



Press service of the CITES Secretariat

**Juan Carlos Vasquez (Media officer)
Virginia Rothenbuhler (Media assistant)**

Geneva, May 2010

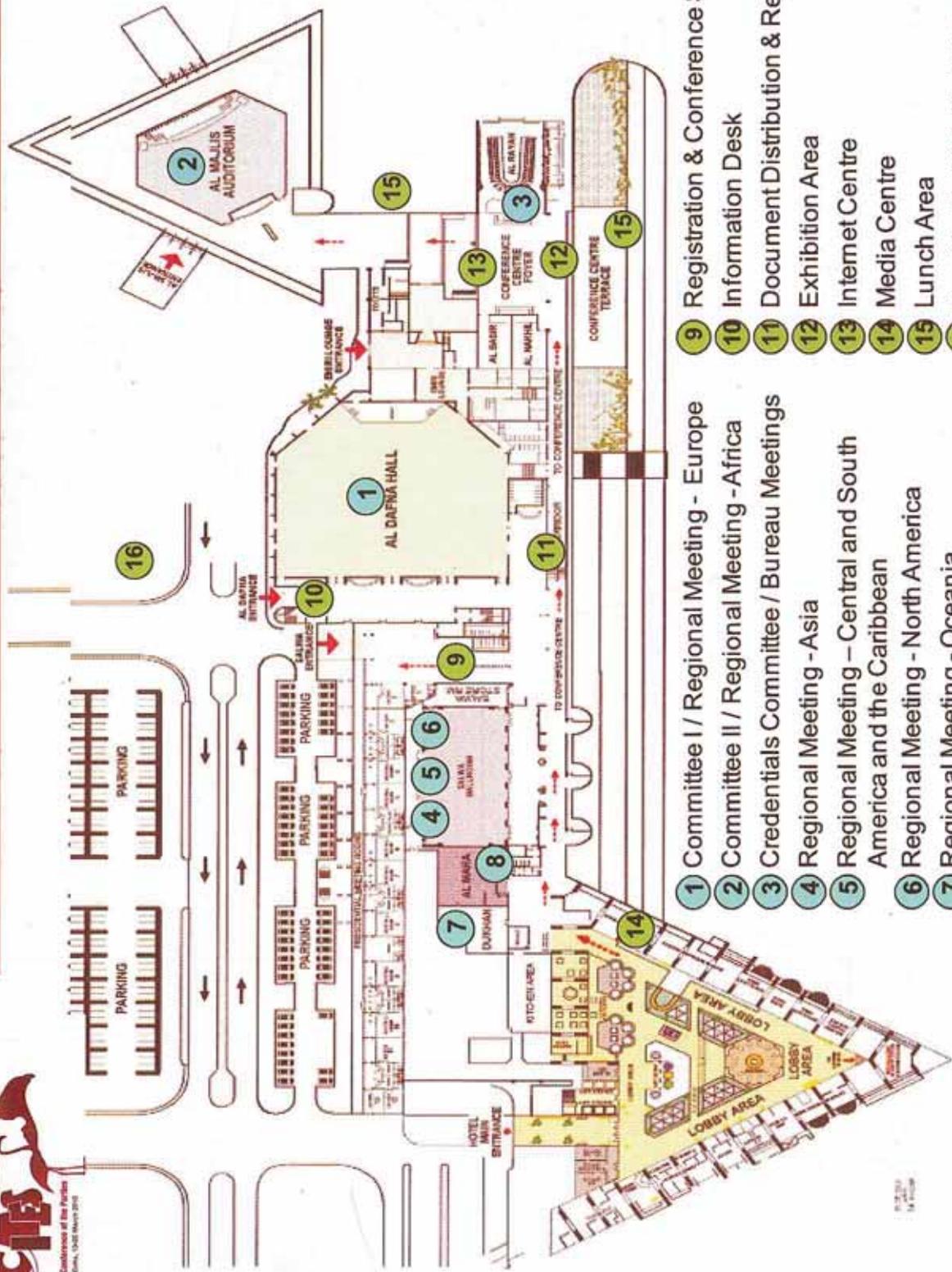


Guilhem Delteil (RFI), Juan Carlos Vasquez (CITES), Virginia Rothenbuhler (CITES), Anne Chaon (AFP), Marlowe Hood (AFP), Alexandre Lourie (NHK).





Conference Floor Plan



- 1 Committee I / Regional Meeting - Europe
- 2 Committee II / Regional Meeting - Africa
- 3 Credentials Committee / Bureau Meetings
- 4 Regional Meeting - Asia
- 5 Regional Meeting - Central and South America and the Caribbean
- 6 Regional Meeting - North America
- 7 Regional Meeting - Oceania
- 8 Media Briefing Room
- 9 Registration & Conference Services
- 10 Information Desk
- 11 Document Distribution & Reproduction
- 12 Exhibition Area
- 13 Internet Centre
- 14 Media Centre
- 15 Lunch Area
- 16 Bus Shuttle Pick-Up Point



**Fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties
Doha (Qatar), 13-25 March 2010**

[Sheraton Doha Resort & Convention Hotel](#)
Al Corniche Street
Doha, Qatar

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For press releases and other information on the meeting, please contact the Press Service of the CITES Secretariat at the above coordinates or visit the CITES website.



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Sheraton Doha Resort & Convention Hotel
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John Scanlon

Scanlon named new chief of CITES

John Scanlon, a top adviser at the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), has been named as the new secretary-general of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES).

Scanlon, selected after a global search and selection process yielding close to 200 applicants, will assume his new position in May this year when Willem Wijnstekers, secretary general since 1999, retires.

CITES is an international agreement between governments that was adopted in 1973 in order to ensure that international trade of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival.

The 15th Conference of the Parties of CITES, which began in Doha on Saturday, is on until March 25.

With some 175 Parties, the Convention is one of the world's most important agreements on species conservation and the sustainable use of wildlife.

Over 42 proposals are on the table, reflecting growing international concern about the accelerating destruction of the world's marine and forest ecosystems through overfishing and excessive logging, and the potential impacts of climate change on the biological resources of the planet.

A growing number of commercially exploited fish have come under CITES controls in recent years. For instance, basking and whale sharks were included in Appendix II in 2002, the great white shark and the humphead wrasse in 2004, and the European eel and sawfishes in 2007.

2010 marks the International Year of Biodiversity and the role of CITES in regulating the global trade in plant and animal species is widely regarded as central to promoting the dual objectives of conservation and sustainable use.

An Australian national, Scanlon joined the UNEP in 2007 as the principal advisor on policy and programme to executive director Achim Steiner, in which capacity he also led the UNEP internal reform team.

A lawyer by training, he has had a long and distinguished career in environmental law, policy and management at national and international levels.

Among other roles, he was Australia's first independent Commissioner on the Murray Darling Basin Commission, he held the position of Strategic Advisor to the World Commission on Dams in Cape Town (South Africa), and headed the Environmental Law Programme (Bonn, Germany) at the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

John Scanlon is new Secretary-General of CITES

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He also served as Chief Executive of the Department of Environment, Heritage and Aboriginal Affairs in South Australia and held several senior roles in New South Wales including as Deputy Director-General of the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources.

Announcing the decision here on the opening session of the CITES' 15th summit here on Saturday, Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UNEP, said: "John Scanlon is a highly qualified and accomplished professional

in the fields of environmental law, international policy and governance. His extensive management experience in public institutions and the strategic role he played in UNEP's recent reform programme make him an outstanding candidate for leading the CITES Secretariat at this critical juncture when the efficacy of environmental governance instruments is under scrutiny."

Scanlon succeeds Willem Wijnstekers who served the CITES Convention as Secretary-General since 1999 and will retire on 1st May 2010.

THE PENINSULA



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John Scanlon

Making a world of difference

LIZ WALSH

TWO South Australians have been appointed to top positions in the United Nations.

But while their battles are poles apart - one will be fighting for fair working conditions across the globe and the other for survival of endangered species - their goals are identical: to make the world a better place.

Dean of Law at Adelaide University, Professor Rosemary Owens, has been appointed to the Committee of Experts for the UN International Labour Organisation (ILO). Former chief executive of SA's Environment Department, John Scanlon, is the new Secretary-General of the UN's Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES).

Prof Owens, only the second Australian selected for the committee of 20 experts, said her appointment meant she would be part of a group helping deliver decent working conditions and

fundamental freedoms to millions of people around the world.

"Sometimes in countries like Australia, people think that doesn't mean much, because they think we have decent living conditions generally," she said. "But it means a huge amount."

Prof Owens will meet with the other experts once a year for three weeks in Geneva, where they will scour the globe ensuring countries - including Australia - are adhering to the conventions of "decent work".

Prof Owens said the ILO targeted child labour, forced labour, human trafficking, female equality and freedom of association. "Nobody can ignore what's happening in the rest of the globe anymore," she said.

Meanwhile, Mr Scanlon starts his new role as Secretary-General of CITES, based in Geneva, tomorrow.

He will head the convention, responsible for ensuring international trade in species does not endanger them.

He said CITES's role was topical for



SAME GOALS: South Australians John Scanlon (Picture: Simon Cross) and, inset, Rosemary Owens have been appointed to top UN posts.

South Australians because of the recent debate surrounding the overfishing of southern bluefin tuna.

"World trade has increased by more than 30 times since 1950; trade in fish and fisheries products has increased by over 50 per cent since the early 1990s; world population is estimated to reach nine billion by 2050, and we are seeing changing consumption habits as prosperity increases. CITES is needed more than ever today."

For the past three years Mr Scanlon

has been based in Kenya as a top-level adviser at the UN's Environment Program. He said winning the role was the realisation of a lifelong dream.

"I've always had the dream of working internationally, and have been attracted to what the United Nations stands for," he said. "A little over 15 years ago now, I decided to do what I could to realise this dream."

"It involved some risk, as change always does, but it was the best thing I ever did."

The Washington Post

Thinking globally to save riches of the sea

International efforts called key to halting overfishing, exploitation

By Juliet Eilperin
Washington Post Staff Writer
Sunday, November 29, 2009

Given the price a single bluefin tuna can fetch -- one sold for a record \$173,600 a few years ago at Tokyo's Tsukiji market -- it's not surprising that the rich, buttery fish is a prized catch. Or that it has prompted a feeding frenzy among international traders.

The money at stake for such things as fish for sushi, the red coral fashioned into jewelry for Italian stores and the shark-fin soup served at Chinese banquets has turned the oceans into a wholesale market -- and prompted new concerns about conserving their resources.

A group of nations, including the United States, recently announced a move to add a record number of commercial marine species to the international endangered list, putting them fin by tusk with such iconic land species as rhinos and elephants.

The move reflects both a new global emphasis on ocean conservation and a major failure by the world's fishery managers, who have been charged with overseeing how we use the ocean. But with significant financial interests at stake, these new efforts are encountering resistance.

"We need to use the arrows in our quiver so we can address the threats that are out there," said Tom Strickland, who as head of the Fish and Wildlife Service will lead the U.S. delegation to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) in March. "No one country, even if it takes aggressive action, can make a dent in the problem unless there's international cooperation."

It's easier to protect a species with less commercial value than one that fetches as high a price as the bluefin tuna. Tuna vendors at Tsukiji account for 40 percent of the market's stalls.

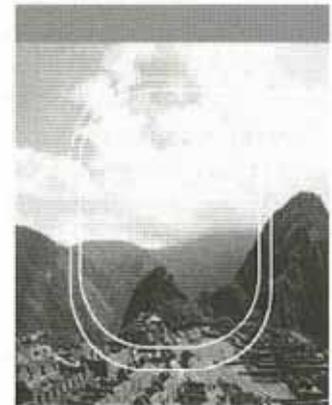
"Most people actually like to eat bluefin tuna, and don't like to eat whales," said Andrew Rosenberg, professor of natural resources and the environment at the University of New Hampshire.

The convention -- the world's primary mechanism for protecting species endangered through trade -- has restricted the trading of a few marketable marine species in the past, including the European eel and seahorses. But when 175 countries convene in Doha, Qatar, they will consider a list that includes eight shark species, 26 kinds of precious red and pink corals, bluefin tuna and the polar bear, a marine mammal.

"You'll see some very heated and engaged debate, because people know CITES makes a difference," said David Morgan, the convention's chief scientist.

Courtney Sakai, senior campaign director at the advocacy group Oceana, said the petitions to include

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Reisen, die inspirieren

those marine species reflect a radical shift in the way they are viewed. "Shark fins are today's ivory tusks," Sakai said. "Like elephants, the world is realizing that sharks are more valuable alive than dead."

No one questions that these species are in trouble. Over the past 40 years, the adult population of eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin tuna has declined 72 percent and the same segment of the western Atlantic stock has dropped 82 percent -- all while being governed by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), which sets catch quotas for the fish and is supposed to curtail illegal fishing. The number of great, smooth and scalloped hammerhead sharks has dropped roughly 70 percent in the northwest Atlantic since 1981.

Jane Lubchenco, who heads the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, which governs marine species in U.S. waters, said international and domestic regulators have not curbed overexploitation of the sea: "The traditional ways of dealing with the oceans, whether they're commercial species or not, have not been effective."

So conservationists such as Carl Safina, who heads the Blue Ocean Institute and first pressed for international protections for Atlantic bluefin in 1991, have turned to CITES "as a way of filling that vacuum." Sue Lieberman, director of international policy at the Pew Environment Group, said listing these species would force exporting countries to "do some science to determine what's sustainable."

The United States was going to support a proposed ban on the trade of bluefin tuna, then decided to give tuna's governing body one last chance to put a stricter limit on the world's catch.

But at the annual ICCAT meeting in Brazil this month, the group opted for a 2010 eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin catch quota of 13,500 metric tons, rather than the 8,000 the U.S. has sought. Rebecca Lent, who heads NOAA Fisheries' international programs, called the decision "disappointing."

Japan opposes the proposal to ban the bluefin tuna trade, though some Japanese consumers have begun to worry about the state of a fish they covet. Hiroko Nishi, a securities administrator in Tokyo, said she would back an international ban if it's "based on a scientific research. It is not like I would die if I didn't eat tuna. . . . Although, I must say, it would be very disappointing if we couldn't eat it any more."

Several environmental groups and some U.S. retailers are trying to shift public attitudes, in an effort to curb the consumer demand that drives international trade. The World Wildlife Fund has lobbied Asian buyers to shun shark-fin soup and bluefin tuna, and the Silver Spring-based nonprofit SeaWeb has launched a "Too Precious to Wear" campaign about the environmental impact of buying coral for jewelry and home decor. Tiffany & Co. no longer sells coral jewelry; neither does Monique Péan, a District native who designs high-end jewelry in New York City.

Lori Arguelles, SeaWeb's vice president of media and policy, noted that coral species across the globe are already being damaged by climate change, harmful fishing practices and pollution. "With all of the things they're facing, they don't need the extra pressure of the coral trade," she said.

Special correspondent Akiko Yamamoto in Tokyo contributed to this report.

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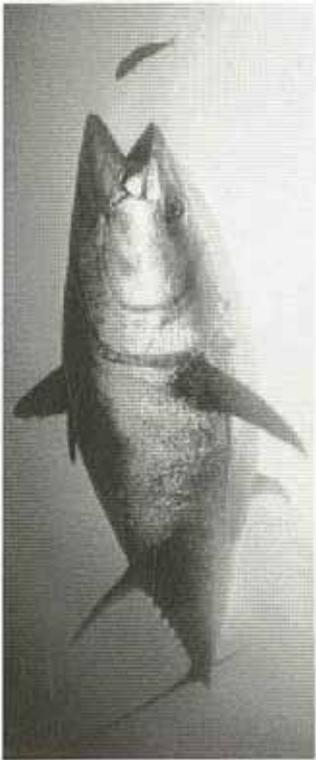
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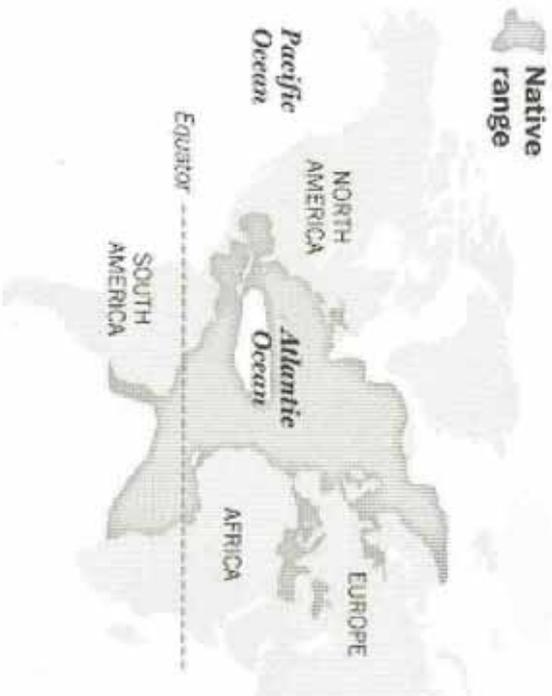
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Case study: Atlantic bluefin tuna

A huge, warm-blooded schooling fish that migrates at speeds of up to 60 mph. A school can cross the Atlantic Ocean in 60 days. The bluefin eats herring and mackerel along with squid, eels and crustaceans.

