

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



Sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties
Bangkok (Thailand), 3-14 March 2013

Administrative matters

ARRANGEMENTS FOR MEETINGS

1. This document has been submitted by the Central African Republic, Mali¹ and Rwanda.²

Background

2. Article XII, paragraph 2 of the Convention lists the functions of the CITES Secretariat. In particular, the Secretariat is required to arrange for and service meetings of the Parties, to undertake scientific and technical studies authorized by the Conference of the Parties, to study the reports and any further information submitted by Parties, to prepare annual reports to the Parties, to make recommendations for the implementation of the provisions of the Convention, and to perform any other function as may be entrusted to it by the Parties.
3. Since the present Convention entered into force, the Secretariat has provided many very useful services to the Parties. In addition to those listed in the previous paragraph, the Secretariat has provided, inter alia, training on law enforcement, legislative advice and assistance in the verification of permits, and has organized special meetings as well.
4. The Convention also specifies the functions of the Conference of the Parties. Article XI, paragraph 2 of the Convention entrusts the Parties with the mission of reviewing the implementation of the Convention, and particularly with the task of making the necessary provisions to enable the Secretariat to carry out its duties. The Conference of the Parties has the explicit and inherent power to oversee, review and determine the work of the CITES Secretariat.
5. To establish a set of common expectations and facilitate the work of the Parties and the Secretariat, the authors of the present proposal consider that it would be useful to introduce some rules on the submission, distribution and translation of documents to be considered at special meetings organized between regular meetings of the Conference of the Parties. For example, we note that the Conference of the Parties, the Standing Committee, the Animals Committee and the Plants Committee have adopted rules on the submission, distribution and translation of documents to be considered at their meetings (see documents CoP15 Doc. 3, PC20 Doc. 2 and AC26 Doc. 2). However, the CITES Secretariat does not apply any such rules *mutatis mutandis* to the special meetings it organizes. Thus, Parties that attend such meetings sometimes receive relevant documents only one day or two before the meeting and therefore do not have enough time to prepare for the meeting. In addition, documents prepared for special meetings organized by the CITES Secretariat are not all translated – when a translation is provided – or distributed well enough in advance. Thus, participants with working languages other than English either do not receive a translation, or only receive a partial translation of the documents that will be dealt with, or are provided with a translation only at the start of the meeting. All the aforementioned situations make it almost impossible for participants to properly prepare for important meetings, which are often technical.

¹ Note from the Secretariat: no official submission of the present document has been received from this country.

² 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.

6. The CITES Secretariat should apply the rules that typically govern CITES and other international organizations to the special meetings it organizes or finances. For example, all potential Party representatives should have the possibility of sending comments on the preparation of the agenda and submitting documents for consideration at such meetings. For meetings held in specific regions where most Parties use one of the official languages of the Convention (e.g. Latin America, French-speaking Africa), documents should be distributed in English and translated at least into the language spoken in the region. Documents and their translations should be distributed at least 7 working days before the meeting to allow participants to prepare for the meeting and make the necessary consultations, if necessary.
7. Late communication of information by the CITES Secretariat on organizational and logistical matters has also had negative effects on the attendance of CITES Parties to special meetings. In fact, delegates are not always informed about meetings sufficiently in advance, and in some cases have even received information about their travelling arrangements or accommodation on the day of their departure. Delegates from Parties should be notified of a meeting well in advance in order to organize their workload and their agenda and make the necessary arrangements to prepare their trip. Such delegates should receive a notification indicating the date, time and place of the meeting as well as information about their accommodation, if appropriate. Timely communication of this information would allow CITES to make savings, particularly through the purchase of air tickets at more affordable prices. Considering that, in certain Parties, travel abroad requires a ministerial authorization, travel arrangements and sponsorship activities should be organized so that delegates are informed of relevant details at least 20 days before the meeting.
8. Finally, less and less funding is available for CITES to organize special meetings. Consequently, when a meeting is organized for a specific group of Parties (e.g. the range States of a CITES-listed species or CITES Parties from a given region), most of its members should confirm in advance that that such meeting is of priority importance for the use of available funds. Currently, Parties invited to meetings organized by the CITES Secretariat are not always consulted in advance about the need to organize a meeting or the choice of the other participants invited. In some cases, they are only informed about the subject of the meeting when the documents for the meeting become available, which is sometimes late and compromises their ability to attend such meetings and participate in them. Therefore, it would be more appropriate to ensure that participants at a meeting are consulted from the planning stage. Parties should have the possibility of advising the Secretariat about the need to organize a specific meeting and to determine whether it should be given priority in the use of CITES funds. Parties should also have the possibility of sharing their opinion with the CITES Secretariat on the draft list of participants to the meeting before it is finalized and invitations are sent.
9. We perfectly understand the need to ensure that the CITES Secretariat continues to have some room for manoeuvre to organize meetings and make the best use of the resources and the time of the CITES staff. However, we consider that adopting a resolution aimed at ensuring the appropriate planning, organization and functioning of special meetings organized or funded by the CITES Secretariat will not only benefit the administration of the Convention and the work of the CITES Secretariat but also all the Parties. The draft resolution dealing with the above-mentioned issues is included as an annex for the consideration of the Parties.

