

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



Nineteenth meeting of the Animals Committee  
Geneva (Switzerland), 18-21 August 2003

Regional Reports

OCEANIA

1. As this document was submitted after the deadline, it is provided in English only.
2. This document has been prepared by Dr Rod Hay in his capacity as Regional Representative for Oceania.

General information

3. Member: Dr Rod Hay (New Zealand); alternate: Dr Dick Watling (Fiji).
4. Number of Parties in the region: five (Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu). Note that France, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America have territories in the Oceanian region.
5. The following countries in Oceania are not Parties: Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau and Tuvalu.

Communication with Parties in the region since the 12th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP12)

6. Following the 18th meeting of the Animals Committee (AC18), Dr Hay circulated the draft report of the meeting to the Parties in the region. Prior to preparing the current report, he contacted the Management and Scientific Authorities of the region requesting items and contributions and comments on AC19 agenda items relevant to the region. Responses on the agenda in general were received from the New Zealand Management Authority; there was additional correspondence on specific items from Australia, Fiji, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea.
7. As regional representative on the Standing Committee, Australia has also communicated on a range of matters relevant to the Animals Committee.
8. There has also been communication with institutions, NGOs and others since CoP12.
9. There has been specific correspondence with the IUCN Crocodile Specialist Group, the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and Wildlife Management International concerning crocodile management in Papua New Guinea; with the IUCN Invasive Species Specialist Group on CITES invasives issues; and with SPREP on a range of issues concerning the implementation of CITES in the region.

#### Follow-up on agenda items since AC18 (San José, April 2002) and CoP12 (Santiago, 2002)

10. New Zealand submitted a proposal at CoP12 to list all species of New Zealand geckos in the genera *Hoplodactylus* and *Naultinus* on Appendix II. Although these species are already a prohibited export from New Zealand, increasing illegal trade has been detected and some wild populations are declining. The proposal to list these species on Appendix II was unsuccessful at CoP12, with the majority of Parties believing that the export prohibition was sufficient protection for the species and a listing on Appendix II was not necessary. Subsequent to CoP12, New Zealand included the species *Hoplodactylus* spp. and *Naultinus* spp. in Appendix III. This listing took effect on 28 May 2003.
11. The adoption at CoP12 of Resolution Conf. 12.7 (Conservation of and trade in sturgeons and paddlefish), which incorporates guidelines for a universal labelling system for the trade in and identification of caviar, represents a successful conclusion of the work of the AC working group overseen by the regional representative for Oceania.

#### Relevant CITES implementation issues in the region

12. Oceania covers a vast area of mostly tropical regions dominated by the marine environment. Trade risks to wild fauna and flora must be seen in the context of the usual range of environmental threats, including habitat loss, invasive species, domestic over-exploitation and global climate change. For example, coral bleaching has had a dramatic effect on the reefs in some parts of the region (e.g. in Fiji). Marine resources form a key part of the local economy. Therefore trade issues concerning them are of critical interest to the countries of the region. The relationship between trade and other pressures needs to be kept in mind, but CITES has an important potential role in sustainable use and protection of species in the marine environment.
13. Despite the small number of Parties in the region, regular regional meetings are unlikely to be held unless opportunities arise in conjunction with other regional gatherings. SPREP is an organization and forum through which regional implementation of the Convention may be able to be facilitated, but other models for regional collaboration may also need to be explored if CITES is to be fully effective in tropical Oceania.
14. A key difficulty, and a major reason for the small number of Parties in the region, is capacity. The population base for those countries which are not party to CITES is usually very small (e.g. the resident population of Niue is about 1,200). Consequently, those administering a Convention such as CITES normally have many competing responsibilities. The resources required to accede to the Convention alone are high relative to the resources available for such purposes. Full implementation is an even larger burden.
15. Scientific expertise is often difficult to obtain when needed, hence the value of building regional networks of expertise which can fulfil some of the technical requirements of CITES, notably those of Scientific Authorities. The Secretariat's new Regional Assistance Programme is a welcome initiative in helping deal with some of the issues for Oceania, as at the regional capacity-building workshop convened in Nadi, Fiji, in April 2002.
16. In general, awareness and activity in support of conservation and sustainable use of natural resources are advancing significantly in the region, with increasing locally- as well as externally-funded activities.

#### Activities conducted in the framework of Resolution Conf. 11.1 (Rev. CoP12)

17. Parties and the alternate regional representative have been kept informed as required. Dr Hay represented the Animals Committee at the regional capacity-building workshop in April 2002 and also represented the Committee at the annual round table workshop on nature conservation in the Pacific hosted by SPREP in July 2003.

### Capacity-building activities

18. The most significant initiative since the report to AC18 was the well-attended (by Parties and non-Party States) capacity-building workshop held in April 2002. Though a formal report of that meeting is not yet available, the regional representative on the Standing Committee, Anne-Marie Delahunt, has had discussions with the Secretariat which we hope will lead to concrete proposals for further capacity-building activities in the region. Decision 12.94 called for a follow-up capacity-building workshop. Meanwhile, work is needed on the development of a regional directory of technical experts, to complement that already developed by the Plants Committee.

### Other topics related to CITES and animal species

19. Following contact with the IUCN Crocodile Specialist Group prior to CoP12, the regional representative approached the Papua New Guinea Government concerning monitoring programmes for *Crocodylus porosus*. The Papua New Guinea export quota depends on the implementation of a monitoring programme including aerial census. The census had not been carried out since 1999 and this was placing the management system in jeopardy. In response to the approaches, the survey programme was re-instituted and the report has been received.

20. Although there has not been an increase in Party membership, there is an increasing amount of activity in the region of relevance to CITES. Activities include the following initiatives:

- a) WWF is working in conjunction with a certification programme being designed by the Marine Aquarium Council (MAC) to develop and help implement sustainable methods for the collection and transportation of live organisms from coral reef ecosystems;
- b) TRAFFIC Oceania is undertaking or planning the following activities at a regional level:
  - i) Investigating trade-related invasive species issues for levels of biodiversity threat and will develop projects as appropriate;
  - ii) Building capacity to implement CITES and domestic frameworks for control of wildlife trade;
  - ii) Contributing to regional understanding of sustainability issues relating to traditional medicine systems;
  - iv) Developing an overview of the live reef fish trade for food;
  - v) Developing an overview of the nature and extent of trade in sharks; and
  - vi) Assisting in the conservation and management of coral resources and trade;
- h) SPREP is coordinating the Regional Avifauna Conservation Programme, the Regional Invasive Species Programme, and the Regional Marine Turtle Programme; and
- i) The South Pacific Commission has a region-wide strategy to help Pacific island countries manage the expanding live reef fish trade, including technical assistance with management plans, national regulations, awareness materials, etc.

### Work to be done by the next meeting of the Animals Committee

21. More progress is required on the implementation of Decisions 10.54 and 10.76 on alien invasive species.

22. Other key issues of importance to Oceania concern Decisions 12.47 on sharks, 12.54 on Syngnathids, and 12.62 on stony corals.