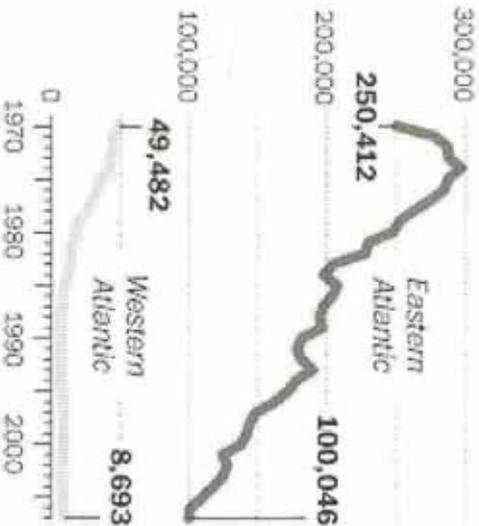


GILBERT VAN FROCKE/ONSEL/TAG-A GIANT FOUNDATION



Marked decline

The estimated weight of "spawning stock biomass," in metric tons of adult Atlantic bluefin tuna in existence.



Largest ever recorded

15 feet, 1,500 pounds

Average size

7 feet,
500 pounds



Fishing methods

Two main industrial fishing methods are decimating the bluefin population:

Longline: A line up to 60 miles long, with baited, hooked lines dangling from it, is attached to a boat and drawn through the ocean.

Purse seine: A boat surrounds a school of fish with a large, vertical wall of net. A winch pulls the bottom closed like a drawstring purse, trapping everything inside it.

Marine animals

that may join other endangered species under the umbrella of international protection:

TRADE MAY BE RESTRICTED

- Red and pink coral
- Hammerhead sharks (scalloped, great and smooth)
- Sandbar shark
- Dusky shark
- Oceanic whitetip shark
- Spiny dogfish*
- Portbeagle*

TRADE MAY BE BANNED

- Atlantic bluefin tuna
- Polar bear

* Will be added in 18 months



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Monday, Nov. 09, 2009

The Hunt for Tuna: A Tough Catch

By Krista Mahr / General Santos City

Nearly every day at dawn, John Heitz falls a little bit in love. Leaning over a 150-lb. (70 kg) yellowfin tuna, the 55-year-old American, whose business is exporting fish, circles his forefinger around its deep eye socket. "Look how clear these eyes are." He traces the puncture where the fish was hooked, and the markings under its pectoral fin where it struggled on the line. "Sometimes," Heitz says, "I see a good tuna, and it looks better to me than a woman."

Heitz, a blond Illinoisan who sports a fading Maui & Sons T-shirt and a tuna tattoo on his bicep, is an out-and-out tuna man. That's why he lives and works in General Santos City in the southern Philippines, one of the planet's great tuna-fishing ports. By 6 a.m. on an August morning, the heat at the docks — a raucous, clanging, blood-and-guts tangle of 10,000 buyers, sellers, porters and men whacking rusty knives into silver skin — is unforgiving. Boat crews crouch in patches of shade on deck, smoking and waiting for their wages. The boats' hulls, sloshing with bloody ice water, are almost empty, only a few shiny bellies lolling in the slush. Porters have already hoisted thousands of tuna onto their shoulders and carried them to the exporters; they swarm around the fat, fresh ones whose slick layer of slime still smells like the ocean, and whose scales gleam with a hint of the yellow flush they had when blood was pumping inside them. ([See pictures of bluefin tuna being caught.](#))

It's one of the few quality hauls of yellowfin that has come in all week. Heitz jumps into the scrum of insults and jokes flying between the buyers and the sellers. Quality testers sink metal rods into the fish, pulling out samples of pink meat that they rub between their thumb and forefinger and smell. The biggest and best tuna will go for about \$700 wholesale, and get whisked away to be washed, beheaded, gutted and packed with dry ice to catch the 10:30 a.m. flight to Manila. By the next day, the fish will be in Tokyo, Seattle or California. By the next night, its meat will be poised between chopsticks.

A Worrying Trend

The world's tuna trade is an awesome 21st century hunt. Ancient Greeks used to stand on bluffs to watch for schools of tuna passing the shore. Today, fishing fleets stalk the fish across thousands of miles of ocean with helicopters, GPS and sonar. In 1950, about 600,000 tons of tuna were caught worldwide. Last year, that figure hit nearly 6 million tons, the prize of a chase that plays out from the Philippines to Canada's Prince Edward Island.

For some species of tuna, the chase is becoming unsustainable. In September, the European Commission recommended that the E.U. support a temporary suspension of the global trade of Atlantic bluefin tuna, a majestic cousin of the yellowfin sold for tens of thousands of dollars a head for its coveted sashimi meat. At current fishing rates, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) estimates that Atlantic bluefin that spawn in the Mediterranean could disappear from those waters as early as 2012. But the recommended ban was shot down by E.U. member states including Greece, Cyprus, Malta, Spain, France and Italy — all countries with a stake in the trade. "The hunt is relentless," says Michael Sutton, vice president of the Center for the Future of the Oceans at the Monterey Bay Aquarium in California. "These are the wolves, grizzly bears, lions and tigers of the ocean. If you take the top predators out, the ecosystem begins to get out of balance." On land, when top predators like lions or wolves die off, lesser ones like baboons or coyotes flourish, throwing an entire food chain off. The same goes for oceans. Scientists believe stocks of southern bluefin around Australia have likely fallen over 90% since the 1950s and could continue to drop. Of the world's 19 non-bluefin commercial tuna stocks, half are now overfished or at risk of going that direction, according to the International Seafood Sustainability Foundation (ISSF), a partnership of canning companies, scientists and the WWF. ([Read "The Mediterranean's Tuna Wars."](#))

That's bad news not just for the oceans, but also for John Heitz and millions of others who make a living from these fish. General Santos earned its motto as the "Tuna Capital of the Philippines" when fishermen could go out in the morning and return at dusk with two or three 150-lb. (70 kg) yellowfin or bigeye, two tuna species that, like the bluefin, are sold for sashimi. Now, even the smallest of those tuna are at least a two- or three-day trip out to sea. These waters, like so many others, have been fished too hard for too long. "General Santos lives and dies by tuna," says Heitz. "Now it's getting less and less. People just have to wake up and smell the coffee."

General Santos is not the only place dependent on tuna. At 6 a.m., an auctioneer in Tokyo reaches up to ring a brass bell, alerting a group of blue-capped, rubber-booted men perusing rows of gray frozen tuna that the bidding is about to begin. He starts to chant out the tuna's serial numbers, written on squares of paper stuck to their bellies. One bidder raises his hand with an offer that the auctioneer weaves into his mantra: "4-5, 4-5, 4-5." That's 4,500 yen — about \$50 — one of many offers made for every kilo of the frozen fish on the block that morning. At Tsukiji, the world's most famous fish market, tuna are sold at prices equivalent to Ivy League educations. In one of hundreds of stalls, wholesaler Keisuke Morishima dismantles a fresh 271-lb. (123 kg) bluefin snared off Oma, a small Japanese town. Bluefin can live for decades, growing more than 10 ft. (3 m) long, weighing up to 1,500 lb. (680 kg), and with enough muscle to propel them at 40 m.p.h. (65 km/h). Throwing his weight into the fish as he makes a cut, Morishima is philosophical. "Some think it's endangered, and I understand their position, but what can you do by worrying about it?" he asks. He'd like all his bluefin to come from Japan, but if there are none on any given day, he says, he'll buy one caught somewhere else.

[Read "Europe Moves Closer to Banning Bluefin-Tuna Trade."](#)

[Read "The Danger of Not Eating Tuna."](#)

The Fish That Became Too Popular

Tuna has been eaten for thousands of years. The Greeks sliced, salted and pickled it, and Mediterranean bluefin was a staple of the Roman soldier's lunch box. But modern Japan's taste for the fish, coupled with rising demand in the U.S., Europe and China, has driven the Atlantic bluefin to become "the poster child of overfishing worldwide," says Monterey's Sutton. The number of breeding tuna in the eastern Atlantic has plunged over 74%

since the late 1950s, with the steepest drop occurring in the past 10 years, while the western population dropped over 82% between 1970 and 2007. The Pacific bluefin, whose habitat spans from the West Coast of the U.S. to Japan, is officially in better shape, but one Tsukiji auctioneer estimates the number of tuna coming in these days is down 60% to 70% from what it used to be. Japan's Fisheries Agency does not believe its local tuna are overfished and has steadfastly refused to impose a quota on its tuna fishermen. But in August, Masayuki Komatsu, a professor at Japan's National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies, who has fiercely defended Japan's right to hunt whale, made the heretical claim that because Japan's bluefin is so depleted "Japanese people must change their mind-set."

Japan consumes about 80% of the 60,000 tons of bluefin caught around the world each year — and local economies on both sides of the planet depend on it. Off the coast of the Spanish port of Cartagena, hundreds of seagulls swarm the same patch of water six days a week, waiting for a boat to arrive and uncoil a long, plastic tube into the water. As sardines and mackerel are pumped into the deep, the water begins to churn. Hundreds of bluefin tuna, circling in vast cages beneath the water's surface, duke it out for their daily meal. This is a tuna ranch, a method that started in the Mediterranean in 1996 and now dominates the Atlantic bluefin industry. Today there are 70 registered ranches in the Mediterranean alone (and more in Mexico, Japan and Australia), and the majority of the region's bluefin quota is caught and dragged to cages to be fattened for six months to a year. The ranch off Cartagena, owned and operated by Ricardo Fuentes & Sons, produces some 10,000 bluefin tuna annually, and this year half of them will go straight to Japan. ([Watch TIME's video "Bluefin Tuna Catch."](#))

Tuna-ranching has proven to be a good way to do business — too good, some argue. In recent years, many boats have joined in the lucrative business of taking fish to ranches like these, sometimes netting more tuna than they're allowed to, or catching underage fish that have not had the chance to spawn. "Fattening is the motor that drives overfishing," says Sebastian Losado, oceans policy adviser for Greenpeace in Madrid. Oversight of this kind of illegal fishing — and more generally, stewardship of the fish — has proven weak. Last November, the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), the Madrid-based body charged with protecting the Atlantic bluefin, adopted a regional quota for 2009 that exceeded its own scientists' more cautious recommendations by nearly three times. Tuna activists read that as a shameless bow to lobbying from countries like France, Italy and Spain, where influential fishermen are loath to see their profits drop. "This isn't a process controlled by countries," says Losado. "It's controlled by companies."

And by lovers of tuna. In Tokyo's upmarket Okusawa suburb, the lunch crowd at the sushi restaurant Irifune has thinned out. Katsumi Honda, Irifune's owner and head sushi chef, rhythmically chops blocks of pink and red flesh behind a counter. Now 68, Honda remembers how, as a boy, his first bite of Japanese *hon maguro*, or bluefin, inspired him to become a chef. For Honda, it's the only tuna there is. "Once you experience our natural *maguro*, you cannot go to a conveyor-belt sushi place anymore," he says. In 2001, when the yen was still rolling, Honda helped auction a Pacific bluefin at Tsukiji for about \$220,000. It was one of the most expensive fish ever sold in Japan. "*Maguro*," Honda explains, "has a power to move people."

Beyond Bluefin

As majestic and imperiled as it might be, all the world's bluefin catch accounts for less than 3% of the tuna that people eat. For the \$175 that a plate of Honda's *maguro* runs to, you can buy half a year's supply of canned tuna from the Ocean Canning Corp. in General Santos. Inside Ocean Canning's processing plant, rows of men and

women in blue smocks skin, bone and pack thousands of fish into cans sent to customers in Europe. Outside, dozens more would-be workers line up at the cannery's office, applications in hand. If there is one thing that people in General Santos can count on, it's the West's insatiable appetite for canned tuna. Global imports have skyrocketed from less than 3 million tons per year in 1976 to over 3.5 billion today. "Demand is very high," says Mariano Fernandez, Ocean Canning's general manager. "Raw material is the problem."

The raw material is mostly skipjack, a small, unglamorous tuna that makes up about 60% of the world's tuna catch. Of the main commercial species, bluefin, yellowfin and bigeye tuna are primarily sold to the sashimi market; skipjack and albacore land in cans. Over half the skipjack caught each year come from the waters in the western and central Pacific, and while skipjack in the region are officially plentiful, according to the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) that keeps track of them, talk to anyone in General Santos and you'll hear otherwise. Supplies of fresh, local skipjack dropped 50% last year, says Miguel Lamberte, the port's manager. This August, the amount of both frozen and fresh skipjack being unloaded was at an all-time low, he says. "And it's still going down."

To keep the cans filled, large Philippine boats have gone further and further afield — to Papua New Guinea, to the Solomon Islands — where there is still plenty of skipjack for the taking. Fishing is growing faster in this swath of the Pacific than in any other part of the world, says the WCPFC, as ever greater numbers of boats from Asia, the Americas and Europe are leaving depleted waters for these bluer pastures. "We're getting a lot of boats seeking to come into our region from the Indian Ocean and eastern Pacific because the skipjack is still healthy here," says John Hampton, manager of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community's Oceanic Fisheries Program, which studies highly migratory fish stocks for the WCPFC. "There is good money to be made." But with more boats on the water, many local governments don't have the resources to keep track of how much fishing is being done in their waters, making illegal fishing or overfishing in protected areas tricky to control.

[Read "Can the World's Fisheries Survive Our Appetites?"](#)

[Read "Sashimi on Demand?"](#)

In General Santos and ports like it, when the fish start to go, everyone loses: the boat owners, the cannery workers, the exporters, the porters, the truck drivers. As the day winds down at the port, John Heitz walks between rows of small, unsold yellowfin that look, and smell, like they have seen better days. After the good ones go early in the morning, thousands of fish like these are left over, caught too young to have been given a chance to spawn and too far away to get back to dock in time to sell for a good price. To Heitz, it's obvious they're from Indonesia — and most likely have been caught without a permit — but there is nobody here from the government fisheries department to verify that. There almost never is. "All these bad fish kind of stress me out," Heitz says. "It would be so easy to manage, and they're just not doing it."

The fishermen get the worst deal of all: the work gets harder and the pay gets less. Down one lane in a waterfront neighborhood, Danilo Ante sits at home with his girlfriend and four kids between fishing trips. On his last job, Ante took home about \$21 for six weeks of work on the high seas. "In the past, there were only a few fishermen," he says. "But now we get fewer fish because there are more boats on the water." Even if his boats keep catching less fish, Ante doesn't have a lot of options in General Santos. "We have to continue. We have to rely on the sea."

An Endangered Species?

In October, Monaco formally proposed to register Atlantic bluefin on Appendix 1 of the U.N.'s Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), a move that would temporarily ban its trade and transfer enforcement from ICCAT to governments. If trade is shut down, so would be fishing, and the Atlantic bluefin would have some time to recover, much as the humpback whale rebounded after being listed in 1975. Monaco's proposal, which all but six E.U. states voted to co-sponsor and which has U.S. support, will go before CITES for approval in March 2010.

Even if that bid fails — and many believe it could — just the threat of CITES may serve as a warning to the tuna industry and to governments. Fishermen, understandably, are not thrilled by the possibility of a ban, no matter how temporary. "We're in a race with the ecologists," says David Martínez Cañabate, adjunct director of Ricardo Fuentes & Sons in Cartagena, which employs about 1,000 workers. "They want to shut down the fisheries, and we want to show them that the quotas and enforcement are working." Cañabate acknowledges there is too much illegal fishing, but believes rogue players can still be controlled. A ban, he argues, would come at too high a price. "Wouldn't it be better to still have the industry?" he asks. "To keep the jobs?" ([See the top 10 food trends of 2008.](#))

Even so, the fishing companies know better than anyone that the only way to save the business is to save the species. The Spanish company has invested in the global quest to get bluefin to reproduce and grow in captivity — a task that has eluded all but a few scientists. In a trial run by the Spanish Institute of Oceanography, scientists funded by Ricardo Fuentes have injected Atlantic bluefin females with synthetic hormones to trigger the fish's egg-laying response. This year, the team helped create some 150 million bluefin eggs, of which they took about 3 million to try to hatch. Of those, "maybe 50 [will] survive to the weight of one gram, or about 50 days [old]," says Aurelio Ortega, a biologist on the project. "We're still a long way off. Even five years would be very optimistic."

