

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



Twenty-sixth meeting of the Animals Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 15-20 March 2012 and Dublin (Ireland), 22-24 March 2012

Reports on the actions taken by regional representatives and additional information from Parties,
relevant to regional cooperation and the work of the Animals Committee

OCEANIA

1. This document has been submitted by the regional representative for Oceania (Dr Hugh Robertson, New Zealand)**.

General Information

2. Number of Parties in the region: 8 (Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu).

The following 9 countries in Oceania are not Parties to the Convention: Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Tokelau, Tonga 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 some responsibility for foreign affairs for these countries this does not render them a party to CITES under New Zealand law. In contrast, the French overseas territories of French Polynesia, New Caledonia, and Wallis and Futuna, and the Australian, United States and United Kingdom territories in the region do come under the CITES umbrella through membership of their parent states.

Communication with Parties in the region since AC 25 (Geneva, July 2011)

3. Following AC25, Dr Robertson sent a report to member Parties outlining the key outcomes affecting Oceania. This report included:
 - a) notification of appointments of Oceania Parties onto various intersessional working groups.
 - b) updates on progress on Reviews of Significant Trade, including the removal of Australian populations of two seahorses, but retention the Solomon Islands population *Tursiops aduncus* (Indo-Pacific bottlenosed dolphin) and *Tridacna*.
 - c) the trade of nine Appendix 1-listed species, including *Brachylophus vitiensis* (Fiji Crested Iguana), *Brachylophus fasciatus* (Fiji Banded Iguana), and all Cheloniidae (sea turtles), have been referred to the Standing Committee because trade in these species appeared to have been in contravention of the Convention.

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** 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.

- d) coverage of the progress of the Working Group on sharks, and early warning of a forthcoming Notification to the Parties on this subject.
 - e) coverage of progress with sea cucumbers and coral identification which have Oceania reps on intersessional Working Groups.
 - f) Mention of a forthcoming Notification to the Parties seeking information on the most useful format to hold the database on the identification of CITES-listed species.
4. A copy of this report was also sent to representatives of 9 Oceania countries that are not members of CITES, and to several IGOs and NGOs working in the region.
 5. Responses to this report were received from Australia, New Zealand, Solomon Islands, IUCN (Oceania) and TRAFFIC (Oceania).
 6. Separate correspondence with Australia passed on the news that the Meeting had accepted their proposal for the Secretariat to issue a Notification to the Parties outlining that the correct name for the Australian freshwater crocodile is *Crocodylus johnstoni* and that *C. johnsoni* is an error in the Appendices as they stand. At the date of writing (12 January 2012), this notification has not yet been issued.
 7. Dr Robertson assisted Vanuatu in changing their authorised signatories to issue CITES permits and reflect those changes in the Regional Directory.
 8. Dr Robertson circulated a letter to the member Parties, non-member countries and several IGOs/ NGOs in the Oceania region outlining the agenda of AC 26, and drew special attention to the Notification to the Parties No. 2011/049, which required responses for this meeting by 6 January 2012.

Relevant CITES implementation issues in the region

9. 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. 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 culture and 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.
10. Since AC25, several important marine conservation initiatives have been implemented in the Oceania region. The Tokelau Islands have declared a 319,000 square kilometre (123,000 sq mile) shark sanctuary in all of its waters, and the Marshall Islands and Federated States of Micronesia joined with governments of Palau (Oceania), the Bahamas, Colombia, Honduras, Maldives and Mexico in banning commercial shark fishing in their waters.
11. Because of a small population size in relation to area administered, and small size of government departments, capacity remains a critical issue for the Parties and non-Parties in Oceania. CITES is normally but a small part of the wide range of environment and conservation responsibilities of a small number of government officials. Often just one or two people deal with all of the Multilateral Environmental Agreements, and staff turnover rates are often high in the small public services of island nations. Some Parties have very low levels of trade in CITES species and so attending to CITES requests for information is a low priority, and electronic communications to registered MAs and SAs fail. These troubles are evidenced by several Parties in the region having difficulties in submitting their annual or biennial national reports by the deadline. The regional record of submitting biennial reports is poor, with only two parties submitting reports in the last four periods (i.e. covering 2003-2010).
12. In some countries, suitable legislation supporting CITES is not yet in place, and the roles and responsibilities of MAs and SAs have not been clearly defined, thereby making CITES implementation difficult.
13. The Capacity Building Workshops held in the region have, however, been greatly beneficial and have been a key driver for the growth of membership from Oceania.

14. 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. In this regard, Dr Robertson is preparing a regional directory of zoological experts.

Capacity-building activities and awareness campaigns

15. In May 2011, the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) and the New Zealand Wildlife Enforcement Group (NZWEG) ran their fourth in-country workshop on the 'Prevention of Illegal Wildlife Trade', this time in conjunction with the Papua New Guinea Customs Department. Meeting participants included officials from the Department of Environment and Conservation (CITES MA), Customs, Police, and Quarantine. The main focus was on building local capacity for effective wildlife law enforcement via practical, hands-on training, especially familiarising staff with the wildlife species most commonly found in international trade in Oceania, and relevant national and international regulations governing the trade in wild animal and plants.
16. In November 2011, 15 fisheries officers from 13 Pacific Island countries (including Fiji, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu) attended a regional workshop "Sea cucumber fisheries: an ecosystem approach to management in the Pacific". The 4-day FAO workshop was held in Fiji, and the wide attendance highlights the regional interest in sea cucumber fishery management.

Agenda items of particular interest in the Oceania region

17. The following items are of particular interest to the eight Parties of Oceania:
 - a) Review of Significant Trade regarding *Tursiops aduncus*
 - b) Non-detriment findings
 - c) Conservation and management of sharks
 - d) Sea cucumbers