



**MEKONG RIVER SUB-REGIONAL WORKSHOP
ON WILDLIFE TRADE MANAGEMENT AND CITES IMPLEMENTATION**

The Mekong River sub-regional Workshop on wildlife trade management and CITES implementation was held in Ha Noi, Viet Nam from 31 May to 2 June 2004. The workshop was formally opened by Dr. Cao Duc Phat, Standing Deputy–Minister, from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Viet Nam.

Thanks were expressed to the Government of Hong Kong S.A.R., China, which had provided financial assistance enabling the CITES Secretariat to fund the workshop and to the officials of Viet Nam for organizing the event. Participants extended a special welcome to the delegates of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, which was the most recent member of the CITES family in the sub-region and noted that its accession to the Convention had entered into effect on 30 May 2004.

Participants in the workshop included delegates from the CITES Management Authorities and other relevant agencies of Cambodia, China (including Hong Kong S.A.R. and Macao S.A.R.), the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam and representatives of the CITES Secretariat, TRAFFIC and the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW). Over thirty individuals attended.

The workshop was intended to:

- provide an opportunity for discussions relating to wildlife management and CITES implementation in the Mekong River sub-region; and
- identify areas for future cooperation among these Parties to the Convention and recommend actions aimed at improving wildlife management and CITES implementation in the sub-region.

During the two formal meeting days of the workshop, participants heard presentations from all of the Parties that were represented, which provided an overview of CITES implementation in each country. Specialized presentations were also made by the CITES Secretariat and TRAFFIC. The representative of IFAW provided an overview of its activities related to wildlife conservation around the world.

Two working groups were formed to discuss the four following themes that were considered to be of particular significance for wildlife management and CITES implementation in the Mekong River sub-region:

- disposal of confiscated live specimens;
- facilitation of legal trade;
- improving communication of enforcement-related information; and
- control of domestic trade in specimens of CITES-listed species.

As a result of the group discussions, the following observations, recommendations and actions were adopted in plenary session by the workshop participants.

Regarding Confiscated of Specimens

1. It was noted that most of the relevant government agencies in the sub-region had insufficient resources and funds to adequately cope with confiscated live specimens and could not afford to ship them to appropriate rescue centres elsewhere in the world. It was, therefore, recommended that financial support should be sought from other CITES Parties or other organizations to help countries in the sub-region deal with this issue, including establishing rescue centres or assisting existing centres.
2. It was recommended that CITES establish an expert group to provide technical advice to Parties regarding the holding and disposal of confiscated specimens and that a database be created of rescue centres that can accept specimens. It was noted that the CITES Secretariat had previously distributed some information relating to this subject and that some Parties had designated rescue centres in their territories.
3. It was recommended that CITES Management Authorities should establish a database at national or regional level that contains details of rescue centres in each country that can hold confiscated specimens and assist in the disposal of such specimens. Parties agreed to share such information at the sub-regional level.

Regarding facilitation of legal trade

1. The CITES Management Authorities represented at the workshop agreed to exchange information regarding their national wildlife trade policies in a timely manner.
2. It was agreed to share details regarding good and bad traders.
3. Each CITES Management Authority agreed to share export permit details with countries of destination in the sub-region within two working days of the issuance of a permit. This would be, as appropriate, by email or fax. It was agreed that by email was preferable.
4. It was agreed that Parties in the sub-region should collaborate in the training of Customs and other relevant wildlife law enforcement authorities, especially at relevant border crossing points.
5. It was agreed that Parties in the sub-region would jointly develop species identification materials, with an emphasis on commonly-traded species and their products.
6. It was recommended that regular bi-lateral or multi-lateral meetings should take place among relevant authorities, especially at relevant border crossing points.

Regarding improving communication of enforcement-related information

1. It was agreed that Parties in the sub-region would seek to improve the relationship between CITES Management Authorities and their relevant national Customs authorities.
2. Each Party represented agreed to ensure that the CITES Secretariat always had current contact details for the relevant national authorities (i.e. Management Authority(ies), Scientific Authority(ies) and enforcement authorities throughout the sub-region.

3. Each Party agreed to share with other Management Authorities in the sub-region samples of the permits and certificates it uses to authorize trade in wildlife, specimens of the signatures of officials authorized to issue permits and certificates and the contact details of such officials. It was agreed that any changes must be communicated throughout the sub-region immediately.
4. The Parties in the sub-region agreed to exchange copies of their national legislation related to international trade in wildlife and to distribute copies of any changes to legislation.
5. It was recommended that each Party in the sub-region should submit to Interpol or the CITES Secretariat information relating to illicit trade in wildlife, using the ECOMESSAGE format.
6. It was recommended that regular meetings should be held at the sub-regional level to focus on enforcement and the facilitation of legal trade.
7. Each Party in the sub-region agreed to designate a national focal point to facilitate the communication of information throughout the sub-region.

Regarding control of domestic trade in specimens of CITES-listed species

1. It was agreed that national legislation must incorporate CITES provisions, so that the Convention can be adequately implemented. Provision must be made in national legislation to ensure that there is sufficient control of trade in specimens, from their point of harvest to the point where they are exported, preferably through the permit or licensing system.
2. It was recommended that Parties in the sub-region consider how best to keep track of specimens of Appendix-II species that are imported, to ensure, in the case of applications for re-export, that it is the same specimens (or genuine offspring) that are traded. It was noted that Thailand, for example, achieves this through requiring import permits and registration.
3. Parties in the sub-region agreed to exchange information regarding domestic traders and captive-breeding and artificial propagation operations to facilitate and promote legal trade in wildlife.
4. It was agreed to enhance relations between enforcement agencies (Customs, Police and those responsible for control of domestic markets) and to involve scientific institutions in providing technical assistance and information.
5. It was agreed to make full use of the information that non-governmental organizations and relevant specialists can provide to assist trade controls and enforcement of the Convention.
6. It was agreed to promote captive breeding and artificial propagation operations to help decrease the pressure on wild natural resources, whilst being aware that wild populations must also be safeguarded and may be used sustainably. It was noted that specimens must be adequately and appropriately marked to distinguish them from wild-collected specimens.

General matters

1. It was agreed that each Party would, as soon as possible after the workshop, establish a focal point to take forward national action on the points agreed and to facilitate further work and communication in the sub-region. It was noted that the representatives at the meeting might not be the final focal point in the future but that some of them could at least act as such initially, to enable progress to be made.
2. It was also noted that several of the points of agreement or recommendations would require external funding and workshop participants called upon potential donors to provide such assistance.

On 2 June 2004, workshop delegates engaged in a field trip to Ba Vi National Park, Viet Nam.