Some are further along. In 2002, Japan's Kinki University successfully bred and raised bluefin in pens and is now selling small amounts of the farmed fish. This year, Clean Seas, an Australian fishing company, got its southern bluefin living in a land-based tank to spawn eggs that were raised to be fingerlings — a breakthrough in the growth cycle. The success was so unexpected that Clean Seas had to leave all but a few of the young fish to die; there wasn't enough room to let them grow.

Aquaculture is not a perfect solution. Farmed tuna have huge appetites — in Cartagena, it takes up to 22 lb. (10 kg) of seafood to add 2 lb. (1 kg) of weight — and they create a lot of waste. But tuna-breeding is one of an expanding list of ideas being rolled out by scientists, activists, chefs, fishermen and entrepreneurs trying to find a happier marriage between the human demand for tuna and the ecosystem. "There is no one silver bullet to end overfishing because there is no one thing causing overfishing," says Mike Crispino of the ISSF. Major canneries that have signed on to the ISSF, such as BumbleBee, StarKist and Chicken of the Sea, are trying to guarantee that the fish going into their cans come from legal and traceable sources. More and more, customers are being offered ways to play a part too. In San Francisco and Seattle, two restaurants are already running popular sustainable-sushi bars, with menus designed around plentiful, local ingredients. "In the U.S., people think of sushi as being five or six fish that you eat in a particular way," says Casson Trenor, a former chef who opened San Francisco's Tataka in 2008 and later helped Seattle's Mashiko transition into serving better-sourced seafood. In the modern sushi restaurant, says Casson, "we're not respecting these animals."

In General Santos, people do respect the tuna. John Heitz points to a few men hauling yellowfin through the water from small wooden boats. "This is one of the few handline fisheries in the world," Heitz says. It's not flashy, but it follows the rules, pays the bills and, over time, it will keep these great animals in the water. "By eating a certain product, you're part of the problem, or part of the solution." Heitz wants to be on the solution side. Once, when he was scuba-diving off General Santos' coast, two yellowfin torpedoed past. "It was like a motorcycle was going by," he says, crouching slightly, staring straight ahead and moving his shoulders back and forth to mimic the fish's muscular energy. "If I hadn't seen it with my own eyes, I wouldn't have believed it." Unless something changes, he may never see its like again.

— with reporting by Lisa Abend / Cartagena and Yuki Oda / Tokyo

[Read "The Sushi Wars: Can the Bluefin Tuna Be Saved?"](#)

[Read "How to Eat Sushi During a Fish Scare."](#)

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Le thon rouge nage en pleine confusion

PÊCHE Un article des «Echos» contestant l'extinction de l'espèce suscite la controverse, alors que l'interdiction de son commerce doit être décidée.

Les pêcheurs de thons rouges de Méditerranée ont-ils été brimés alors que ce poisson se porterait en réalité très bien ? C'est la question que posait, hier, un article à sensation publié par les *Echos* et titré «L'extinction du thon rouge remise en cause par des scientifiques». Parmi les chercheurs cités comme «sceptiques» face à la menace, Jean Marc-Fromentin, de l'Institut français de recherche pour l'exploitation de la mer (Ifremer).

Grossir. Or, ce dernier est en pétard. «*Le journaliste des Echos ne m'a pas contacté*», regrette-t-il. Dommage, il aurait découvert une réalité assez différente de celle décrite par son article. Les observations, lors de suivis aériens, de concentrations importantes de thons dans le golfe du Lion ont été effecti-

vement conduites par l'équipe de Fromentin de 2000 à 2004. Interrompues par manque de crédits de l'Ifremer, elles ne seront reprises qu'en 2009. Cette dernière prospection apporte une bonne nouvelle, explique Fromentin, «avec des abondances de près du double de la moyenne des années 2000 à 2004». Mais rien de miraculeux là-dedans.

En 2007, décision a été prise d'interdire la pêche des thons de moins de 30 kg, les moins de 4 ans. Ceux qui passent cette période de leur vie dans le golfe du Lion, avant d'aller ailleurs vieillir et grossir jusqu'à 10 ans, âge à partir duquel ils commencent à être des reproducteurs efficaces. Or, les senneurs français, italiens et espagnols pêchaient 150 000 thons jeunes par an en moyenne dans le

golfe. Trois ans d'interdiction ont porté leurs fruits, comme l'indique le dernier rapport scientifique (1) : «*Des informations qualitatives provenant des pêcheries du stock Est depuis 2007, conjointement avec les résultats préliminaires des prospections aériennes en 2009, donnent des indications cohérentes d'une plus forte abondance, ou d'une plus grande concentration, de petits thons rouges dans la Méditerranée du Nord-Ouest. Cependant, ces résultats doivent être confirmés par des observations additionnelles.*»

Prix. Bonne nouvelle... mais pas de quoi pavoiser. Car, pour la majorité des scientifiques, l'effort de pêche actuel – près de 50 000 tonnes par an entre 1995 et 2007 contre 25 000 tonnes au plus depuis des décennies – ne peut être durablement supporté par le

stock actuel de thons. Pour que les thons juvéniles, protégés depuis 2007, deviennent de gros et prolifiques adultes, il leur faut des années de répit. Et donc une limitation de la pêche. Cet avis repose, certes, sur des méthodes d'évaluation présentant «des incertitudes», reconnaît Fromentin. Mais il n'est mis en cause que par des scientifiques isolés et des pêcheurs motivés par le prix de ce poisson. Alors que la Cites, la convention sur les espèces protégées, doit, entre le 13 et le 25 mars, décider d'interdire ou non le commerce international du thon rouge, les manœuvres ont commencé.

SYLVESTRE HUET

(1) Réalisé par la Commission internationale pour la conservation des thonidés de l'Atlantique.

PÊCHE

De nouvelles études scientifiques sèment le doute : en Méditerranée, le thon rouge n'est peut-être pas en voie de disparition. Plusieurs chercheurs qui avaient sonné l'alarme se déclarent aujourd'hui sceptiques.

L'extinction du thon rouge remise en cause par des scientifiques

DE NOTRE CORRESPONDANT
À MARSEILLE.

Le président des thoniers de Méditerranée, Mourad Kahoul, jubile. Après cinq ans de débats souvent violents contre les écologistes, il vient pour la première fois de recevoir l'adhésion de scientifiques à la thèse que défendent les 160 membres de son association : le thon rouge dont la France et l'Union européenne veulent interdire le commerce international ne serait pas en danger d'extinction. En certains endroits, leur stock aurait même doublé en dix ans.

Le coup risque d'être d'autant plus dur pour les défenseurs de l'environnement qu'il est porté par des membres même du comité scientifique de la Commission internationale pour la conservation des thonidés de l'Atlantique (Cicta) chargée du diagnostic et des recommandations concernant l'espèce. C'est le cas du biologiste italien Antonio Di Natale, spécialiste des grandes espèces marines et des systèmes de pêche, qui a longtemps contesté les thèses des pêcheurs.

Parmi les sceptiques figurent aussi des scientifiques du centre de recherche halieutique méditerranéenne et tropicale de l'Ifremer de Sète, conduits par Jean-Marc Fromentin, celui-là même qui avait alerté l'opinion publique contre des menaces de surexploitation du thon rouge (*Thunnus thynnus*) il y a cinq ans.

Avec trois autres chercheurs de l'institut, il a effectué 25 survols aériens d'observation du golfe du Lion entre le 17 juin et le 30 septembre dernier, exactement sur les mêmes routes de prospection de 4 campagnes réalisées entre 2000 et 2003. Au total, 16.000 kilomètres ont été parcourus pour relever les positions GPS des bancs en surface.

« La plupart des vols ont permis de détecter une présence abondante de thon rouge dans l'ensemble du Golfe, avec de très importantes concentrations de 1 à 2 km de rayon composées d'individus de 20 à 30 kg », c'est-à-dire des spéci-



Pêcheurs à Zahara de los Atunes, dans le sud de l'Espagne.

mens sexuellement matures, ont observés les chercheurs. Une première analyse a été présentée au comité scientifique de la Cicta fin septembre dernier. « Il en ressort que la densité observée en 2009 est environ deux fois supérieure à celle observée sur la période 2000-2003, poursuivent-ils. Ces résultats sont cohérents avec les observations aériennes menées par les scientifiques espagnols en Méditerranée Nord occidentale. »

Le chercheur océanographe Antonio Di Natale vient, lui aussi, remettre en cause la réalité du stock en doutant de l'efficacité du système d'évaluation de la biomasse

de thon rouge utilisé : Virtual Population Adapt (VPA), un outil d'analyse historique des données qui permet de prédire les tendances du stock à partir des données de prises, et notamment de l'âge des spécimens.

Distorsion des données

« Il y a un décalage entre les hypothèses tirées de l'extrapolation des énormes banques de données conservées par le secrétariat du Cicta et la réalité sur le terrain », affirme-t-il, après avoir comparé la masse de données accumulée depuis les années 1950. « VPA, tranche-t-il, n'est pas apte à décrire l'énorme complexité d'espèces pélagiques qui ont une telle distribution géographique et des déplacements imprévisibles aussi bien vers les profondeurs qu'à l'horizon. »

Antonio Di Natale soulève un autre problème causé par la mise en place des systèmes de quota à la Cicta : « Les données qui ont été fournies par les scientifiques depuis la fin des années 1990 se sont adaptées aux règles du jeu de la commission. Les scientifiques qui ont participé au comité scientifique, particulièrement ceux qui travaillaient sous contrat avec leurs gouvernements, c'est-à-dire une large majorité, ont évité de présenter des données trop contrastantes comparées à celles fournies par

leurs Etats. Ça ne signifie pas que des données ont été manipulées, mais elles n'ont tout simplement pas été présentées. »

Le biologiste cite en exemple deux séries de données collectées exactement au même endroit en 2008. L'une provient d'observations à bord de navires scientifiques, l'autre des avis déclaratifs collectés à bord des bateaux de pêche. Problème : l'une et l'autre montrent des données différentes concernant la distribution par taille de l'espèce. Dans le premier cas, les jeunes spécimens sont surreprésentés (dans une proportion de presque 40 %) ; dans le second, ce sont les individus sexuellement matures.

« Impossible d'établir de corrélation valable avec de telles distorsions », condamne un autre spécialiste de l'espèce, le professeur Corrado Piccinetti, directeur du laboratoire de biologie marine de l'université de Bologne et président de la commission scientifique de la CGPM (Commission générale des pêches pour la Méditerranée) à qui il prévoit de présenter le rapport lors de la prochaine réunion le 12 avril. « Nous n'avons pas d'information scientifique valable pour dire si le stock de thon rouge est en danger ou pas », affirme-t-il aujourd'hui.

Après la remise en cause du Giec dans le dossier du réchauffement climatique, ces révélations vont-elles jeter un nouveau trouble sur la pertinence des métadonnées utilisées pour modéliser des phénomènes complexes et en tirer des conclusions réglementaires ? « Elles rétablissent au moins l'équilibre nécessaire pour faire entendre la voix des sceptiques », sourit le patron des thoniers, Mourad Kahoul. Il souhaite maintenant porter l'affaire devant la Cicta, l'organisation de l'ONU chargée de la protection des espèces en danger, qui se réunit du 13 au 25 mars à Doha (Qatar).

PAUL MOLGA



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PRESS RELEASE

CITES world conference opens with call for new wildlife trade rules

Decisions on the budget will show how seriously 175 member States take new measures to conserve and manage natural riches of the planet

Doha, 13 March 2010 – Some 1,500 delegates representing more than 170 governments, indigenous peoples, non-governmental organizations and businesses are attending the triennial world conference of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Bluefin tuna, elephant populations and a wide range of sharks, corals, polar bears, reptiles, insects and plants are top of the agenda for the two-week meeting.

CITES Secretary-General Willem Wijnstekers thanked Qatar for hosting the meeting and noted that existing and new challenges require increased political support for the 35-year old treaty to match present day demands. Mr Wijnstekers congratulated the member States for the many conservation successes during these years but warned that more needs to be done. "We do not want to risk letting down the developing world in its struggle to ensure that trade in wild fauna and flora is conducted legally and sustainably", he said.

Many of the 42 proposals on the table reflect growing international concern about the accelerating destruction of the world's marine and forest ecosystems through overfishing and excessive logging, and the potential impacts of climate change on the biological resources of the planet. The UN General Assembly has declared 2010 the international year of biodiversity and the CITES Conference will be one of the key occasions governments have this year to take action to protect biodiversity. Member States will decide by consensus or a two-thirds majority vote for measures to conserve and manage species on the agenda.

"2010 is a key year for biological diversity. By ensuring that the international trade in wildlife is properly regulated, CITES can assist in conserving the planet's wild fauna and flora from overexploitation and thus contribute to the improved management of these key natural assets for sustainable development", said Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary General and Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, which administers the CITES Secretariat.

Other issues on the agenda include the adoption of urgent measures to tackle illegal trade of tiger products, rhinos and other species that are on the brink of extinction. It will also address the potential impacts of CITES measures on the livelihoods of the rural poor, those on the frontlines of using and managing wildlife.

Note to journalists: For more information, contact Juan Carlos Vasquez at +974-4175621 or +974-5692804 (cell), or j.vasquez@cites.qa. For more information, on media accreditation to cover the CITES Conference please visit our webpage: http://www.cites.org/eng/cop/15/E-CoP15_media_accreditation_form.pdf

Background information on the proposals

The listing proposals can be viewed at <http://www.cites.org/eng/cop/15/prop/index.shtml>

Document 68 containing the recommendations from the Secretariat and the comments received from Parties, FAO, ICCAT, ITTO and other specialized bodies can be viewed at: <http://www.cites.org/eng/cop/15/doc/E15-68.pdf>

Report of the Panel of Experts on proposals to transfer populations of the African elephant from Appendix I to Appendix II can be viewed at:

Tanzania: [http://www.cites.org/eng/cop/15/doc/E15-68A06a\).pdf](http://www.cites.org/eng/cop/15/doc/E15-68A06a).pdf)

Zambia: [http://www.cites.org/eng/cop/15/doc/E15-68A06b\).pdf](http://www.cites.org/eng/cop/15/doc/E15-68A06b).pdf)

Bluefin tuna and sharks

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the world's capture (non-aquaculture) fisheries produced 92 million tonnes of fish in 2006, of which 81.9 million came from the sea. The value of the total marine and freshwater catch at the first point of sale was around USD 91.2 billion. As a result, it is estimated that some 52 % of marine fish stocks or species groups are fully exploited, 19 % overexploited and 9 % depleted or recovering from depletion. The maximum wild capture fishing potential from the world's oceans has probably been reached, and a more closely controlled approach to fisheries is required (See <ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/011/i0250e/i0250e.pdf>)

A growing number of commercially exploited fish have come under CITES controls in recent years, for example: the basking and whale sharks were included in Appendix II in 2002, the great white shark and the humphead wrasse in 2004, and the European eel and sawfishes in 2007.

At the forthcoming conference, proposals will be made to bring eight commercially fished species under the purview of CITES.

Monaco is proposing a complete ban on international commercial trade in the bluefin tuna. ([proposal 19](#)). This iconic species can reach 3 metres in length and over 650 kg in weight. It can swim at nearly 40 km per hour and dive to 1,000 metres deep. It is highly sought after as a delicacy: in January 2010, a single fish was reportedly sold for over USD 120,000. Although it has been fished for many centuries, its populations in the Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean Sea have undergone very substantial declines in the last 40 years. Repeated efforts have been made to ensure more sustainable fishing, but now Monaco claims that it is time to bring the international trade to a halt to allow time for the species to recover.

The scalloped hammerhead shark ([proposal 15](#)) occurs widely in coastal warm temperate and tropical seas and is exploited extensively for its fins. Significant declines in the population of the species have been reported in many areas where it is caught. Two other species of hammerhead shark (great hammerhead and smooth hammerhead) and two further sharks (sandbar shark and dusky shark) have similar shaped fins, and the proponents, Palau and the United States of America, recommend that all these species be subject to CITES trade controls.

The same two countries are also proposing that trade CITES controls be applied to another shark, the oceanic whitetip ([proposal 16](#)), which, in spite of its wide range in tropical and subtropical waters, has declined in numbers wherever it has been harvested for its fins.

In total, several million sharks of these two species are estimated to be fished annually to supply the demand for fins.

The porbeagle shark ([proposal 17](#)) has equally experienced population declines, notably in the northern Atlantic and the Mediterranean, owing to unsustainable fishing for its high-value meat and fins. Palau and Sweden, on behalf of the European Community Member States, note the lack of consistent data on the global catch of this species. They argue that requiring CITES export permits will ensure that international markets are supplied by fish from sustainably managed fisheries that keep accurate records.

