

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

Interpretation and implementation of the Convention

Species trade and conservation issues

Sea cucumbers

IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISION 12.60

1. This document has been submitted by Ecuador.

Introduction

2. The international trade in sea cucumbers remains a significant conservation issue, and Ecuador has listed one of its native – and heavily exploited – species (*Isostichopus fuscus*) in Appendix III to control illegal exports and ensure sustainable harvest in the Galapagos Islands.
3. At the 12th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (Santiago, 2002), the United States of America submitted document CoP12 Doc. 45 on the Trade in sea cucumbers in the families Holothuriidae and Stichopodidae. That document described the extensive global trade in various species of sea cucumbers and led to the adoption of Decisions 12.60 and 12.61.
4. Decision 12.61 directs the Secretariat, in part, to the following:
 - b) *contingent on the availability of external funding, cooperate with other relevant bodies, including the fisheries sector, to convene a technical workshop to consider and review biological and trade information that would assist in establishing conservation priorities and actions to secure the conservation status of sea cucumbers in these families; and*
 - c) *contract the preparation of a document for discussion at the technical workshop. This document should contain all relevant available information concerning the status, catches and bycatches of, and trade in specimens of species in the families Holothuriidae and Stichopodidae and on any domestic measures for their conservation and protection, and a review of the adequacy of such measures.*
5. The technical workshop called for in Decision 12.61 was convened in Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) from 1 to 3 March 2004. Unfortunately, time, budget, and personnel constraints prevented distribution of the discussion document and other relevant reports prior to the Kuala Lumpur workshop. This prevented a thorough and scientific discussion of all issues surrounding the sea cucumber trade, as well as the various trade controls either in place or proposed for these species.
6. The CITES technical workshop was preceded by another forum on sea cucumber conservation, convened by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Dalian (China) from 14 to 18 October 2003. Many attendees at the CITES workshop expected to review the output from this FAO discussion, but final proceedings were unavailable from FAO at that time. FAO staff attended the CITES workshop, and distributed a summary of the Dalian discussions. This summary stated, *inter alia*, that “international intervention (e.g. IUCN/CITES) may be needed to assist in the conservation and management of sea cucumbers”.

7. Decision 12.60 on sea cucumbers directs the Animals Committee to:
- a) review, with the assistance of experts as may be needed, the outcomes of the technical workshop convened by the Secretariat and other available information concerning the biology, catch and bycatch of and trade in sea cucumbers in the families Holothuriidae and Stichopodidae and develop appropriate recommendations; and*
 - b) prepare, for consideration at the 13th meeting of the Conference of the Parties, a discussion paper on the biological and trade status of sea cucumbers in the above families to provide scientific guidance on the actions needed to secure their conservation status.*
8. At the 20th meeting of the Animals Committee (AC20, Johannesburg, March-April 2004), most attendees were unable to review the summary of the CITES sea cucumber workshop until they arrived at the meeting. A small working group at AC20 was unable to draft more than a simple outline of the discussion paper called for in Decision 12.60, and the full Committee has therefore not completed the task mandated in Decision 12.60, paragraph b).
9. Accordingly, the Parties are invited to consider a new Decision that would simply:
- a) extend the deadline for completing the Animals Committee discussion paper on sea cucumbers until CoP14; and
 - b) call on the Secretariat to assist in obtaining funds from interested Parties, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and others to contract out the drafting of the discussion paper for full review by the Animals Committee.
10. Draft decisions are presented in the Annex for the Parties to consider. If they are adopted, Decisions 12.60 and 12.61 could be deleted entirely.

COMMENTS FROM THE SECRETARIAT

- A. The Secretariat refers to its comments on document CoP13 Doc. 37.1, submitted by the Animals Committee and addressing the same issue.
- B. The Secretariat stresses the need for external funding for undertaking further actions in this area. Since no species of sea cucumber is included in Appendix I or II of CITES, funding would be needed to cover fully the staff and travel costs of the Secretariat for its work in connection with this issue.

DRAFT DECISIONS OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

Directed to the Animals Committee and the Secretariat

Regarding sea cucumbers

- 13.xx The Animals Committee shall:
- a) review the proceedings of the International technical workshop on the Conservation of sea cucumbers in the families Holothuriidae and Stichopodidae (March 2004, Kuala Lumpur), as well as those of the forum on Advances in Sea Cucumber Aquaculture and Management (ASCAM) convened by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (October 2003; Dalian); and
 - b) prepare, for consideration at the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties, a discussion paper on the biological and trade status of sea cucumbers in the above families to provide scientific guidance on the actions needed to secure their conservation status.
- 13.xx The Secretariat shall assist in obtaining funds to support the preparation of the Animals Committee discussion paper on the biological and trade status of sea cucumbers in the families Holothuriidae and Stichopodidae.