiscated 31 shipments of live plant material in violation of

CITES. These shipments contained a total of 6,695 plants. The 30 shipments assigned to plant rescue centers contained 3,864 orchids, 2,343 aloes, 411 cacti, 27 euphorbias, 27 pitcher plants, and 8 tree ferns.

U.S. CITES Annual Reports for 2011 and 2012: On 26 October 2012, USFWS submitted, directly to UNEP-WCMC in electronic format, the U.S. CITES Annual Report data file for 2011 (139,751 data records), which contained data on all U.S. trade with the rest of the world in CITES-listed species of fauna and flora during 2011. On 5 November 2013, USFWS submitted, directly to UNEP-WCMC in electronic format, the U.S. CITES Annual Report data file for 2012 (148,594 data records), which contained data on all U.S. trade with the rest of the world in CITES-listed species of fauna and flora during 2012. The data in these data files represent actual trade and not just numbers of CITES permits issued.

U.S. CITES Biennial Report for 2011-2012: On 18 October 2013, USFWS submitted to the CITES Secretariat the U.S. CITES biennial report for the years 2011 and 2012. This report summarized some of the major legislative, regulatory, and administrative measures taken by the United States during 2011-2012 in its implementation and enforcement of CITES. Resolution Conf. 11.17 (Rev. CoP14) recommended that Parties submit their biennial reports in accordance with the *Biennial Report Format* adopted by the Parties at CoP13 and distributed by the Secretariat in CITES Notification to the Parties No. 2005/035. Therefore, the United States submitted its 2011-2012 biennial report in accordance with that format. The USFWS has posted this report on its CITES website at <http://www.fws.gov/international/pdf/biennial-report-us-cites-2011-2012.pdf>.

U.S. elephant seizure data: On 14 May 2013, USFWS submitted to TRAFFIC East/Southern Africa data files containing U.S. elephant part and product seizure data for the year 2012 for inclusion in the Elephant Trade Information System (ETIS).

#### **4. ACTIVITIES OF THE REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES**

##### **UNITED STATES**

Communications with the Chair of the Standing Committee and the Secretariat: The United States served as both the North American Regional Representative and Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee throughout the reporting period, and in the capacity of Vice-Chair had regular communications with the Secretariat and the Chair of the Standing Committee.

Regional teleconference in preparation for SC65: In June 2014, the United States, as the North American Regional Representative on the Standing Committee, will hold a conference call with Canada and Mexico as part of the regional consultation process in preparation for SC65.

#### **5. REGIONAL COOPERATION**

##### **CANADA**

On behalf of the CITES Secretariat, Canada developed the "Internet Toolkit: A Manual for Conducting Research on the Internet". The manual was completed in 2012 and was launched at CoP16 in Bangkok, Thailand, in March 2013. The Internet Toolkit is now available on INTERPOL's website.

Environment Canada's involvement with the INTERPOL Wildlife Crime Working Group has included building capacity and facilitating the exchange of information in support of coordinated and enhanced enforcement efforts around the world. In 2013, Environment Canada increased coordination and information exchange related to environmental crimes through INTERPOL, by seconding two Enforcement Branch employees for one day a week to the INTERPOL National Central Bureau (NCB), located at the RCMP headquarters in Ottawa. The aim of these secondments is to improve the Enforcement Branch's ability to exchange operational information with INTERPOL, with other countries' INTERPOL NCBs and with other domestic agencies operating in the NCB. Additionally, these individuals will align INTERPOL processes with Environment Canada's internal decision-making processes, train officers on criteria for exchange of information to and from Canada and conduct historical data entry of select completed cases.

##### **MEXICO**

Members of the North American Region communicate regularly as part of the ongoing commitment to meet and discuss regional CITES issues. A North American Regional meeting was hosted by Mexico in February 2013, in advance of CoP16. In between meetings, the North America Region maintained communication through

conference calls and email, particularly in 2014 in preparation of the 27<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Animals Committee and the 21<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Plants Committee.