The spiny dogfish ([proposal 18](#)) is a small shark that was once abundant in temperate waters. It is now overexploited for its meat, which is highly valued in Europe (often sold in 'fish and chips' shops in the British Isles) and elsewhere. As many other sharks, it is particularly vulnerable to excessive fishing because of its slow reproductive rate. It also tends to travel in large schools of hundreds or thousands, which are easier for fishing boats to harvest them in large quantities. Palau and Sweden, on behalf of the European Community Member States, propose listing the spiny dogfish in Appendix II (which manages trade through a permit system) and establishing a sustainable fishery management programme for the species.

Corals

The most valuable of all the precious corals, red or pink corals ([proposal 21](#)) have been harvested for over 5,000 years and used for jewellery and other decorative items. Their tree-like colonies provide protection and habitat for other marine species and occur in the tropical, subtropical and temperate oceans, often at great depths. Overharvesting for international trade and the destruction of colonies by bottom trawls and dredges have greatly affected their capacity to reproduce and regenerate. The United States and Sweden, on behalf of the European Community Member States, propose adding the red or pink corals to Appendix II to control the trade therein.

The long-running debate on elephants and ivory

The long-running global debate over the African elephant has focused on the benefits that income from ivory sales may bring to conservation and to local communities living side by side with these large and potentially dangerous animals versus concerns that such sales may encourage poaching. This year's proposals ([proposal 4](#), [proposal 5](#) and [proposal 6](#)) again reflect opposing views on how best to improve the conservation and sustainable use of the world's largest land animal.

CITES banned the international commercial ivory trade in 1989. In 1997 and 2002, recognizing that some southern African elephant populations were healthy and well managed, it permitted Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe to sell some stocks of ivory to Japan totalling over 150 tons. The sales took place in 1999 and 2008 and earned some USD 20 million for elephant conservation and community development programmes within or adjacent to the elephant range.

At this year's conference, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia are seeking similar approval to sell government-owned stocks that have accumulated over the years. The United Republic of Tanzania has nearly 90 tons of such stock, and Zambia just over 21 tons.

Taking the opposite view, the Congo, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Rwanda and Sierra Leone are proposing a halt to the limited international trade in African elephant ivory currently permitted and a 20-year moratorium on any proposals to relax international trade controls on African elephants.

Polar bear and other proposals

The potential threat to the polar bear from climate change has been much discussed recently, and the United States is seeking to increase its protection in CITES by completely prohibiting international commercial trade in the species ([proposal 3](#)). Mexico and Egypt are seeking to reduce CITES controls on the Morelet's crocodile and the Nile crocodile, respectively, as they believe that the status of these species in the wild has improved ([proposal 8](#) and [proposal 9](#)). In contrast, Honduras and Guatemala are seeking to apply CITES controls to four species of spiny-tailed iguanas that are increasingly sought by hobbyists in other countries. ([proposal 11](#) and [proposal 12](#)). The Plurinational State of Bolivia proposes that similar measures be adopted for the spectacular Satanus beetle ([proposal 20](#)), which is also sought by collectors.

Madagascar is seeking to include 12 endemic plants in Appendix II ([proposals 22-24, 26, 27, 30, 32-36 and 39-41](#)), while Brazil and Argentina propose the the same listing for the Brazilian rosewood ([proposal 29](#)) and the Palo Santo ([proposal 42](#)), respectively, two tree species that produce essential oils extensively used in perfumery and cosmetics.

Other proposals call for lifting all trade restrictions on certain species on the grounds that they no longer require such protection. These include the Marsh rose ([proposal 37](#)) and the Swartland sugarbush ([proposal 38](#)) from South Africa, and the North American bobcat or lynx ([proposal 2](#)).

Backgrounder: understanding CITES

Thousands of species of wild fauna and flora are used by people in their daily lives for food, housing, health care, cosmetics or fashion. CITES recognizes that commercial trade in these plants and animals may be beneficial both to conservation and to the livelihoods of local people.

However, unregulated wildlife trade can seriously affect species populations, especially those that are already vulnerable as a result of other factors, such as habitat loss. Governments responded to this concern by adopting CITES in 1973 to regulate international wildlife trade and ensure that it remains at a sustainable level. With 175 Parties, CITES remains one of the world's most powerful tools for biodiversity conservation through the regulation of trade in wild fauna and flora.

Even setting aside commercial fishing and the timber industry, international trade in wildlife remains a very lucrative business, estimated to be worth billions of dollars annually and to involve more than 350 million plant and animal specimens every year. Unregulated international trade can push threatened and endangered species over the brink, especially when combined with habitat loss and other pressures.

CITES provides three regulatory options in the form of Appendices. Animals and plants listed in Appendix I are prohibited from international commercial trade except in very special circumstances.

Appendix I contains about 530 animal species and a little more than 300 plant species, including all the great apes, various big cats such as cheetahs, the snow leopard and the tiger, numerous birds of prey, cranes and pheasants, all sea turtles, many species of crocodiles, tortoises and snakes, and some cacti and orchids.

Commercial international trade is permitted for species listed in Appendix II, but it is strictly controlled on the basis of CITES permits. This Appendix II covers over 4,460 animal species and 28,000 plant species, including all those primates, cats, cetaceans, parrots, crocodiles and orchids not listed in Appendix I.

Finally, Appendix III includes species that are protected within the borders of a member country. By including a species in Appendix III, a country calls on others to help it regulate trade in the said species by making the issuance of a certificate of origin necessary to enter into trade. This Appendix lists over 290 species.

CITES, then, does much more than regulating trade in large charismatic mammals. It sets up a green certification system for non-detrimental wildlife trade (based on CITES permits and certificates), combats illegal trade and related wildlife offences, promotes international cooperation, and helps establish management plans so that range States can monitor and manage sustainably CITES-listed species.

CITES requires each member State to adopt the necessary national legislation and to designate a Management Authority that issues permits to trade. Governments must also designate a Scientific Authority to provide scientific advice on imports and exports. These national authorities are responsible for implementing CITES in close cooperation with Customs, wildlife enforcement, police or similar agencies.

As the impact of trade on a population or a species increases or decreases, the species can be added to the CITES Appendices, transferred from one Appendix to another, or removed from them. These decisions are taken at the triennial CITES conferences and must be based on the best biological information available and on an analysis of how different types of protection can affect specific populations.

It is worth noting that when a species is transferred from Appendix I to Appendix II, its protection has not necessarily been 'downgraded'. Rather, it can be a sign of success that a species population has grown to the point where trade may be possible with strict oversight. In addition, by allowing a species to be commercially traded at sustainable levels, an Appendix-II listing can actually improve protection by giving local people a greater incentive to ensure the species' survival.

The CITES Secretariat produces recommendations on the proposals described above after analysing them against the various listing criteria. These criteria relate to: trade (is the species being actively traded? Is trade really the problem rather than, say, habitat destruction?); biology (what is the scientific evidence that populations are declining or increasing?); and other technical matters (e.g. has the proponent consulted thoroughly other range States?).

CITES meet begins today

MAYA MANSOUR

DOHA Delegates from 175 countries will participate in the 15th Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), which will start on Saturday under the patronage of the Deputy Emir and Heir Apparent His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani.

Minister of Environment HE Abdullah bin Mubarak bin Aboud al Midhadhi will deliver a keynote speech in the inauguration ceremony at Hotel Sheraton.

New measures will be discussed to conserve and manage the bluefin tuna, elephant population and a wide range of sharks, corals, reptiles, insects

and plants during the convention, which will concluded on March 25.

Some countries propose to lift CITES regulations on some of the species.

The convention will discuss over 40 proposals, many of which reflect the growing international concern about the accelerating destruction of the world's marine and forest lives through excessive fishing and killings, and the potential impact of climate change on the biological resources of the planet.

The UN General Assembly has declared 2010 the international year of biodiversity and the CITES conference will be one of the key occasions for the governments to take action to

protect biodiversity.

Other issues on the agenda include adoption of urgent measures to tackle illegal trade in tiger, rhinos and other species that are on the brink of extinction, addressing the potential impacts of CITES measures on the livelihood of the rural poor who are often on the frontlines of using and managing wildlife; and allocate sufficient financial resources to ensure that CITES goals are fully achieved.

A substantial budget increase will be necessary to ensure proper implementation of the measures proposed for adoption in Doha. The current annual budget of the CITES Secretariat is about US \$5 million.

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Business 21
World oil stockpiles high
 Opec is not expected to make any fundamental change in output at its next meeting. Qatar's Deputy Premier And Minister of Energy And Industry H.E. Abdulrah bin Humaid Al Attiyah said.

Sport 33
'Baby Schumi' outguns rivals
 Germany's Sebastian Vettel put returning compatriot Michael Schumacher in the shade yesterday with pole position for Red Bull at the season-opening Bahrain Grand Prix.

A World of Never Ending Surprises



With milk, not cream
 for melting for gift giving

Optima

Call to overhaul wildlife trade regime

Qatar has taken CITES responsibilities seriously

BY SATISH KANADY

DOHA: The 15th Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) began with a call for new wildlife trade rules. Opening the nearly two-week summit here yesterday, the Minister of Environment H.E. Abdullah bin Mubarak bin Abdul Al Ma'dhadi cautioned that the rampant, illegitimate trade of Earth's precious flora and fauna is posing a great threat to world's biodiversity.

"In the past, trade was made irregularly and illegitimately, constituting a main threat against the biological variety, subjecting some species to extinction, and causing loss of many different plant and animal species. CITES meetings has had a considerable influence in keeping these species that are endangered to be extinct by organising their trade in, holding conferences, enacting laws, and applying the strategy generated by the Convention to achieve the balance between environment and development," he said. The ranking of the State of Qatar within Category (A) in the International Classification of the Member States in (CITES) Convention



The Secretary of Environment H.E. Abdullah bin Mubarak bin Abdul Al Ma'dhadi (centre), Executive Director of UNEP Achim Steiner (right) and CITES Secretary-General Willem Wijnstekers during the opening session of the CITES Cop15 conference in Doha yesterday. (AOLU BASIT)

We will oppose tuna ban: Japan

DOHA: Any move to impose a blanket ban on international commercial trade in Atlantic bluefin tuna at the CITES meet would be vehemently opposed by Japan. The country would also lobby the parties of the International Convention to oppose the 'unrealistic' move, a key member of Japanese delegation told *The Peninsula* here yesterday.

"Enlisting a food product meant for daily consumption in the endangered species is not appropriate. We have set very clear criteria for the baseline reduction in the catch," Masayoshi Minuro, Director, Global Environment Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan said. The tuna is a daily consumption food. CITES is more into the protection of indigenous species. The very nature of Atlantic bluefin tuna is against including in the 'ban list'.

Full report on page 6

fauna, the Convention's Secretary-General Willem Wijnstekers said. "The Convention had just 150 parties in 2000. Today, 170 countries are implementing CITES and a number of countries are about to join. This brings the convention close to one of my personal goals and to that of a full global membership."

In this Year of International Biodiversity, we should have significantly reduced the loss of

countries have also been enrolled from this herd," he said. The Minister hoped that the deliberations at the Doha Meet would help ensure a real and permanent protection to the world's natural resources and boost the efforts to limit the illegitimate international trade in the wild creatures.

Underlining the growing importance of CITES in the protection of world's wild flora and of the neighbouring and friendly

about responsibilities and obligations and need to ensure concrete action in the areas of capacity building, public awareness and good science as basis for our decision and of course law enforcement, he added.

THE PENINSULA
 See also page 6

إشادة بنجاح قطر في التنظيم

خيبة أمل من قرارات «ساييس» حول التونة والفيلة الإفريقية



مراكبة وبريد مختلف العرسى خلال مناقشة بعض الموضوعات التي تهم الدول العربية خلال اجتماع «ساييس» حول تصاريح التيل المصرية والذي كان من المقرر إجرائها من المقرر الأول الذي يمنع الاتجار فيها، وإبراجها ضمن الملحق الثاني لتحرير الاتجار لسدادها فيها، غير أن المقرر لم يرقه.

إلى جانب هذا التقلت الدول العربية على مساندة تونس التي تصدر التونة (بوفين تونا) إلى اليابان وتجارة (الرجان) غير أن هذين المقترحين لم يرقسهما كذلك لعدم إقرارهما الفيلبة للتلخ.

وفيما يتعلق بالمناقشات طلبت تنزانيا بإعادة إبراج المقترح الرابع حول الفيلة الكونغوليتا إفريقياً منقلاً من الملحق 1 إلى الملحق 2، مما يسمح بالاتجار لسداد لها، غير أنه لم تم الجوه إلى التصويت السري، ولم يحز الإقرار أغلبية الثلثين، وتم رفضه مرة أخرى بـ 53 صوتاً مقابل 47، وامتنعت 34 دولة.

وكان هناك نصويت آخر يتعلق بالتلخح الأساس الخاصة ببيع الفيلة الكونغوليتا إفريقياً قدمت به زامبيا، وبعد إعادة عرض وجهة النظر الرسمية حول إعادة إبراجه تم الجوه إلى التصويت، وسرة أخرى عقب هذا الأخير أسام زامبيا في جني بعض المال لدعم اقتصادها ومجانها البرية، وكانت نتيجة موافقة 59 صوتاً معارضة 47، وامتنعت 38 صوتاً آخر.

والمناقشات التي دارت حول المواضيع التي طرحت عليه وأبرز استغربه كما أبداه البعض من عدم رضا حول ما يتعلق باسمك التونة مثلا، داعياً إلى ضرورة الإقرار بإعادة الدول في المناقشات الديمقراطية، وتطبيق القرارات التي تلخها الإغلبية، خاصة التصويت بشأن اسمك التونة الذي اعترضه غير قليل على معارضة الدول لحقولها، مثلثاً في الوقت ذاته آلية التصويت السري حول المقترحات التي تقدمها الأطراف.

وقد مثل مؤتمر الأطراف للاتفاقية الدولية لتتقيم الاتجار في العلاقات الحيوانية والنباتية المهددة بالانقراض (ساييس) فرصة مميزة لتوحيد الجهود العربية من أجل صياغة سياسات مزممة للدول بشأن الاتجار في الأنواع الحيوانية والنباتية المتعلقة مما التتمة المستخدمة وحقوق السكان المحليين في الاستفادة من الموارد الطبيعية بشكل عادل ومستدام.

وإجمعت الدول العربية على قرارات المناقشات وخاصة الأنواع الممتشرة عبر الوطن العربي.

وقد حظي المؤتمر بمشاركة عربية لم يسبق لها مثيل حيث شاركت كافة الدول العربية في هذا المؤتمر باستثناء العراق وليبنان، علماً أن لبنان والبحرين سجنتم إلى اتفاقية «ساييس» العام المقبل في حين شاركت البحرين كدولة

المناخي التي وجدت حقلها من التلخاش والالتزام في هذا المؤتمر.

وشدد على أن هذه هي المرة الأولى التي يرى فيها «ساييس» بهذا المستوى العالمي من النجاح والتفاني، مشيراً إلى أهمية أن تعطي الأطراف عناية واشتغالاً للقبلة التغير المناخي والزراعة لسدادها لبعض الأنواع الممتشرة البحرية، معترفاً لك أهمية تلخها التجارية، وعلى الأطراف استمرار دعمها لتتعزيز ما تم الإتفاق عليه في مؤتمر الدوحة، خاصة في الملحق الثاني للاتفاقية.

من جانبه التقى السيد علي حسين فاروق ممثل ليبيا على استضافة قطر للمؤتمر،

فطر تلخ الجهود التي بذلها المشاركون، وما أبدوه من ملاحظات لصالح الحياة الفطرية والحيوانات المهددة بالانقراض، وعبر القول إن «جميع المقترحات التي تم تمريرها أو تم رفضها قصد منها حماية الحياة الفطرية فقط، وربما كان هناك خلاف حول من يقوم بهذه الحماية» أي التلخاش أو ساييس التي تلخطع بدور كبير في عملية الحماية هذه، كما إننا سنعمل على الاستعانة والاستفادة من الأبحاث العلمية في هذا المجال.

وكسل رئيس اللجنة الأوتري السيد مانهسون إن من الرسائل التي خرج بها المؤتمر إعطاء دور مهم لفضية التغير

وتنجمه.

وقد أبدى الإتحاد العام للاتفاقية وممثلو أميركا والاتحاد الأوروسي ما أسموه ب«خيمة الإل» فيما تم التوصل إليه من قرارات بخصوص اسمك التونة التي قام بعدم إبراجها في ملحق الاتفاقية الأول الذي يضم الأنواع المهددة الأكثر بالانقراض، وبالتالي يحظر صيدها والاتجار فيها.

