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PRESS RELEASE

CITES authorizes 2004 export quotas for Caspian Sea caviar

Bangkok, 8 October 2004 – The Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) has announced today the 2004 export quotas for Caspian Sea sturgeon.

The approval follows an agreement by the five Caspian Sea States on a new approach to managing sturgeon stocks and the caviar trade that gives the Caspian States an economic incentive to reduce illegal harvesting, to promote sustainable fisheries management and to provide much-needed stability for the caviar industry.

Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation and Turkmenistan have agreed to reduce their caviar export quotas significantly for this year. Their combined 2004 export quota for caviar from beluga – the rarest and most valuable of all sturgeon – is 50% of the 2003 level. The quota for stellate sturgeon has been reduced by 40% compared to 2003. The levels of caviar from Russian and Persian sturgeon have been cut by 10%. These will now be considered the new base levels for discussions on quotas for future years. (See the attached table for details.)

“The Caspian States have agreed to reduce substantially their caviar exports this year. They have achieved these reductions through adjustments to the total harvest of sturgeons and through an increase in the amount of harvested sturgeons devoted to hatchery conservation programs,” said Dr. Jim Armstrong, CITES Deputy Secretary General.

“The new approach agreed here gives the governments a strong economic stake in tackling illegal fishing. As the illegal trade declines, legal exports – and thus government earnings – will rise accordingly in future years,” he said.

In addition to committing themselves to tackling illegal catch and trade, the range States have agreed to finalize future quotas by the beginning of each trading year. This will offer greater certainty and stability to both the fishing and caviar industries as they make their business plans. The governments have also agreed to place a higher percentage of legally harvested sturgeon fish into hatcheries each year as an added conservation measure.

CITES responded to high levels of poaching and illegal trade in the Caspian Sea – which accounts for some 90% of world caviar – by calling on the Range States to take stronger action. The trade in Caspian Sea caviar was halted for a period in 2001. Extensive discussions and stronger actions by the range states were required before the 2002 and 2003 quotas could be agreed.

Today's announcement was made in the margins of a two-week CITES conference being held in Bangkok, Thailand. The conference is also considering a proposed revision of Resolution Conf. 12.7 (see www.cites.org/eng/resols/12/12-7.shtml). Introduced by the CITES Secretariat, this

resolution would, if agreed next week, apply this same new approach combining a strengthening of conservation measures with tighter regulations to combat illegal markets to all the major sturgeon-producing basins, including the Black Sea, the Azov Sea and the Amur River.

The CITES Secretariat is administered by UNEP, the UN Environment Programme.

Note to journalists: For more information, contact the CITES press office in Bangkok at +66-4-098-7621 or email juan.vasquez@unep.ch or michael.williams@unep.ch. See also www.cites.org.

Caspian sturgeon caviar export quotas 2001-2004 (in kilograms)

Azerbaijan	2001	2002	2003	2004
Beluga	520	530	400	200
Russian Sturgeon	3 450	2 770	4 200	3 780
Stellate Sturgeon	2 840	2 470	4 500	2 700
Ship Sturgeon	0	0	0	0

Islamic Rep. of Iran	2001	2002	2003	2004
Beluga	3 950	2 950	2 130	1 065
Russian Sturgeon	3 460	2 100	1 950	1 755
Stellate Sturgeon	23 400	14 827	11 700	7 020
Ship Sturgeon	1 000	0	0	0
Persian Sturgeon	51 000	55 890	63 000	56 700

Kazakhstan	2001	2002	2003	2004
Beluga	4 200	5 140	4 720	2 360
Russian Sturgeon	3 200	4 480	3 560	3 204
Stellate Sturgeon	20 900	17 280	18 350	11 010
Ship Sturgeon	2 500	0	0	0

Russian Federation	2001	2002	2003	2004
Beluga	2 300	1 500	1 600	800
Russian Sturgeon	17 300	16 700	16 200	14 580
Stellate Sturgeon	13 500	13 500	13 800	8 280
Ship Sturgeon	0	0	0	0
Sterlet	100	100	100	100

TOTALS	2001	2002	2003	2004
Beluga	10 970	10 120	8 850	4 425

Russian Sturgeon	27 410	26 050	25 910	23 319
Stellate Sturgeon	60 640	48 077	48 350	29 010
Ship Sturgeon	3 500	0	0	0
Sterlet	100	100	100	100
Persian Sturgeon	51 000	55 890	63 000	56 700
TOTAL	153 620	140 237	146 210	113 554