In October 2012, the PROFEPA Office of the Deputy Attorney General for Industrial Inspection, together with WWF-TRAFFIC North America and with funds from the USFWS Wildlife Without Borders Program, held the “Workshop to Strengthen the Skills of Officials Responsible for the Management and Enforcement of Wildlife Legislation in Mexico”. Training was provided to 81 public servants from the federal environment sector from throughout the country and from local governments, who are responsible for the management, verification, and inspection of wildlife for national and international trade. In 2013, they also organized the “Workshop to train instructors in matters of trade in and trafficking of wildlife,” which was aimed at 50 public servants from PROFEPA, CONABIO, the General Customs Administration and the Office of the Attorney General of the Republic. To date, the contents of the workshop have been passed on to 119 public servants in the PROFEPA regional offices throughout the country. To continue with this initiative, a proposal was submitted to the USFWS Wildlife Without Borders Program in 2014 and has been pre-approved.

In September 2012, personnel from PROFEPA attended various events involving training, updating and exchange of technical experiences, which were facilitated by the North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC): “Meeting on best forensic practices.” Under the framework of this cooperation, PROFEPA participated during the “Workshop on Exchange of Information and Intelligence on the Trafficking of Protected Marine Species in North America” (Vancouver, July 2013) for investigation and information exchange on certain species of common interest (totoaba, sea cucumber, clarion angelfish), from which seizures were made in both Mexico and the United States.

In October 2013, UNAM signed an agreement with the Smithsonian Institution of the U.S. National Museum of Natural History to carry out the project “Wildlife Bar Code-Mexico.” That project will seek to use bar codes as a tool to support the CITES law enforcement authority in Mexico (PROFEPA) in identifying species traded internationally that are difficult to identify. The CITES authorities, in cooperation with the academic sector (UNAM), the MEXBOL network of the National Science and Technology Commission (CONACYT), the Office of the Attorney General of the Republic (PGR) and the Scientific Division of the Federal Police, have developed a document that describes the scope of the project in Mexico, and a list of 800 species (200 priority species in addition to similar and associated species) that require sequencing for inclusion in a genetic reference library.

## **UNITED STATES**

Narwhal tusk trafficking: The USFWS Office of Law Enforcement teamed with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Canadian Wildlife Service to investigate four individuals involved in the unlawful harvest, sale, and export of 1.5 million USD worth of CITES-listed narwhal tusks from Canada into the United States. The investigation secured Federal felony indictments against three U.S. residents and their Canadian supplier; charges include conspiracy and money laundering as well as smuggling. The Canadian defendant, who was arrested in the province of New Brunswick on 19 December 2013, on an extradition warrant requested by the United States, was successfully prosecuted in Canada in connection with smuggling hundreds of narwhal tusks across the border to U.S. buyers. Convicted on seven counts, he was fined 385,000 Canadian dollars and given an 8-month conditional sentence. Two of the U.S. defendants (both Tennessee residents) pleaded guilty to felony conspiracy and wildlife trafficking charges in January 2013. The third defendant (a New Jersey man) stood trial in Maine in March 2014, and was found guilty of smuggling narwhal tusks from Canada and related money-laundering crimes.

Cross-border reptile trafficking: In 2013, a 28-year-old New York woman who, over a two-year period, smuggled over 18,000 protected reptiles (many of them species CITES-listed) from the United States to Canada for the pet trade, was sentenced to spend 18 months in prison after pleading guilty to felony Lacey Act and conspiracy charges. USFWS and Canadian investigators showed that the defendant transported the reptiles by boat across the St. Lawrence River from the U.S. side of the Mohawk Indian Reservation to the Canadian side and delivered them to a Canadian co-conspirator. Market value of the smuggled reptiles in Canada exceeded 800,000 Canadian dollars. The Canadian co-conspirator in this reptile smuggling ring was successfully prosecuted in Canada, where he was found guilty of two counts of violating that country’s major wildlife law. He was sentenced to serve 90 days in jail, spend three years on probation, and pay 50,000 Canadian dollars in restitution to Canada’s Environmental Defense Fund.