من ناحيتهم أعرب ممثلو كينيا وبنسوانا عن خيبة أمهم لعدم إبراج الفيلة الإفريقية في الملحق الثاني للاتفاقية، وذلك كما تنص عليه من ملحق على البشر والفرارح والمزارعين.

وقالوا في هذا السياق إنهم سيصعدون هذه القضية في الأمم الإفريقية لتبقى مسوراً مهما كانت المناقشات، وحتى يتم تبني القضية من قبل الرؤساء الأارقة، ومن ثم نقلها للمؤتمرات «ساييس» القادمة.

وتحدث السيد فادح عبد الله محمد مستشار الحياة الفطرية بوزارة البيئة عضو الوفد القطري خلال المؤتمر العلمي من وجهات النظر للتشقة حول المواضيع التي كانت محل بحث ونقاش على مدى الأسبوعين الماضيين، والتي أكدت في مجملها حرص الجميع على حماية الحياة الفطرية من الانقراض.

كما أكد السيد فادح وقد وافقه على ذلك بغية المتحدثين على الدور الحيوي ل«ساييس»، وقبيلتها العالمية في صيانة الحياة الفطرية وحمايتها، وفق إن دولة

لحضور «الصفير الجارح» وزير الدفاع الإريتري يصل الدوحة

وصل إلى الدوحة مساء اليوم الفريق أول/صبيحان التريم وزير الدفاع الإريتري في زيارة أيداع تستمر عدة أيام لحضور فعاليات ترمين «الصفير الجارح» ومعرض كيمعس» العالمي البحري الذي يقام اعتباراً من بداية الأسبوع القادم.

وكان في استقباله بشار الدوحة الدولي العميد ركن محمد أحمد السليطي مدير الكراسم والعلاقات العامة والتوجيه الحكومي، وسعادة السيد علي إبراهيم مدير إريتريا لدى دولة قطر، وعدد من كبار خبراء القوات المسلحة.

«خشب الأغوار» محور نقاش اليوم الثاني

مؤتمر «سايتس» يبحث حماية 25 نبتة مهددة بالانقراض

في الطبيعة شرط أن يتم ذلك على نحو مستدام

وعندما يتأكد على نحو علمي تعرض أحد الأنواع للتهديد، يمكن للامانة العامة للاتفاقية أو الدول الأعضاء الترخيص لإنتاج نوع محدد في أحد ملحقاتها الثلاثة.

ويمنع الملحق الأول التجارة الدولية، ويقتصر هذا العام أن يشمل سمك الخون الأحمر في المتوسط. يضم هذا الملحق إلى الآن 530 نوعاً حيوانياً وأكثر من 300 نوع من النباتات، من بينها القردة الكبيرة والأنواع السنورية أي الفهد والنمر المرقط والتمور وسواها، فضلاً عن سلاحف البحر وأنواع عدة من النعاسيح والتعابين وغيرها.

أما الملحق الثاني فيفرض رقابة صارمة على التجارة بحيث يشترط الحصول على إذن مسبق بالتصدير، ويمكن أن تشمل الشعب المرجانية الحمراء وأنواع عدة من النعاسيح تشمل أكثر من 4460 نوعاً حيوانياً و28 ألف نبتة. وعندما يعجز الملحق الثاني عن

الحيلولة دون تراجع عدد فصيلة معينة، كما حصل مع سمك الحفش منذ العام 1998، فيمكن اتخاذ القرار بالانتقال إلى الملحق الأول. أما الملحق الثالث فيمكن أن تلجا إليه إحدى الدول على نحو أحادي من أجل حماية نوع موجود عندها فتفرض قيوداً صارمة على تصديره.

ويضم هذا الملحق نحو 250 نوعاً عند إدراج نوع معين في أحد ملاحق الاتفاقية، يعود لكل دولة قرار تبني التشريع المناسب واتخاذ الوسائل العلمية والأمنية والجمركية لضمان تطبيقه. غير أن بعض الأنواع المدرجة في الملحق الأول، مثل النمر منذ 35 عاماً، أو في الملحق الثاني مثل سمك الحفش منذ العام 1998، لا تزال أعدادها في تراجع، بسبب اندثار موطنها الطبيعي أو التجارة غير الشرعية.



الدوحة، القطر

تواصلت أمس فعاليات مؤتمر الأطراف للاتفاقية الدولية لتكثيف الاتجار بالكائنات الفطرية المهددة بالانقراض ومنتجاتها (سايتس) التي تستضيفه قطر في الفترة من 13 إلى 25 مارس.

وشهد اليوم الثاني مؤتمراً صحفياً تحدث فيه عدد من ممثلي الدول الأطراف في الاتفاقية، حول القضايا التي تناولها المؤتمر في يومه الثاني من حيث المقترحات التي ستناقش على مستوى اللجان المختصة، وفي الجلسات العامة. ومن المقترحات مسالة إدراج سمك الخون الأزرق ضمن ملاحق الاتفاقية.

وانتمت المناقشات في اليوم الثاني بالعمومية وتفرعت لمسائل إدارية وإقليمية، وستخصص مناقشات في يومي الثلاثاء والأربعاء للتعديلات التي ستدخل على ملاحق الاتفاقية، وستبحث اللجنة الأولى في بعض القضايا المتعلقة بمنتجات الخشب، من أجل استخدام مستدام للغابات الحضرية والاستوائية، تنفيذاً واستجابة للمطالبات (سايتس).

وتحدثت السيدة شريفة سلطان السالم، أمين سر الهيئة العامة للبيئة في الكويت، عن خشب الأغوار المعروف عند العرب وخاصة عند الخليجين، حيث يتسم هذا النوع من الخشب بتعدد استخداماته وتوفره على شكل مسحوق أو زيت مخلوط، وإثبات إلى أنه يوجد في بعض البلدان الآسيوية مثل مينمار وكمبوديا، ويستخدم كخشب.

وحرصاً على استدامة هذا النوع فقد أدرج ضمن الملحق الثاني للاتفاقية سايتس ويتم تنفيذ منذ عام 1995 مشيرة إلى أن الكويت سوف تستضيف ورشة عمل علمية متخصصة حول هذا الموضوع، وسوف تدم دعوة أمانة سايتس واللجنة العلمية لحضور هذه

الاتفاقية وتعد اتفاقية التجارة الدولية لأنواع المهددة بالانقراض، الآداء الأساسية لحماية النباتات والحيوانات البرية، ولا تشرف الاتفاقية مباشرة على هذه الأنواع، بل تنظم تبادلها التجاري وتضمنه في حال تسبب الأضرار فيها بالإضافة إلى تدهور المواطن الطبيعي لهذه الأنواع إلى اندثارها، وإلى اليوم هناك 34 ألف نوع تحت حماية الاتفاقية.

واقترت الاتفاقية في العام 1973، وهي تضم 175 بلداً تجتمع كل ثلاث سنوات تقريباً، ولتجني أي قرار يجب الحصول على غالبية ثلثي الحاضرين.

وتذكر اتفاقية التجارة الدولية لأنواع المهددة بالانقراض بأن تجارة النباتات أو الحيوانات قد تكون ضرورية للسكان المحليين، وتكون للمحافظة على هذه الأنواع

تستضيفه الدوحة إن المشاركة الكويتية تأتي في سياق التعاون العربي والاتفاق على رؤية مشتركة تجاه القضايا المطروحة، وقال إن الكويت تحرص على المشاركات الدولية التي تعنى بالبيئة، مؤكداً أن هناك اتفاقاً على رؤية عربية وخليجية وأوراق العمل المقدمة، مشدداً على أهمية توحيد الرؤى العربية.

وأضاف أن دولة قطر جديرة بهذه الاستضافة العالمية الكبيرة، كما أكد أن هناك بعض الأنواع التي سوف تعمل بعض الدول العربية على إدراجها في ملاحق الاتفاقية، والكويت بالطبع تدعم المقترحات العربية، واعتبر اتفاقية «سايتس» أكثر الاتفاقيات البيئية نجاحاً على المستوى العالمي، وقال إن الاهتمام جدول الأعمال من بنود ومحاور سوف يعكس نجاح وفاعلية هذه

الورشة، بهدف المحافظة عليه، ويناقش المؤتمر من خلال جلساته العامة ولجانته المختصة أيضاً موضوع التمور ووحيد القرن كحيوانات مهددة بالانقراض. وبينت السيدة ماجريتا كلمن، رئيسة اللجنة العلمية في سايتس أن النباتات أكثر أهمية من الحيوانات، قائلة إن هناك خمسة وعشرين نوعاً منها مهددة بالانقراض، مشيرة إلى أن هناك عدداً من المقترحات تقدمت بها بعض الأطراف كالبرازيل والأرجنتين والمكسيك وغيرها للمحافظة عليها، وقالت: إننا سوف نعمل على إحراز تقدم بكل الحماية اللازمة لهذه الأنواع المهددة بالانقراض من النباتات. وقال مدير البيئة بالكويت السيد صلاح المضحى، رئيس الوفد الكويتي في مؤتمر الأطراف بالاجتماع الخامس عشر الذي



Susan Millward from Animal welfare institute, USA, and Staci McIennan, Policy Officer, Wildlife of Eurogroup of Animals, with polar bears during the CITES Conference in Doha yesterday.

ABDUL BASIT

CITES meet to discuss timber-related issues

DOHA: Beyond the headline-grabbing proposals on bluefin tuna and ivory trade, the largest wildlife trade convention meeting this week will also address several timber-related issues - an often overlooked responsibility of the Convention on International Trade and Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES).

In a CITES meeting on Friday, Peru was given a six month ultimatum to address critical issues over the illegal mahogany trade. The CITES Standing Committee - the body that governs the CITES between conference of the parties meetings - took the decision to take this step following Peru's repeated failure to manage effectively illegal

logging and trade in the valuable timber. CITES Parties will be discussing timber, medicinal plants and agarwood at the meeting tomorrow.

The timber-related trade - including agarwood, an aromatic resin extracted from certain tree species - is especially important in the Middle East, where CITES governments are meeting for the first time. Mahogany is popular to make furniture all over the world, while agarwood is used in perfume-making in Middle Eastern countries. "Trees account for the vast bulk of wild plants in trade, yet only three commercially important timber species are listed on CITES, of which bigleaf mahogany is the most

valuable," said Colman O'Criodain, Wildlife trade analyst, WWF International.

Six months from now, Peru must have enacted legislation to regulate the mahogany trade, implemented a computerised tracking system for mahogany and harmonised the different harvest and export quota systems being used. Failure to meet these requirements will result in the Standing Committee voting on a suspension of mahogany exports from Peru. Earlier, Peru rejected a recommendation from the Committee that it set a voluntary moratorium on its mahogany exports.

THE PENINSULA

Japan to oppose bluefin tuna ban

Discussion of bluefin tuna included in CITES agenda

BY SATISH KANADY

DOHA: Any move to impose a blanket ban on international commercial trade in Atlantic bluefin tuna at the CITES meet would be vehemently opposed by Japan. The country would also lobby the parties of the international Convention to oppose the 'unrealistic' move, a key member of Japanese delegation told *The Peninsula* here yesterday.

"Enlisting a food product meant for daily consumption in the endangered species is not appropriate. We have set very clear criterion for the baseline reduction in the catch", Masayoshi Mizuno (**pictured**), Director, Global Environment Division, Ministry of foreign Affairs, Japan said.

The tuna is a daily consumption food. CITES is more into the protection of indigenous species. The very nature of Atlantic bluefin tuna is against including in the 'ban list'. "Of course, there is depletion in the stock. But it is not at an alarming rate as propagated by the interest groups".

But it is not at an alarming. The current situation is not much reduced from the qualifying mark", he added.

In fact Monaco's proposal came in October last. But the international convention on Atlantic Tuna held in November had suggested to reduce the allowable catch to 40 percent and the allowable period to one month from two months. Japan's fishing community is really care about the dwindling stock. The stock of Atlantic Tuna has been improved considerably. The catch is stable. Japan's total catch of bluefin tuna during the year 2008 was 21,000 million metric tonnes. Instead of going for a blanket ban on tuna, the international community must come out with proposals for management measures to improve the stock.



We also request the European Union to come out with realistic proposals, he said.

Mizuno said Japan would lobby the member countries to stand with them in the conference and expressed confidence that it can convince

the participating NGOs and parties of the Convention to set aside the proposal. "It is difficult to predict whether this conference would include Atlantic bluefin tuna in the appendix I. The discussion on bluefin tuna is included on Thursday's agenda. If we fail to reach on a consensus, the meet would leave the issue to a working group. The working Group may come out with a proposal in the next few days", said Achim Steiner, Executive Director, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

CITES is likely to consider an appropriate mechanism to address the issue in Doha meet. The world has come to Doha with very serious proposal to consider. There is a general acknowledgment to act on this, he said.

There is no doubt that tuna is in crisis. But the discussion must be based on the science and the efficacy of managing the situation. We don't want this conference to become a theatre of battle, but a platform for rational decision, Steiner added.

THE PENINSULA

Bataille diplomatique autour des espèces menacées

LE MONDE | 12.03.10 | 15h47 • Mis à jour le 12.03.10 | 18h59

Rarement conférence des parties de la Convention sur le commerce international des espèces de faune et de flore menacées d'extinction (Cites) aura autant fait parler d'elle. Ce coup de projecteur tient, pour beaucoup, à la focalisation sur le thon rouge, espèce convoitée et surpêchée dont le sort fait l'objet d'une intense bataille diplomatique. Son commerce pourrait être suspendu à l'occasion de cette réunion, qui se tient à Doha (Qatar) du samedi 13 au jeudi 25 mars.

L'année internationale de la biodiversité, décrétée par les Nations unies en 2010, renforce encore l'intérêt pour la conférence. Plus d'un tiers des espèces sauvages recensées par l'Union mondiale pour la conservation de la nature (UICN) est menacé d'extinction. La communauté internationale s'est engagée à stopper la destruction d'écosystèmes indispensables à l'homme, sans succès jusqu'à maintenant. Or la Cites est un des rares outils multilatéraux de protection de la nature ayant démontré son efficacité. A tel point qu'elle apparaît de plus en plus comme un recours.

L'objectif de la convention, adoptée en 1973, est de s'assurer que le commerce international d'espèces sauvages, qui génère des milliards de dollars de recettes chaque année et porte sur plus de 350 millions de spécimens, ne menace par leur survie. *"Chaque jour, nous consommons de la biodiversité pour notre alimentation, notre mobilier, nos cosmétiques, nos vêtements, nos bijoux, nos objets d'art, notre pharmacie, souligne Juan Vasquez, porte-parole du secrétariat de la Cites. La nature est une ressource renouvelable si on la gère bien, mais si on dépasse les limites, on provoque des extinctions."*

Pour endiguer le phénomène, chacun des 175 Etats parties de la Cites peut, tous les trois ans, proposer d'intégrer une ou plusieurs espèces à l'une des annexes de la convention. L'annexe I est réservée aux animaux et végétaux menacés de disparition imminente. Si la proposition est votée à la majorité des deux tiers, le commerce international en est interdit. Les espèces surexploitées, sans être en danger critique, sont proposées à l'annexe II. Leur commerce est autorisé, mais les Etats doivent fournir des certificats garantissant qu'elles ont été prélevées légalement et qu'elles ne sont pas surexploitées.

Quelque 33 000 espèces sont aujourd'hui classées, dont moins d'un millier à l'annexe I, qui inclut grands singes, éléphants, guépards, tigres, tortues, oiseaux de proie, crocodiles, cactées, orchidées... Le système a fait ses preuves. L'interdiction du commerce international de l'ivoire, en 1989, a été un moment historique pour la Cites. Sans cette convention, il n'y aurait sans doute plus à la surface du globe ni éléphants, ni tigres, ni rhinocéros, ni tortues marines...

"OUTIL LE PLUS PUISSANT"

"C'est l'outil le plus puissant pour protéger la biodiversité, commente Lucien Chabason, directeur délégué de l'Institut du développement durable et des relations internationales (Idri). D'abord parce que la Cites utilise l'arme commerciale. Ensuite parce qu'elle fonctionne à la majorité et non à l'unanimité. Un Etat ne peut donc bloquer une décision. Enfin, elle a su assurer la mise en oeuvre de ses décisions, grâce à la mobilisation des services douaniers dans les ports et les aéroports."

"Contrairement à la Convention sur la diversité biologique de 1992, qui fixe des objectifs généraux et fait appel au volontariat des Etats, sans réel débouché, la Cites prend des décisions concrètes qu'elle fait appliquer", renchérit Sébastien Moncorps, directeur du comité français de l'UICN. Si un Etat n'applique pas correctement une décision, il peut être sanctionné par une interdiction totale du commerce des espèces listées.

