

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

Thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties
Bangkok (Thailand), 2-14 October 2004

Strategic and administrative matters

Review of permanent committees

REVIEW OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEES

1. This document has been submitted by Australia.
2. The CITES *Strategic Vision* recognizes the importance of reliable scientific data and effective monitoring systems supported by strong national capacity and effective cooperation. It includes enhancing the capacity of each Party to implement the Convention and a continued strengthening of the scientific basis of the decision-making process. Each goal in the *Strategic Vision* has numerous objectives and activities. The *Strategic Vision* describes the need to ensure the Convention is underpinned by an improved and secure financial and administrative system so that all other goals can be successfully met. As CITES faces a continuing shortage of funds to support its *Strategic Vision*, the challenge is to determine the relative priority of each major objective and activity and provide the necessary support to achieve the required outcomes.
3. Three key goals are scientific assessment, capacity building and enforcement. They are interdependent and the level of support allocated to each function has a bearing on the level of activities and outcomes that each may achieve. Without a mechanism for review, the balance between scientific assessment, capacity building and enforcement is likely to be adversely affected. It is important that Parties have an opportunity to express their views and be satisfied that the Convention is performing efficiently and effectively in key areas.
4. Australia strongly encourages Parties to support a process that ensures the Convention achieves its goals through the application of good management practices.

Issues

5. The Animals and Plants Committees are established under Resolution Conf. 11.1 (Rev. CoP12), Annex 2. The Terms of Reference for the two committees are almost identical.
6. Costs are increasing significantly (from approximately CHF 50,000 in 1997 to close to CHF 90,000 in 2002) and, in the absence of change, will continue to increase. Reasons include the number of meetings and the large number of participants at each meeting. This necessarily places a burden on other important activities that cannot, as a result, be adequately supported.
7. Recommendations from the scientific committees are not attracting consistent support by the Conference of the Parties. This could be for any number of reasons but it suggests that the present arrangements could benefit from a review to give the Parties confidence that the present structure is the best available and that monies allocated are justified.

Proposal

8. Parties are asked to agree to a review of the scientific committees, with suggested terms of reference along the following lines:
 - a) Examine and report on the most effective and efficient means of providing scientific advice to the Convention and to the Parties as appropriate;
 - b) Examine and report on the resources required to support adequately the provision of scientific advice having regard to the resources necessary to support adequately other key activities, including capacity building and enforcement;
 - c) Examine and report on an effective process of regular review of the provision of scientific advice; and
 - d) Examine and report on the mandate of a scientific committee.

Recommendation

9. The Standing Committee should be directed to review the scientific committees using terms of reference to be developed by a working group at the present meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

COMMENT FROM THE SECRETARIAT

The Secretariat supports Australia's call for a formal review of the scientific committees and agrees that the terms of reference for this review should be developed by a working group at the present meeting. The Secretariat suggests that it would be appropriate to include a review of the Nomenclature Committee in the terms of reference.