U.S./Canada wildlife smuggling: In the fall of 2012, the USFWS Office of Law Enforcement, the Canadian Wildlife Service, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, and New York State officers completed a successful investigation of the unlawful commercialization of CITES-listed Asian arowanas and injurious snakehead fish being smuggled into the United States from Canada. The main defendant – the owner of a commercial aquarium business in Toronto – pleaded guilty to violating U.S. and State wildlife laws and paid 13,000 USD in

finer and restitution. He was also prosecuted in Canada on Federal and Provincial charges and was sentenced there to spend 60 days in prison and he and his business will pay some 75,000 Canadian dollars in fines.

## **6. MEETINGS AND WORKSHOPS**

### **CANADA**

The Canadian network of management authorities communicates regularly. There are bi-annual meetings where the latest permitting policies and procedures are discussed. Topics for discussion include changes in CITES (resolutions and species listings), permit templates and secure permitting requirements, CITES reporting requirements, permit standards, etc.

The Canadian network of scientific authorities communicates regularly by teleconference and email to discuss CITES related issues and further the program to develop standing non-detriment finding (NDF) reports, which are used to support permit decisions on sustainable exports of legally obtained CITES specimens. A December 2013 workshop was held to explore Canada's interests and challenges regarding national implementation of the scientific aspects of CITES and to provide advice and comments on Canada's international activities.

The Canadian Scientific Authority also communicates regularly with an Aboriginal Consult group to discuss CITES related issues as they pertain to Canadian Aboriginal peoples.

Canada attended the North America regional meeting, hosted by Mexico in February, 2013, as part of an ongoing commitment to meet and discuss regional issues and positions in advance of the Conference of the Parties. These meetings allow regional members to better understand other North American Parties' views and concerns, especially regarding shared species.

### **MEXICO**

The Mexican Management and Scientific Authorities participated in the "Regional Workshop on the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (GSPC) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Strategic Biodiversity Plan 2011-2020" in Mexico City, from 15-17 November 2012. The workshop also counted with the participation of CBD's and/or GSPC's national focal points from Costa Rica, Cuba, United States, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Puerto Rico, United Kingdom, and the Dominican Republic; in addition to representatives from TRAFFIC, New York's Botanical Garden, the University of Puerto Rico, the Biological Station "Las Cruces", and the Mexican Indigenous Tourist Network.

PROFEPA participated in the "Workshop on Identification of Shark Fins," held in Roatán, Honduras, where training and updating was provided on suitable implementation and operation of CITES in matters of identifying shark fins.

Mexico hosted the 27<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Animals Committee (AC27), the 21<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Plants Committee (PC21), and their joint sessions (AC27/PC21) at Veracruz from 28 April to 8 May 2014, including a series of parallel activities, as follows:

- a) Guided visits to sites where CITES species are used and managed;
- b) A poster session aimed to broadcast experiences on investigation, management and conservation of CITES species, promoting the exchange and collaboration between Mexican communities and CITES experts;
- c) Parallel meetings: CSG-Mexico/Responsible Ecosystem Sourcing Platform (RESP), IUCN Mexican Palms Assessment and Mexican IUCN Committee meeting;
- d) Side-events: Implementation of Appendix II of sharks (PEW), FAO-CITES Cooperation, UNCTAD, RESP, UNOCD-PROFEPA Alliance, USA Identification of wood, GSPC (CONABIO-BGCI), Identification guide for Cycads (Kew Botanical Garden), Advisor Committee Program (ITTO), Conservation and trade of Mexican *Abronia* spp.;

- e) A public seminar “CITES and the challenges to sustainability” to give relevant sectors and the CITES international community the opportunity to exchange information and experiences on the proper implementation of the Convention.

General information on the different activities held in Veracruz meetings is available at:

<http://www.biodiversidad.gob.mx/planeta/cites/veracruz/>.

The Mexican Scientific Authority and the General Directorate for Forestry and Soil Management (DGGFS-SEMARNAT) attended the “Central American regional workshop under the ITTO-CITES Program”, in La Antigua, Guatemala from 16-18 July 2013. The workshop was hosted by Guatemala’s government (CONAP and INAP), and was convened following the recent listing in Appendix II of species of *Dalbergia* from the region at CoP16 (Bangkok, 2013). Workshop participants learned about the ITTO-CITES Program to date, shared experiences on their management of mahogany, rosewood, and other CITES-listed species, and developed a set of ideas for proposals for assistance under the Program.