En raison de cette efficacité, le champ couvert par la Cites grandit. Historiquement centrée sur les animaux et plantes emblématiques, elle s'étend aujourd'hui à des espèces exploitées commercialement à grande échelle, comme les espèces marines et certaines essences de bois, que d'autres systèmes de à préserver la ressource qui a poussé certains Etats à se tourner vers la Cites. Résultat : des intérêts économiques de plus en plus puissants entrent en scène, et le jeu diplomatique se tend.

Ce bilan positif ne doit pas occulter plusieurs limites. Les Etats peuvent, en émettant une "réserve", ne pas appliquer une décision - même s'il leur faut alors assumer les risques politiques d'une telle décision, notamment une pression accrue des écologistes. De plus, la Cites ne régleme pas le commerce intérieur, qui est aussi une cause majeure d'extinction.

Surtout, en l'absence de moyens propres, son application sur le terrain repose sur l'engagement des Etats à faire appliquer les contrôles et à lutter contre le braconnage, qui reste une menace considérable. Ces carences expliquent pourquoi le tigre d'Asie ou le rhinocéros, entre autres, sont toujours menacés, malgré leur inscription à l'annexe I.

Enfin, la Cites est loin de couvrir les multiples causes de l'érosion de la biodiversité. *"Elle ne traite ni la réduction des habitats, ni l'introduction d'espèces invasives, ni la pollution, ni le réchauffement climatique, explique Colman O'Criodain, du Fonds mondial pour la nature (WWF). Ce n'est pas son rôle."*

"La Cites fonctionne bien aussi parce qu'elle porte sur un objet limité", observe M. Chabason, pour qui ses succès réels *"ne doivent pas faire écran à l'ampleur de la régression du vivant, qui demande une mobilisation générale"*.

China boost on eve of Doha meet

1,500 to attend CITES conference

BY SATISH KANADY

DOHA: The 15th triennial meeting of the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) opens here today on a positive note with Chinese traditional medicine producers deciding to stop the use of tiger bone as an ingredient.

Illegal trade in Asian big cat products is a key issue to be debated in the nearly two-week summit. China is among the 175 countries that are signatories to this international treaty governing wildlife trade.

The important development on the eve of the CITES meet has been hailed by various NGOs involved in the protection of endangered fauna and flora.

The Wild Fauna and Flora International (WWF) and the wildlife trade monitoring network TRAFFIC congratulated the World Federation of Chinese Medicine Societies' (WFCMS) statement urging its members not to use tiger bone or any other parts from endangered wildlife, here yesterday.

"CITES governments should be encouraged by this statement and use the opportunity they have at this meeting to pass measures, that if properly enforced, can help put an end to tiger trade," Dr Colman O'Criodain, Wildlife trade analyst of WWF International said in Doha.

He also called on all WFCMS members to promote tiger conservation and encourage them to abide by all relevant international and national regulations on wildlife trade.

The increased attention on the Atlantic bluefin tuna and other marine life by the 175-nation Convention tops the ambitious

agenda of meetings beginning here today. The conference is also expected to take up issues ranging from combating elephant poaching for ivory in Africa to proposals to ban trade in polar bear skins and parts.

And less-known species such as the spiny-tailed iguanas of Mexico and Central America and the spectacular *Dynastes satanas* beetle of Latin America — both prized by collectors — will be discussed.

Over 1,500 delegates representing more than 170 governments, indigenous people, non-governmental organisations and businesses are attending the world conference.

Bluefin tuna, elephant populations and a wide range of sharks, corals, polar bears, reptiles, insects and plants are on the agenda.

CITES Secretary-General Willem Wijnstekers, thanked Qatar for hosting the meeting and noted that existing and new challenges require increased political support for the 35-year old treaty to match present day demands.

Wijnstekers congratulated the member states for the many conservation successes during these years but warned that more needs to be done.

"We do not want to risk letting down the developing world in its struggle to ensure that trade in wild fauna and flora is conducted legally and sustainably," he said.

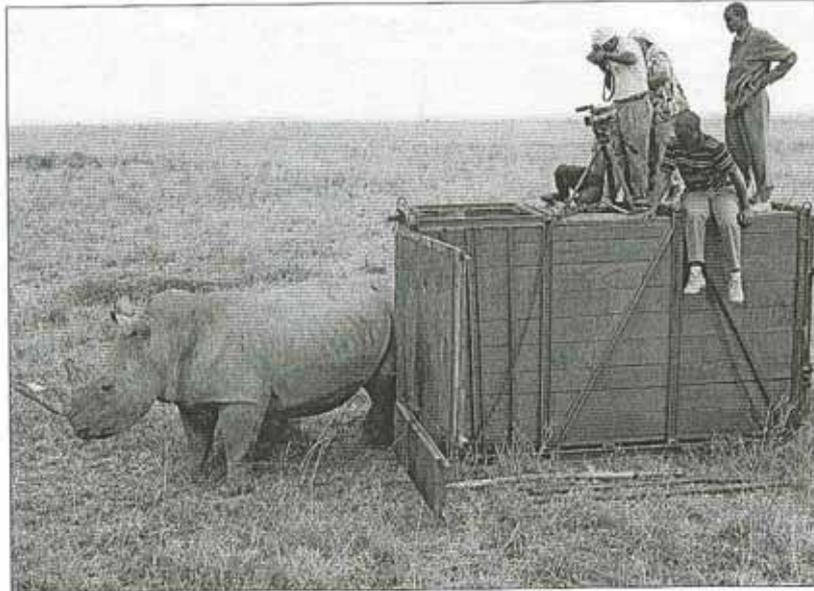
Many of the 42 proposals on the table reflect growing international concern about the rapid destruction of the world's marine and forest ecosystems through over-fishing and excessive logging, and the potential impacts of climate change on the biological resources of the planet.

THE PENINSULA

See also page 4

South Africa backs proposal to sell ivory stocks

Animal rights group says move will be a selfish stance that jeopardises elephant populations across Africa



SAFE AGARE: Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) rangers and officials release a female white rhino from a cage at Nairobi National Park during the translocation of 10 new white rhinos from the drought-stricken Lake Nakuru National Park in the Rift Valley. **PICTURE: THOMAS BARON / REUTERS**

SHERRIE BEGA

SOUTH Africa will throw its weight behind a proposal by Tanzania and Zambia to sell their ivory stocks to more than 100 tons of ivory to China and Japan.

But in doing so, it will be supporting "wildlife thieves" and jeopardising elephant populations across Africa, according to an Animal Rights Africa (ARA) report to the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), which starts in Qatar today.

Tanzania, with about 90 tons of ivory, and Zambia, with more than 21 tons, are requesting CITES approval to trade their ivory stocks in a one-off sale. In another proposal the Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Mozambique and Sierra Leone are asking CITES to allow the limited trade in African elephant ivory and impose a 20-year moratorium on any proposals to use international trade controls. In 2007, CITES allowed South Africa, Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe to sell more than 100 tons of ivory to Japan and China, and facilitated a nine-year moratorium on bulk ivory sales.

ARA's Malinda, spokesman for the Department of Environmental Affairs, confirmed the government would support the proposals if they were approved. "The proposals from Tanzania and Zambia are not different from the earlier proposals of Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe and therefore South Africa will be more inclined to support their proposals as well."

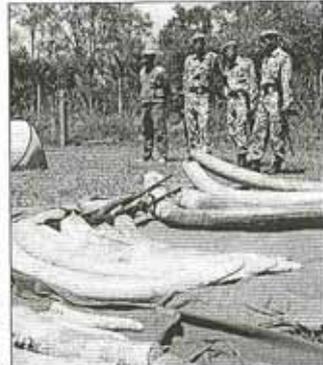
The ARA believes if approved, the proceeds from the one-off sale will "further stimulate the trade in ivory" and act as a catalyst for poaching.

"The present level of poaching is already wiping out elephant populations across Africa. If this new proposal is approved, it would be throwing fuel on the fire."

"These nations supporting Tanzania and Zambia's request to sell ivory are adopting a selfish view and jeopardising elephants across Africa," she said.

Malinda, however, disputes that the legal trade is doing more harm than the illegal trade, citing a report presented to CITES last year, which showed there was "no correlation between legal ivory sales and the illegal killing of elephants."

A similar report will be dis-



CONTRABAND: Kenyan Wildlife rangers keep a watch on confiscated elephant tusks at the Kenyan wildlife office in Nairobi. **PICTURE: STAA SIMON/AP**

puted at the CITES conference. CITES notes the auctions from its 2007 one-off approved around 500 million for elephant conservation and community development programmes.

"The ARA believes these 300 million in 2007 revitalised the ivory market and helped 'wash black market trade'. This is exacerbated by poor governance in both buying and selling nations."

At least 20 000 elephants were killed annually to supply the ivory trade, it revealed. "Many predicted the sales approved in 2007 might fuel an increasing appetite for ivory among the rapidly growing Chinese middle class. This prediction appears to have been correct and seems also to have triggered a considerable revival of the illegal trade, with a consequent surge in poaching over the past year."

"These sales are problematic, no matter how carefully they are monitored. The reliance on legal domestic ivory markets, particularly in the Far East, influences public perceptions and legitimises the demand for ivory."

It said DNA analysis of ivory seizures in the Far East indicated that large numbers of elephants were dying for their ivory, while elephant populations in Tanzania were "intolerably slowly affected".

The analysis added that legal ivory could not satisfy demand in the emerging market, noting how many tons of ivory

were seized in Vietnam, the Philippines, Thailand and some African countries last year.

"It would be naive to believe the dispersal of processed ivory (in Japan and China) can be sustained because regulated ivory indicates there are more elephants in the ivory trade. The majority of African nations have seen the elephants in their countries depleted by the demand for ivory. CITES has only a few licensed remaining, and Sierra Leone's last elephants were wiped out by poachers in November 2005."

In Tanzania, home to the second largest elephant population, poaching related following the sale of stockpiles in 2007, while Zambia's elephant population has been unable to recover from heavy poaching of ivory from Zambia were found in seizures of illegal tusks.

Today the elephant population stands at 470 000, according to the ARA, which adds that most African elephant range states have no effective poaching monitoring or control systems, or to fund any effective law enforcement.

CITES has dismissed allegations it is biased in favour of the legal ivory trade. "Whatever the secretary's comments on the proposals may be, they will be based upon objective assessments, using the criteria the CITES parties adopted," said secretary-general Willem Wijnstekers.

Expert group to probe rhino horn trade

SHERRIE BEGA

A NEW international wildlife conservation of rhino experts, conservationists and conservationists hopes to clamp down on the sophisticated networks behind the illegal trade in rhino horn.

The International Convention on Combating Wildlife Crime is one of the urgent measures that the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) is announcing at its 10th meeting of the Conference of the Parties, which gets under way in Qatar today to tackle the illegal trade in wildlife, including the rhino, the tiger and other animals on the brink of extinction.

John Selous, CITES chief enforcement officer, told the Saturday Star the convention is a grouping of the CITES Secretariat, Interpol, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, the World

Bank and the World Customs Organisation.

"We'll be looking at wildlife crime in general, but one thing we suggest is that these agencies together convene a meeting of those most affected by the illegal trade in ivory and rhino horn. We'll try to bring together the intelligence that is out there and get an overview of what's going on."

"When you look at where the animals are, whether it's ivory or rhino, the same countries are regularly coming up," he said. "It's mostly in the Far East, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Kenya. There seem to be certain hot spots in Africa such as Ethiopia and the United Arab Emirates."

He said it was frustrating that "many of these countries aren't talking to each other." He wanted to get their representatives under one roof. "Hopefully from there, we can develop a strategy."

The South African government, in its submission to CITES, reveals that so far this year 31 rhinos have been killed or their horns removed. From 2008 to February 2010, there had been a "dramatic increase" in rhino poaching incidents, with 120 rhino killed last year.

Although poaching levels in South Africa were not endangering the increasing white rhino population of around 16 000 - this could change if poaching continued to escalate. "However, if the illegal killing of white rhino continues at the current rate, we would reach the stage where numbers start declining to a point where the mortality rate will exceed the natality rate," the government said.

Selous said while South Africa had reacted late to the rhino, its anti-poaching efforts were paying off. "I think without necessarily wishing to be critical, it did

take some time for authorities in South Africa to wake up to see just how bad this problem was. Now there doesn't seem to be much room for criticism."

"South Africa is doing a good job. This is not an easy crime to combat. Unfortunately criminals always seem to be one step ahead of us. Part of that is because wildlife crimes, in many respects, isn't seen as a mainstream crime."

The CITES Secretariat said in its rhino report: "It is apparent there is no room for complacency with regard to crimes directed against rhino in South Africa, and perhaps elsewhere, in cooperation with Zimbabwe in the near future. These appear to be scope for engaging more effectively with private landowners with rhino populations."

Selous said the scale of rhino poaching has become a serious concern. "If you look at the mid- to low-toe to the beginning of this century, rhino

poaching had more or less disappeared. There appears to be a belief that has sprung up in parts of the Far East that a rhino horn will prevent you from getting cancer, or if you're suffering from it, prevent its progress," he said, exposing hoaxes included Vietnam, Thailand, China and Laos.

CITES had presented a detailed briefing document on the illegal trade in rhino horn to law enforcement agencies in Vietnam last year.

"I got an indication they're willing to respond, or if you're suffering from it, prevent its progress," he said, exposing hoaxes included Vietnam, Thailand, China and Laos.

"These nations supporting Tanzania and Zambia's request to sell ivory are adopting a selfish view and jeopardising elephants across Africa," she said.

A similar report will be dis-

Elvis festival gives town its very own Heartbreak Hotel

MELANIE PETERS

THE PICTURESQUE town of Storms River on the Garden Route is about to shake, rattle and roll as hundreds of Elvis Presley fans arrive to pay tribute to the King of Rock 'n' Roll at a five-day festival.

The festival will be held at the Protea Hotel Ditshelebosom Village at the end of April and about 2 000 Elvis fans are expected to attend the country's only Elvis festival.

The organiser of the festival, hotel owner Dan de Beer, is a die-hard fan. It was his collection of Cadillac - similar to the one that Elvis owned - and his wide collection of everything Elvis, from movies to gold records and dolls, that got Cape Town's four guide Peter Pitzel thinking.

Intigued by De Beer's fascination with the King, he suggested the idea of the festival.

The event will include vintage car shows, a showcase of period Elvis cars, Elvis movies, a memorabilia shop, a talent competition, a Marilyn Monroe beauty pageant and a Elvis food stall that serves the King's favourites, like peanut butter banana bread.

There will also be an exhibit

by members of the South African Elvis Club.

Pitzel said: "I regularly travelled through the town and was fascinated by a place called the Cadillac Shop that housed these beautiful cars. There were pictures on the walls and all sorts of Elvis paraphernalia. It was like his own private museum."

"I thought to myself, 'who is this guy?' When I met him (De Beer) I suggested he have an Elvis festival."

"I don't think he would take me seriously and now there are about 2 000 people heading for Storms River from all over the country."

De Beer said he had been a fan for more than 40 years. He loved Elvis so much that five years ago when he married his wife Anne, he bought her an Elvis gown and served at the ceremony in a Ford Mustang complete with stage smoke and a guitar.

"I have three Cadillacs similar to the ones Elvis had. The black would be married in, the white would be for Elvis' white Cadillac, and the red would be for Elvis' red Cadillac," he said.

I have three-dimensional street signs that read Viva Lee Vegas and Elvis Heart Ding

Road. I take staff regularly from America and today I just received a framed gold record of Elvis' hit single *Are You Lonesome Tonight?*

De Beer said Pitzel to help him draw up the proposal for the festival. The town's main road is the go-to road for the festival and could become the Elvis capital of Africa.

De Beer said: "This is all amazing. I hope it will become an annual event. Everyone is excited."

He said a similar festival in a small inland town 200km outside Sydney had started with 200 people but now attracts 10 000 and hosts 200 artists into the local economy.

He said he had always felt there should be some sort of memorial to Elvis. He had many fans here in South Africa - "a kind of Woodstock festival, a place where, once a year, a holiday pilgrimage could be made for those who could not go all the way to Woodstock in Memphis, Tennessee."

Pitzel said the Western Cape had held other popular music events such as Opikopel and the Cape Town Jazz Festival. "So it can be done. Money raised from the festival would be put back into



ACCENT ON ELVIS: Elvis Presley fans will gather in Storms River for a three-day festival paying tribute to the King of Rock 'n' Roll.

organising more festivals and community projects, like a crèche for village children."

Elvis Presley was an interesting character outside his role as music legend. He had many collections, including statues of Venus de Milo and Joan of Arc. The FBI has seized over 600 pages of files on him, most of his favourite books were the Bible and The Impressionist.

The Elvis Festival will be held at the end of April 30 to May 2.

