

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



Twenty-first meeting of the Animals Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 20-25 May 2005

Regional Reports

OCEANIA

1. This document has been prepared and submitted (after the deadline) in English by Dr Rod Hay in his capacity as Regional Representative for Oceania.

General information

2. AC Membership: At COP13 (Bangkok) Dr Rod Hay (New Zealand) was elected to commence a further full term as member representing the region. At the same meeting, Mr John Aruga (Papua New Guinea) was elected as alternate representative, replacing Dr Dick Watling of Fiji, who had served his full term.
3. Number of Parties in the region: The number of Parties in the region has grown by 40%, with Palau acceding to the Convention on 16/04/2004 and it coming into force on 15/07/2004; and Samoa joining on 09/11/2004 with it coming into force on 07/02/2005. The other Parties are Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu. Note that Australia, France, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America are other Parties with territories in the Oceanian region. Where appropriate, there is communication on Oceanian issues with their management and scientific authorities
4. The following 11 countries in Oceania are not Parties to the Convention: Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Solomon Islands, Tokelau and Tuvalu. The Cook Islands and Niue are self-governing in free association with New Zealand, and Tokelau is a self-administering dependency of New Zealand. While New Zealand assumes responsibility for foreign affairs for these countries this does not render them party to CITES under New Zealand law. In contrast, the French overseas territories of New Caledonia, French Polynesia and Wallis and Futuna, and the Australian, United States and United Kingdom Territories in the region do come under the CITES umbrella through the membership of their metropolitan states

Communication with Parties in the region since AC20 (Johannesburg, 29 March-2 April 2004)

5. Following the 20th meeting of the Animals Committee, Dr Hay circulated the draft report of the meeting to the Parties in the region.
6. Dr Hay pre-circulated the agenda of this meeting to all Management and Scientific Authorities across the region and received comprehensive briefings on key issues from Australia and New Zealand.

7. As regional representative on the Standing Committee, Australia has also communicated on a range of matters relevant to the Animals Committee. There has also been correspondence with the regional representative on the Plants Committee on specific issues, particularly in the lead up to COP13
8. There has also been limited communication with other institutions and NGOs since AC20.
9. There has been specific correspondence and meetings with the IUCN Shark Specialist Group and with Parties in the Region on shark conservation issues; continuing contact 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.
10. Dr Hay also participated in an Ad-hoc Technical Expert Group (AHTEG) on Islands, convened by the Convention on Biological Diversity, in December 2004. The Programme of Work drafted by that working group, and subsequently amended and endorsed by the CBD Subsidiary body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice, which Dr Hay also attended, contained specific actions promoting and implementing CITES in island states.
11. A further CBD AHTEG, currently being convened in Auckland, is focusing on gaps in international instruments concerning the regulation and control of alien invasive species. As past convenor of the Animals Committee Working Group on this issue, Dr Hay has provided a briefing to the organisers on the CITES Resolution and Decisions on this matter.
12. The most significant regional event since AC20 was the CITES technical workshop on wildlife trade and risk assessment held in Brisbane, Australia from 2-5 August. This workshop was an important capacity-building initiative (see below) but it also provided a great opportunity for communication on a wide range of matters, particularly valuable in the lead up to COP13. The event was generously hosted by the Australian Management Authority, organised by TRAFFIC Oceania and supported and attended by the Secretariat.

Follow-up on agenda items since AC20 ((Johannesburg, 29 March-2 April 2004))

13. The Regional Representative chaired the intersessional Working Group on Sharks, establishing a work programme in conjunction with the Working Group and the IUCN Shark Specialist Group. This was reported at COP13, where a COP Working Group was established, again under the Chairmanship of the Oceanian AC representative.

Relevant CITES implementation issues in the region

14. 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 and growing 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 of the region.
15. 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.
16. 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.

17. 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.
18. 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)

19. No specific activities since AC20 but note that New Zealand now funds the expenses of the regional representative to the Committee.

Capacity-building activities

20. As noted above, the capacity-building workshop held in Brisbane, was an important initiative for the region, and built on the achievements of the workshop convened in Nadi, Fiji in 2002. The Agenda for the Brisbane workshop included:

- Regional Structure and Committee representation
- Obligations of CITES Parties and non-Parties
- Introduction to Non-detriment findings and role of quotas
- Risk Assessment Approach (based on IUCN table)
- Problems of particular taxonomic groups (e.g. birds, crocodiles, orchids, tree ferns, clams, corals)
- Non-detriment findings (e.g. corals)
- Harvest management and production systems (e.g. crocodiles in PNG; coral harvest management in Australia)
- National Legislation experience of Parties – Case Studies: Fiji and PNG
- Annual reports, trade data and significant trade review process
- Financing of CITES functions – regional examples and discussion of options
- Identification of future capacity building needs and activities – including funding options, possible CoP13 decisions

21. The workshop was followed by a formal regional meeting dealing with COP13 preparations, compliance and enforcement matters, permits and trade database development; and particular species trade issues

22. Work is still needed on the development of a regional directory of technical experts, to complement that already developed by the Plants Committee.

Agenda Items of particular relevance to the Oceanian region

23. The following items are of particular interest to the seven Parties of Oceania:

- Review of significant trade in Appendix II species, notably giant clams
- Production systems for specimens of CITES-listed species
- Addis Ababa Principles and Guidelines for the Sustainable Use of Biodiversity
- Trade in alien invasive species
- Sea cucumbers
- Conservation and management of sharks

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

24. Prepare a Directory of Experts as prepared for the Plants Committee