COMMENTS FROM THE SECRETARIAT

- A. The present document contains complaints about the Secretariat's organization of "special meetings". However, as it does not indicate which specific meetings it is referring to, it is not possible to comment on the particular problems that were encountered.
- B. The only meetings for which funds are made available in the budget of the Secretariat, adopted by the Conference of the Parties, are the meetings of the Conference of the Parties and of its three permanent committees. Funds for all other meetings have to be found from external sources and all arrangements for those meetings are dependent on the resources available. These are sometimes inadequate to cover all costs, including logistics, interpretation, translation, travel and accommodation of participants. This problem is not peculiar to CITES and applies equally to all other multilateral environmental agreements. This is beyond the control of the Secretariat, which always uses its best endeavours to make the best of the funds available.
- C. With regard to the draft resolution in the Annex, the Secretariat believes that the level of detailed instruction to the Secretariat is unnecessary and impractical. It is not aware of any other multilateral environmental

agreement where the Parties have established such rules and constraints for the organization of non-official meetings for which there is no budget. Moreover, the proposed procedure would be costly to implement and, in its references to distribution of printed documents, takes no account of developments in technology or the changes in the rules on this subject in the permanent committees.

D. In Resolution Conf. 4.6 (Rev. CoP15), the Conference of the Parties:

DECIDES that any draft resolutions or decisions submitted for consideration at a meeting of the Conference of the Parties that have budgetary and workload implications for the Secretariat or permanent committees must contain or be accompanied by a budget for the work involved and an indication of the source of funding.

The present document does not contain any such indication. The Secretariat believes that, if the Conference of the Parties establishes such strict rules for the preparation of all the meetings that are organized by the Secretariat, as proposed in the present document, it would not be able to meet the requirements without an additional staff member (plus office space and office support). Moreover, the implementation of the requirements relating to the translation of documents assumes that funds for such translation are made available, which is not always the case.

E. The Secretariat always welcomes feedback on meetings that it convenes and is responsive to any concerns expressed by Parties and participants. It already reports to the Standing Committee regarding its fundraising and organization of meetings and it is unnecessary to provide for this in a further Resolution. The Conference of the Parties has already resolved, in Resolution Conf. 11.1 (Rev. CoP15), that the Standing Committee shall provide to the Secretariat general policy and general operation direction, as well as guidance and advice on the preparation of agendas and other requirements of meetings of the CoP and any of its committees. Any serious concerns not adequately responded to by the Secretariat can always be raised with the Standing Committee and the Secretariat can respond at Standing Committee meetings, as necessary. The Secretariat engages directly with the Standing Committee both at its regular meetings and through ongoing interaction with the Chair.

DRAFT RESOLUTION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

Guidelines on meetings organized or funded by the CITES Secretariat

THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION

1. For the purposes of the present Resolution, a 'meeting' refers to any special meeting convened specifically between regular meetings of the Conference of the Parties and the CITES Committees and organized or funded totally or in part by the CITES Secretariat.
2. The aim of this document is to advise the CITES Secretariat on the organization of all special meetings.

Consultation of Parties on the need to organize a meeting

3. When the organization of a meeting is not specifically required by a decision of the Conference of the Parties or the Standing Committee, the Secretariat shall send a notification to all the potential participants from Parties at least 60 days before the date of the meeting and attach a list of potential participants, an estimate of the cost of the meeting and the draft agenda. Parties thus notified will have 14 days to respond to the CITES Secretariat, indicate whether they support the holding of the meeting, and send comments on the draft list of participants and agenda. The organization of the meeting shall proceed provided that most members of potentially invited Parties have explicitly supported it in their response to the CITES Secretariat and that sufficient resources are available. If the CITES Secretariat does not receive any signs of support in this regard, it shall report the situation to the Standing Committee and cancel the organization of the meeting.

Documents

4. If the draft meeting is approved by most potential participants from Parties involved, the Secretariat shall send all such participants the draft agenda and revised list of participants at least 40 days before the meeting. The Secretariat shall also send all CITES Parties a notification informing them about the meeting, including the draft agenda and list of participants. The Secretariat shall consider any additional comments received after this.
5. The Secretariat shall send invitations (specifying the place and date of the meeting) to people included in the final list of participants at least 30 days before the meeting.
6. Any documents that participants from Parties wish to propose for consideration at the meeting shall be submitted to the Secretariat at least 30 days before the date of the meeting where they are to be discussed. As far as possible, such documents should not exceed 12 pages in length (with the exception of charts, maps, illustrations and figures included as an annex).
7. All documents submitted to the Secretariat by a Party or an observer at the request of the Secretariat shall be distributed to all participants to the meeting (and, if necessary, placed on the CITES website) as soon as possible after they are received, but no later than 10 days after the deadline for the submission of documents, in the original language (which shall be a CITES working language) in which they have been submitted.
8. When several working languages are used at a meeting, the Secretariat shall take the necessary measures to provide a translation of the documents and interpretation of the debates held at the meeting into the appropriate working language. The Secretariat shall distribute translated documents to all participants to the meeting at least 7 working days before the meeting where they are to be discussed. Any documents that have not been translated within this deadline will not be included in the agenda of the meeting or dealt with by participants to the meeting.
9. The Secretariat shall distribute all valid documents for the meeting to all participants as well as the head of the Management Authority of participants from Parties at least 7 working days before the meeting. Any documents distributed by the Secretariat after this date will not be included in the agenda of the meeting or dealt with by participants to the meeting.

10. Subject to confidentiality rules, the Secretariat shall provide copies of the documents to any Party that requests them.
11. Documents may also be submitted for information purposes only (Inf. documents). These will not be translated and cannot be discussed at the meeting. However, such documents may be referred to if they relate to the existing agenda items, but not discussed.

Use of funds

12. At each meeting of the Standing Committee, the Secretariat shall submit a report on the efforts it has made to fund meetings and other activities for which it has been asked to seek funding through the Standing Committee or the Conference of the Parties.
13. In the report mentioned in the previous paragraph, the Secretariat shall explain how it determined the order of priority for its efforts.

Delegate sponsorship

14. When a delegate's travel is sponsored, the Secretariat shall inform him/her of the arrangements made for this purpose and accommodation conditions at least 20 days before the meeting. Sponsorship shall cover all costs associated with the attendance of sponsored delegates.