31 pupils, teacher in 14-seater

PARENTS must take responsibility for the safety of their children by checking on the transport they use at school. Transport Minister Sim Ntshole urged yesterday after a driver was charged with cramming 31 schoolchildren and a teacher into a 14-seater taxi.

KwaZulu Natal Road Traffic Inspectorate spokesman Rajen Chintoban said yesterday traffic officers were stumped to find the children crammed into the taxi on the B1E7 at Umhlang, where the children went to school.

The children are aged between five and 11. The driver was arrested and charged with overloading. Transport MDC's Willem Mchunu lambasted the driver, saying "people are not sacks of potatoes that you can overload until there is no space" - *News24.com/Mapungu*

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NGOs at CITES hail tiger bone ban by Beijing

Meeting to take up issue of poaching

DOHA: As 15th edition of triennial Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) is set to open here today, a positive note has emerged from Beijing. Chinese medicine societies yesterday announced its decision not to use tiger bones as ingredient to the traditional medicines.

Illegal trade in Asian big cat products is a key issue to be debated in the nearly two-week summit. China is among the 175 countries that are signatories to this international treaty governing wildlife trade.

The important development on the eve of the CITES meet has been hailed by various NGOs involved in the protection of endangered fauna and flora.

The Wild Fauna and Flora International (WWF) and the wildlife trade monitoring network traffic congratulated the World Federation of Chinese Medicine Societies' (WFCMS) statement urging its members not to use tiger bone or any other parts from endangered wildlife, here yesterday.

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The increased attention on the Atlantic bluefin tuna and other marine life by the 175-nation Convention tops the ambitious agenda for nearly two weeks of

meetings beginning Saturday in Doha.

The conference is also expected to take up issues ranging from combating elephant poaching for ivory in Africa to proposals to ban trade in polar bear skins and parts. And less-known species such as the spiny-tailed iguanas of Mexico and Central America and the spectacular *Dynastes satanas* beetle of Latin America — both prized by collectors — will be discussed.

Over 1500 delegates representing more than 170 governments, indigenous peoples, non-governmental organisations and businesses are attending the world conference. Bluefin tuna, elephant populations and a wide range of sharks, corals, polar bears, reptiles, insects and plants are on the agenda for the two week meeting.

CITES Secretary General Willem Wijnstekers, thanked Qatar for hosting the meeting and noted that existing and new challenges require increased political support for the 35-year old treaty to match present day demands. Wijnstekers congratulated the member States for the many conservation successes during these years but warned that more needs to be done. "We do not want to risk letting down the developing world in its struggle to ensure that trade in wild fauna and flora is conducted legally and sustain ably", he said.

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PRESS RELEASE

Scientists meet in Doha to discuss global trade in timber and wild plants

Top on the agenda mahogany, cedar, ramin, candelilla, agarwood, *Guaiacum* and other plants valued for their wood, medicinal, ornamental or other qualities

Doha, 14 March 2010 – Top experts attending the ongoing meeting of the triennial general assembly of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) will consider how best to regulate trade in wild plants and products such as musical instruments, cancer medicines, lipsticks, emulsions, polishes, gums, cosmetics, perfumes and many other products containing wild plants protected by CITES.

The world summit will discuss new measures to trace the legal origin of timber entering international markets and ensure the sustainable harvesting of mahogany and other precious timbers. The neotropical populations of the bigleaf mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla*) are listed on CITES Appendix II, which requires that shipments of this timber be accompanied by a CITES export permit. Admired for its high quality, beauty and durability, mahogany is made into luxury furniture, boats, expensive panelling, musical instruments and other products. One cubic metre of big-leaf mahogany can fetch over USD 1,000 on the international market and one tree alone can produce more than USD 100,000 worth of high-quality furniture. The bigleaf mahogany thrives in dry tropical forests ranging from southern Mexico to the Amazon basin. It can grow to 70 m, with an average height of 30-40 m, and trunks can reach 3.5 m in diameter.

The mahogany range has become fragmented, many populations have declined dramatically and the building of access roads for mahogany lumbering has encouraged broader deforestation. Populations have declined by over 70 % in Central America since 1950 and the species is already reported to be commercially extinct in El Salvador, Costa Rica and parts of South America. The other two species of Latin American mahogany – the Cuban mahogany (*Swietenia mahagoni*) and Honduras mahogany (*Swietenia humilis*) – are also now commercially extinct. Today, the major natural stands of the bigleaf mahogany are in Brazil, Bolivia and Peru. Plantations have been established in Fiji and other countries, but the CITES listing does not apply to them.

The leading importers of this wood are the United States – which alone accounts for some 80 % of the entire market – the Dominican Republic, the United Kingdom and Spain. The Appendix-II listing enables importing nations to better assist export nations with checking the legality of shipments and ensuring that the mahogany trade is fully transparent.

The CITES member States will also discuss the merits of removing the controls for lipsticks and other products containing candelilla (*Euphorbia antisyphilitica*). These products are traded in enormous quantities through a complex supply chain. Relaxing the current controls on finished products containing candelilla would allow enforcement officers to focus on the smuggling of illegal timber and other endangered plants from their natural habitats.

Euphorbia antisyphilitica is a shrubby plant whose natural range extends from the southwest of the United States (New Mexico and Texas) to Mexico, having densely clustered stems that yield the multipurpose candelilla wax. Its distinctive properties make it an essential raw material in a wide array of cosmetics (especially lipsticks), inks, dyes, adhesives, coatings, emulsions, polishes, pharmaceutical products and gum base. Candelilla wax is also used as separation agent or mould in the production of candles, chocolates, cakes and jellies.

To date, Mexico seems to be the only country exporting candelilla wax. However, some of the wax is exported to the United States, from where traders re-export it to Europe or the Far East, sometimes without the mandatory CITES re-export certificates.

Other issues on the agenda include the adoption of measures to protect 14 species from Madagascar, agarwood, *Guaiaacum* and other plants. It will also address the potential impacts of CITES measures on the livelihoods of the rural poor, those on the frontlines of using and managing forests and wild plants.

Note to journalists: For more information, contact Juan Carlos Vasquez at +974-4175621 or +974-5692804 (cell), or juan.vasquez@cites.org

170 nations take part in CITES meet

MAYA MANSOUR

DOHA

THE 15th Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) was inaugurated on Saturday by Minister of Environment HE Abdullah bin Mubarak bin Aaboud al Midhadhi, at the Doha Sheraton, on Saturday.

Some 1,500 delegates, representing more than 170 countries, indigenous peoples, non-governmental organisations and businesses were present at the inauguration. Bluefin tuna, elephant populations, sharks, corals, polar bears, reptiles, insects and plants are at the top of the agenda for the meeting which will continue for two weeks.

Al Midhadhi was joined by United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) Executive Director Archim Steiner and CITES Secretary-General William Wijnstekers.

In his inaugural speech, al Midhadhi said, "We are very proud to host this important conference, which is being held in the Middle East for the first time. I am confident that this conference will achieve its aims through the cooperation and efforts of the member states of the convention".

He pointed out that the importance of the convention was maintaining the environmental balance of the wild species, by keeping them in their natural habitat.

"Qatar that ranks in Category A in the International Classification of CITES member states, has a responsibility to preserve such distinction. Qatar has played a big

role in saving animals from extinction, including the Arabian Oryx. It was re-settled in natural reserves, and now it is deemed to have the biggest Oryx herds in the Arab world".

"The CITES convention has had a considerable influence in keeping these species from getting extinct, by holding conferences, enacting laws, and adopting policies that strike a balance between environment and development," the minister added.

CITES Secretary-General Willem Wijnstekers thanked Qatar for hosting the meeting and noted that existing and new challenges require increased political support for the 35-year-old treaty

to match present-day demands. Wijnstekers congratulated the member States for the many conservation successes during these years but warned that more needs to be done.

"We do not want to risk letting down the developing world in its struggle to

ensure that trade in wild fauna and flora is conducted legally and sustainably", he said.

Many of the 42 proposals on the table reflect growing international concern about the accelerating destruction of the world's marine and forest ecosystems through overfishing and excessive logging, and the potential impacts of climate change on the biological resources of the planet. The UN General Assembly has declared 2010 the international year of biodiversity and the CITES Conference will be one of the key occasions governments have this year to take action to protect biodiversity.



Eco drive
TRADE IN ENDANGERED
SPECIES

US to push hard for ban on Atlantic bluefin tuna trade

By Bonnie James
Deputy News Editor

The US "intends to try very hard" to get a ban on all international commercial trade of Atlantic bluefin tuna, a senior official told *Gulf Times* yesterday.

A proposal to save the highly prized and "overharvested" "sushi-sashimi" species will be hotly debated at the ongoing CITES conference with the US and Japan leading the rival packs.

"Though we have fishermen who will be very affected with a ban, we believe we should not lose a species that is important to the whole world," deputy assistant secretary for fish and wildlife and parks, Jane Lyder stated.

The official, who is leading the US delegation to the 15th Conference of Parties of the CITES here in Doha, asserted that the bluefin tuna is eligible for Appendix I, the highest level of protection offered by the convention.

The most endangered species of plants and animals, including the tiger, mountain gorilla and all sea turtles, are on Appendix I.

"We have a good amount of support, we are still counting votes and looking



Jane Lyder: 'We believe we should not lose a species.'

at what the chances are," said Lyder who is engaged in hectic consultations with representatives from various countries.

In all, 175 nations are parties to CITES and their delegations are attending the conference which runs until March 25 at the Sheraton Doha.

"Our viewpoint is that someday the Japanese grandchildren and great-grandchildren will be eating bluefin tuna if we can ensure its long-term viability and make it a sustainable fishery," the US official observed.

Lyder expressed hope that an Appendix I listing under CITES would pave the way for a restoration of the stock

of the dwindling species.

Current population information for the species shows it meets the biological criteria for listing in Appendix I.

In the Atlantic Ocean, bluefin tuna are managed as two separate stocks - an Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean, and a Western.

The Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean stock of the Atlantic bluefin tuna has declined steeply during the last decade.

Based on estimated catches, scientists estimated the spawning stock biomass in 2007 to be 78,724 metric tons. This contrasts with the biomass peak of 1955, at 305,136 metric tons.

The decline over the 50-

year historical period ranging from 1955 to 2007 is estimated at 74.2%, the bulk of which (60.9%) took place during the last 10 years.

The Western Atlantic spawning stock has declined by 82.4% from 49,482 metric tons in 1970 to 8,693 metric tons in 2007.

During the past decade, the Western stock has stabilised at a very low population level. Many experts correlate this stabilisation to adoption of rigorous science-based catch quotas and other management measures together with effective monitoring and enforcement.

Such measures ensured strict compliance by the US fleet with the guidelines of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT).

"In November last year, there was a meeting of ICCAT, they took some unprecedented steps to protect bluefin tuna, but they did not go as far as we felt they needed to go to avoid a listing. We are still concerned about the quotas they set for 2010 and are still concerned about enforcement," Lyder added.

Tom Strickland, assistant secretary of the interior for fish and wildlife and parks, is expected to arrive in Qatar next week to lead the US delegation at CITES.

Oceana calls for fishing norms

By Nolmot Olayiwola
Staff Reporter

Oceana, an international organisation focusing solely on ocean conservation, yesterday reiterated its decision to follow through the Monaco proposal to enlist the Atlantic bluefin tuna on Appendix I of the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Floral (CITES).

"Oceana is strongly in support of the Monaco proposal to put the Atlantic bluefin tuna on CITES's Appendix I and we will be meeting with representatives of delegates personally and explaining with them the reasons for the proposal and our support that these species are not just in trouble, they are being threatened with extinction," Oceana senior campaign director David Allison told *Gulf Times*.

He said the proposal was a very important one for the conservation of the tuna specie as its population in the Atlantic Ocean has drastically declined by between 80-85%.

"What has happened with the bluefin tuna was a management failure at the regional level because the trade was not adequately managed so much so that the actual catch for 2007 was four times more than the quota that was set because of the black market and unreported fishing," he recalled.

Allison called for a regional body that would be

saddled with the responsibilities of managing the bluefin tuna fisheries for the international market.

"CITES is really the last best chance to have a sustainable population of bluefin tuna in the future and getting a CITES designation is very difficult as there are rigid rules that must be addressed in order to get species listed on CITES appendix," he said.

While acknowledging that Japan has succeeded in making the tuna one of the premier and most important fishfood in the world, he lamented that the demand has greatly outstripped supply.

and sharks in CITES Appendix II to protect them from over-exploitation.

"Oceana has been working on the bluefin tuna, sharks and sea corals preservation for more than 10 years. We want to reinforce and reassure so many countries that we believe have received some misinformation about the impact of designating these species in the CITES appendix," he said.

"Oceana initiated a campaign in the Mediterranean in the US to protect the deep sea corals from bottom trawlers that is scrapping and killing them. Now organisations



However, he said with a CITES regulation, the international trade in the fish will be prohibited but the domestic production will still be there for the concerned countries to use and sell tuna within their own countries.

Conversely, he said the Japanese did not want to allow an international body to manage the trade in a species that was fetching them so much money.

Apart from the bluefin tuna, Oceana has also come to the CITES conference to garner support for the inclusion of sea corals

are saying if there is going to be trade there must assurances that the corals are going to be taken care of over a long period of time," he maintained.

He added that the inclusion of sharks and corals in CITES document will prevent similar scenario being faced concerning the bluefin tuna.

"The sharks had no management at all and what we are asking for is a management as being done for fisheries. If you take a population down to a very low level, they may never be able to rebuild."

Activists contest Japanese claim

By Fran Gillespie
Doha

Japan claims it does not fish for Atlantic bluefin tuna, a proposed ban on the commercial trade of which is a key issue at the CITES conference, but environmental activists challenge it.

The ban is being contested by Japan, which imports approximately 75% of the world's annual bluefin catch for use in fresh sushi and sashimi.

Gulf Times spoke to Toshikazu Miyamoto, attending the conference as the representative of a coalition of Japanese fisheries.

"We promote sustainable fishing," he said, "and Japan does not fish for Atlantic bluefin tuna, we import from Mediterranean countries."

This claim was contested by a representative of Greenpeace International,

Oliver Knowles, who said: "We believe that there is a Japanese fishing fleet in the western Atlantic."

Birgith Sloth from Denmark also told *Gulf Times* that there is a Japanese fleet fishing for bluefin in European waters.

The Danish representative for CITES for 17 years, joining only two years after it was set up in 1975, and continuing until 1994, she now works as an independent consultant in biodiversity.

Knowles stated that the stocks of the northern bluefin tuna are decimated: latest figures indicate 80% of the species has been fished out.

"Even if fishing stopped tomorrow it'd be very hard for the species to recover to its original levels," he said while asserting that the species deserved a slot on Appendix 1, which would mean a complete ban on international trade in bluefin.

"We know that the Japanese are lobbying hard and are telling other countries that a displaced European fishing fleet would be a big threat to fish stocks in developing nations. This is nonsense, it's not the case at all that there would be a spare fishing fleet looking for something to fish! If the tuna fleet was stopped from fishing in the Mediterranean and Atlantic it would simply be decommissioned and downsized."

Sloth explained that the population of Atlantic bluefin tuna in the western Atlantic is now only 15-18% of what it was before commercial exploitation.

Nowadays the fishing is concentrated in the Eastern Atlantic and the Mediterranean, and that population has been reduced by 82% over the last 40 years. "The situation is critical," she added.

Experts mull norms to regulate trade on wild plants, products

The CITES member-states are set to discuss norms to regulate trade in wild plants and their by-products

Top experts attending the ongoing triennial meeting of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) will consider how best to regulate trade in wild plants and products made out of them. Musical instruments, cancer medicines, emulsions, polishes, gums, cosmetics and many other products contain wild plants protected by CITES, including the big-leaf mahogany.

The CITES member-states will also discuss the merits of removing the controls for lipsticks and other products containing candellilla wax.

Other issues on the agenda include the adoption of measures to protect agarwood (an aromatic resin extracted from certain tree species and widely used in the Gulf region), gaidacum and other plants valued for their wood, medicinal, ornamental or other qualities.

It will also address the potential impacts of CITES measures on the livelihoods of the rural poor, those on the frontlines of using and managing wildlife.

The world summit is discussing new measures to trace the legal origin of timber entering international markets and ensure the sustainable harvesting of mahogany and other precious timbers.

The neo-tropical populations of big-leaf mahogany are listed on CITES Appendix II, which requires that shipments of this timber be accompanied by a CITES export permit.

Admired for its high quality, beauty and durability, mahogany is made into luxury furniture, boats, expensive panelling, musical instruments and other products.

One cubic metre of big-leaf mahogany can fetch over \$1,000 on the international market and one tree alone can produce more than \$100,000 worth of high quality furniture.