## UNITED STATES

Iguana conservation workshop: USFWS sponsored a first of its kind Caribbean regional iguana conservation workshop in San Juan, Puerto Rico, in December 2013. The Puerto Rico Department of the Environment and Natural Resources hosted the workshop and provided logistical support. Island governments, scientists, resource managers, and conservation NGOs all came together to learn from each other and share experiences, while formulating a priority conservation action plan for the future. Iguanas are among the most endangered lizard families, and a wide variety of Appendix-I and -II species occur on different islands across the Caribbean region; poaching for the pet trade has recently re-emerged as a key threat to some species. The United States would be pleased to hear from any Parties or NGOs interested in supporting this initiative. The workshop results will be available at SC65 as an Information Document.

Free trade agreements and capacity building: The Department of the Interior International Technical Assistance Program (ITAP) continues to work on wildlife trafficking and CITES capacity building projects in Central America. ITAP is currently working to establish similar efforts in Asia and South America. Many of these activities are conducted in coordination with the U.S. Department of State and the USFWS provides technical experts on assessment and training missions. For additional information please visit the ITAP website at <http://www.doi.gov/intl/itap/index.cfm>.

Criminal investigations training in Africa: In response to the wildlife poaching crisis in Africa, the USFWS Office of Law Enforcement presented a comprehensive criminal investigations training program in both June 2013 and August 2013 at the U.S. State Department’s International Law Enforcement Academy in Gaborone, Botswana. A total of 65 officers from 10 sub-Saharan African nations – Botswana, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Kenya, Namibia, Republic of the Congo, South Africa, Tanzania and Zambia – completed the intensive two-week course.

Wildlife forensics training: The USFWS National Fish and Wildlife Forensics Laboratory in Ashland, Oregon, hosted a one-week training program for forensic experts from southeast Asia in August 2013. During the reporting period, Laboratory scientists also provided forensics training and consultation in Vietnam and Australia.

Anti-smuggling training in Asia: In the fall of 2013, USFWS law enforcement officers helped conduct an anti-smuggling training program hosted by the Department of Homeland Security in Bangkok, Thailand. They provided courses on CITES, surveillance, controlled deliveries, and crime scene processing to 40 participants from the Royal Thai Police; Royal Thai, Laotian and Myanmar Customs; Thailand’s Attorney General’s Office; INTERPOL; the FREELAND Foundation; and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Wildlife Enforcement Network.

Smuggling interdiction training: In September 2012, the USFWS wildlife inspector stationed in Puerto Rico presented training on wildlife smuggling interdiction and detecting CITES permit fraud in Panama to officers from that country and the other member nations of the Central American Wildlife Enforcement Network.

U.S. CITES delegation visits China: In June-July 2013, USFWS representatives took part in meetings with the P.R.C. State Forestry Administration (SFA) in Beijing to discuss results of CoP16. These representatives also took part in a one-day CITES identification training workshop for Chinese Customs Officials in Guangzhou on turtle species that were recently listed in the CITES Appendices.

APHIS CITES workshop: In June 2013, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and USFWS conducted a CITES training workshop in Brownsville, Texas, for APHIS and CBP inspectors of the U.S. ports along the Texas-Mexico border.

Wood identification workshop in the Dominican Republic: In 2012, the U.S. Forest Service conducted a wood identification workshop in the Dominican Republic for 35 attendees from the local government and universities.

Wood identification workshop in Nicaragua: The U.S. Forest Service sent an expert from its Forest Products Lab to Nicaragua in 2013 to deliver a wood identification workshop using the Forest Service's Central America wood identification manual. The workshop in Nicaragua had approximately 40 attendees from local government and universities.

## **7. PROBLEMS FACED BY THE REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES**

### **UNITED STATES**

At SC64 (March 2013), the United States, which had served as the North American Regional Representative on the Standing Committee for the intersessional period between CoP15 and CoP16, was again elected as the Regional Representative for the intersessional period between CoP16 and CoP17. Since then, the United States can report that coordination within the region has continued to be excellent and it has faced no special problems as Regional Representative.