The big-leaf mahogany thrives in dry tropical forests ranging from southern Mexico to the Amazon basin. It can grow to 70m, with an average height of 30-40m, and trunks can reach 3.5m in diameter.

The mahogany range has become fragmented, many populations have declined dramatically and the building of access roads for mahogany lumbering has encouraged broader deforestation.

Populations have declined by over 70% in Central America since 1950 and the species is already reported to be commercially extinct in El Salvador, Costa Rica and parts of South America.

The other two species of Latin American mahogany - the Cuban mahogany and Honduras mahogany - are also now commercially extinct. Today, the major natural stands of big-leaf mahogany are in Brazil, Bolivia and Peru.

Plantations have been established in Fiji and other countries, but the CITES listing does not apply to them. The major importers of this wood are the US - which alone accounts for some 80% of the entire market - the Dominican Republic, the UK and Spain.

The Appendix II listing enables importing nations to bet-

ter assist export nations with checking the legality of shipments and ensuring that the mahogany trade is fully transparent.

Products containing candellilla wax are traded in enormous quantities through a complex supply chain. Relaxing the current controls on finished products containing candellilla would allow enforcement officers to focus on the smuggling of illegal timber and other endangered plants from their natural habitats.

Candellilla is a shrubby plant whose natural range extends from the southwest of the US (New Mexico and Texas) to Mexico, having densely clustered stems that yield the multipurpose candellilla wax.

Its distinct properties make it an essential raw material in a wide array of cosmetics (especially lipsticks), inks, dyes, adhesives, coatings, emulsions, polishes, pharmaceutical products and gum base.

To date, Mexico seems to be the only country exporting candellilla wax. However, some of the wax is exported to the US, from where traders re-export it to Europe or the Far East, sometimes without the mandatory CITES re-export certificates.

Germany has recently contacted the US authorities with a request to raise awareness about this issue and to take enforcement action.

All these topics were discussed by a panel yesterday at the CITES conference. John Donaldson, Steve Johnson, Sherwafa Sultan al-Saleem, He-siquo Benitez, Margarita Clemente, and Milena Sosa Schmidt were the panelists.



A panel of experts discussing about timber, essences and other flora products in international trade.

Animal activists urge ban on farm breeding of tigers

Delegates at the ongoing 15th Conference of the Parties to CITES have been urged to reflect on the world's rapidly disappearing biodiversity and to make decisions based on the precautionary approach, which protects species for the future rather than for short-term profits.

"Parties to CITES have a heavy responsibility. With species disappearing from our planet daily - CITES member-states can and must make a difference," International Animal Welfare (IPAW) delegation head Azedine Downes said at the conference.

"In 2010, we must return to the true purpose of the convention and that is to protect species

of conservation concern from over-exploitation with strict adherence to the precautionary approach," Downes added.

IPAW is calling on countries to support a proposal submitted by Sweden on behalf of the EU member-states that would prohibit breeding of tigers for commercial trade of their parts and products.

The group observed that this year being the Chinese year of tiger, parties have the opportunity to help protect wild tigers for future generations.

"China showed great leadership in implementing a domestic ban on the trade in tiger bone in 1993 complementing the international ban on the trade in tigers, a CITES Appendix I spe-

cies," IPAW's Grace Ge Gabriel said.

Gabriel added that despite the ban, the illegal trade in tiger parts is thriving in anticipation of a re-opening of a legal market. "This illegal trade is driving the already depleted population of fewer than 3,500 wild tigers ever closer to extinction."

Recent investigations in China have found an increase in the illegal sale of products claiming to contain tiger parts from tiger farms, both online and in stores.

While there are fewer than 50 wild tigers left in China, tiger farms collectively have over 6,000 tigers and boast an annual reproduction rate of 800. Operated also as safari parks for tourists, these tiger farms

openly sell products such as tiger bone wine as health tonics. "Any reduction of demand for tiger parts in China that has resulted from the government's trade ban is undermined by this illegal trade. These tiger farming businessmen are cultivating a new demand for dead tigers, fuelling the illegal trade in wildlife and stimulating the poaching of wild tigers," Gabriel added.

However, IPAW has opposed the proposal submitted by Tanzania and Zambia seeking permission for a one-off sale of 112 tons of ivory, an action which IPAW claimed was contrary to the nine-year moratorium on further trade in ivory agreed upon by member-states in the last CITES conference in 2007.

CITES gives Peru six months to curb illegal mahogany logging

DOHA: Peru was given a six month ultimatum to address critical issues over the illegal mahogany trade at the CITES meeting. The CITES Standing Committee - the body that governs CITES between conference of the parties meetings - took the decision to take this step following Peru's

repeated failure to manage effectively illegal logging and trade in the valuable timber.

Six months from now, Peru must have enacted legislation to regulate the mahogany trade, implemented a computerised tracking system for mahogany and harmonised the different

harvest and export quota systems being used. Failure to meet these requirements will result in the Standing Committee voting on a suspension of mahogany exports from Peru. "Peru argues that it exports less than a fifth of the mahogany it did a decade ago, but that's not because

they've cut down on the trade through better management, it's because they've plundered their forests of the resource," said Bernardo Ortiz, Director of TRAFFIC South America.

"Years of mismanagement in Peru's mahogany trade are making an international ban an inevitable outcome. But the reality is it is too little too late given mahogany is effectively commercial extinct in Peru already." Earlier, Peru rejected a recommendation from the Committee that it set a voluntary moratorium on its mahogany exports.

CITES Parties will be discussing further timber, medicinal plants and agarwood at the meeting.

Agarwood - an aromatic resin found in certain tree species - is especially important in the Middle East, where CITES governments are meeting for the first time. Mahogany is popular to make furniture all over the world. "Trees account for the vast bulk of wild plants in trade, yet only three commercially important timber species are listed on CITES, of which bigleaf mahogany is the most valuable," said Colman O'Criodain, Wildlife trade analyst, WWF International.

Other timber proposals that CITES governments will consider at this conference include Brazilian rosewood and holy wood (also known as palo santo), both of which are also valued for their oils by the cosmetics industry.

THE PENINSULA



Panel on 'Timber, essences and other flora products in international trade' addressing the media on the second day of CITES meet yesterday. R O IBRAHIM

CITES to consider steps to protect precious timbers

DOHA: Top experts attending the ongoing meeting of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) will consider how best to regulate trade in wild plants and products such as musical instruments, cancer medicines, lipsticks, emulsions, polishes, gums, cosmetics, perfumes, and many other products containing wild plants protected by CITES.

The world summit will discuss new measures to ensure the sustainable harvesting of mahogany and other precious timbers. The neo-tropical populations of the bigleaf mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla*) are listed on CITES Appendix II, which requires that shipments of this timber be accompanied by a CITES export permit.

Admired for its high quality, beauty and durability, mahogany is made into luxury furniture,

boats, expensive paneling, musical instruments and other products. One cubic metre of big-leaf mahogany can fetch over \$1,000 on the international market and one tree alone can produce more than \$100,000, worth of high-quality furniture. The bigleaf mahogany thrives in dry tropical forests ranging from southern Mexico to the Amazon

Basin. It can grow to 70m, with an average height of 30-40m, and trunks can reach 3.5 m in diameter. The mahogany range has become fragmented, many populations have declined dramatically and the building of access roads for mahogany lumbering has encouraged broader deforestation.

Populations have declined by over 70 percent in Central America since 1950 and the species is already reported to be commercially extinct in El Salvador, Costa Rica and part of South America.

The other two species of Latin American mahogany (*Swietenia mahagoni*) and *Honduras mahogany* (*Swietenia humilis*) are also now commercially extinct. Today, the major natural stands of the bigleaf mahogany are in Brazil, Bolivia and Peru. Plantations have been established in Fiji and other countries, but the CITES listing does not apply to them.

The leading importers of this wood are the US-which alone accounts for some 80 percent of the entire market- the Dominican Republic, the United Kingdom and Spain.

The Appendix-II listing enables importing nations to better assist export nations with checking the legality of shipments and ensuring that the mahogany trade is fully transparent. The CITES member States will also discuss the merits of removing the controls for lipsticks and other products.

THE PENINSULA

Agarwood needs protection: Expert

Popularly known as Oudh, the aromatic wood faces depletion threat

BY HUDA NV

DOHA: GCC countries should take the right choice immediately to protect the depleting Agarwood (Oudh) resources. The Agarwood trade industry with its billion dollar value is in high need for proper management for its sustainable continuation, according to an expert.

"The CITES conference here is an important turning point for the Agarwood conservation and trade as some of the major consumers are in the region," said James Compton, Asia-Pacific Programme Coordinator, Traffic - a wildlife trade monitoring network.

"There should be a collaborative management between both the consumer countries and the producers. If consumer countries like GCC states, Taiwan, Japan and others make the right choice and commitment now, a long lasting change will happen. Else, if something is not done in five years the chance for a sustainable trade is very low," he told *The Peninsula*.

Agarwood or Oudh as it is popularly known here is an aromatic wood that is at the threat of depletion in the wild. In 1995, one species of Agarwood was listed in CITES Appendix II, which means that trade may continue, but a CITES export permit is required. Later in 2004, all the Agarwood species were also added to the list.

Although overall trade volumes of the wood may appear small in 'timber trade' terms, they are not small in monetary terms. Agarwood chips and segments may sell for several hundred to several thousand dollars per kilogramme. In Qatari market,



James Compton, Asia-Pacific Programme Coordinator of Traffic, a wildlife trade monitoring network, speaking to *The Peninsula*.

18 grammes of the wood can cost QR500. The wood is mainly used to make customary perfume and for other cultural purposes in the region. The demand for the wood is high due to its medicinal, religious, cultural, aromatic value through out the world, mainly within Asia.

"The trade history of the wood goes back to centuries, and hence there is a huge mismanagement as it doesn't look into having trade system which can ensure the conservation of the Agarwood reserves. This is a key CITES issue." Also the quality and quantity of the Agarwood from the wild is going down due to extreme exploitation. At the same time in the past ten years suddenly a boom in domestic harvesting. "People are looking to make money out of this kind of harvesting; hence that is also

another challenge for CITES to differentiate between wild and the domestic species," he said

Consumer countries including Qatar should work together with the producers to ensure Agarwood industry which encourages legal and sustainable trade and curb black market.

The flora and fauna now are heavily influenced by human intervention so one cannot just wash hands leaving everything to the nature. "There should be a system in which the consumer country supports the producers. Commitment is needed from consumer country to protect the resources, rather than leaving responsibility. If the culture of use is to be made sustainable, then the consumers - both individuals and authorities - should take charge of the resource management."

THE PENINSULA



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PRESS RELEASE

CITES to discuss initiatives to dismantle criminal networks involved in tiger and rhino poaching

Doha, 15 March 2010 – Delegates and enforcement experts attending the CITES summit in Qatar will discuss this week the perilous state of tigers in the wild and the nature of poaching and illegal trade in tigers. The CITES Secretariat, in conjunction with INTERPOL, is calling for countries to submit information about crime against tigers, so that it can be analysed and effective anti-poaching strategies developed.

In the early 1900s, tigers were found throughout Asia and numbered over 100,000. Current estimates indicate that less than 3,200 of these remain in the wild. Tigers are today primarily poached for their skins but almost every part of a tiger's body can be used for decorative or traditional medicinal purposes. Most tigers are now restricted to small pockets of habitat, with several geographical populations literally teetering on the brink of extinction.

The CITES community will learn of progress being made by the Global Tiger Initiative, a partnership of governments, international agencies and non-governmental organizations, who are working collaboratively to save the tiger. The Initiative's next major event will be in Vladivostok, Russian Federation, in September 2010, when Prime Minister Putin will host a meeting of heads-of-state to commit political will for tiger conservation.

It is almost four decades since the world realized that tiger numbers were falling alarmingly. Between the 1970s and 2010, governments and the conservation community spent tens of millions of dollars trying to save this magnificent animal. Millions of dollars, euros, pounds, rupees and yuans continue to be spent.

"If we use tiger numbers as a performance indicator", says CITES Secretary-General Willem Wijnstekers, "then we must admit that we have failed miserably and that we are continuing to fail. How have we let this happen? Although the tiger has been prized throughout history, and is a symbol of incredible importance in many cultures and religions, it is now literally on the verge of extinction. 2010 is the Chinese Year of the Tiger and the International Year of Biodiversity; this must be the year in which we reverse the trend. If we don't, it will be to our everlasting shame."

Aside from its significance as a 'flagship' species, the tiger is also a marvellous indicator of the health of our forests. Falling tiger numbers also ring an alarm bell in relation to loss of habitat, human encroachment into important areas of biodiversity and wilderness, conflict between tigers, humans and livestock and wildlife crime.

Protected from international commercial trade through its listing in Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), tigers still suffer significantly from illegal trade. They are poached for their skins and body parts, which are used for decorative and traditional medicine purposes.

Delegates at CITES CoP15 will also consider the escalation of rhino poaching and the approaches to fight criminal networks involved in the increasing illegal trade in their horns in parts of Africa and Asia. Whereas the tiger is suffering from threats such as loss of habitat and tiger numbers have been steadily declining, this is not the case for rhinoceroses. The early- and mid-1990s saw rhino numbers grow encouragingly in many of its range States. There were dramatic recoveries and poaching of this animal became fairly infrequent.

However, in the mid-2000s, rumours emerged that rhinoceros horn could stave off cancer or halt its spread in people suffering from the disease. Rhinos in countries such as India, South Africa, Nepal and Zimbabwe now appear to be killed by organized crime groups that control the smuggling of rhino horns to the far east of Asia, where they are sold on the black market for thousands and thousands of dollars.

South Africa and Zimbabwe have seen dramatic increases in rhino poaching in the past 2-3 years, where over 300 animals are estimated to have been illegally killed. The 'shoot to kill' policy adopted by some governments in Africa does not seem to be deterring poachers and one national park store was even robbed at gunpoint, so that horns removed by park staff from rhinos that had died naturally could be stolen.

CITES calls upon its partners, such as INTERPOL, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and the World Customs Organization to join it in this war against organized crime that seeks to rape the world's natural resources.

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Regulate trade of wild plants: Experts

RAJESH MISHRA
DOHA

EXPERTS attending the triennial general assembly of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES) will hold discussions on how to regulate trade in wild plants and products, such as musical instruments, medicines for cancer, lipsticks, emulsions, polishes, gums, cosmetics and perfumes, which contain wild plants protected by CITES.

Addressing a press conference on the sidelines of the 15th Conference for the Parties on Sunday, the experts said that the world summit would also mull over new measures to trace the legal origin of timber entering international markets and ensure sustainable harvesting of mahogany and other precious wood.

Speaking on the occasion, Milena Sosa Schmidt from CITES Secretariat said, "The neo-tropical populations of the big leaf mahogany (*swietenia macrophylla*) are listed on CITES appendix 2, which requires that shipments of this timber be accompanied by a CITES export permit. Admired for its high quality, beauty and durabil-

ity, mahogany is used to make luxury furniture, boats, expensive panelling, musical instruments and some other valuable products."

One cubic metre of big leaf mahogany can fetch over \$1,000 in the international market and one tree alone can produce more than \$100,000 worth of high-quality furniture. The big leaf mahogany thrives in dry tropical forests rang-

Protect timber
Eco conference

The major natural forests of big leaf mahogany today are in Brazil, Peru and Bolivia. The leading importers of this wood are the US, UK and Spain.

ing from southern Mexico to the Amazon basin. It can grow to 70 metres with an average height of 30-40 metres and trunks that can reach 3.5 metres in diameter.

Steve Johnson from International Tropical Timber Organisation (ITTO) said, "The big leaf

mahogany range has become fragmented as many populations have declined dramatically and the building of access roads for mahogany lumbering has encouraged deforestation. The population of this precious species has declined by over 70 percent in Central America and the species is already reported to be commercially extinct in El Salvador, Costa Rica and parts of South America. Besides, the other two species of Latin American mahogany and Honduras mahogany are also extinct."

The major natural forests of big leaf mahogany today are in Brazil, Peru and Bolivia. The leading importers of this wood are the United States, which alone accounts for some 80 percent of the entire market, the Dominican Republic, the United Kingdom and Spain. The Appendix 2 list enables importing nations to better assist export nations in checking the legality of shipments and ensuring that mahogany trade is fully transparent.

CITES representative from Mexico Hesiquio Benitez said that the CITES member states would also discuss the merits of

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Regulate trade of wild plants: Experts



Experts at the CITES meet, in Doha, on Sunday.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

removing controls on lipsticks and other products containing candelilla (*euphorbia antisiphilitica*). According to him, these products are traded in enormous quantities through a complex supply chain, and relaxing the controls would allow enforcement officers to keep a close vigil on smuggling.

The Chair of the Plants Committee Margarita Clemente said that protec-

tion of mahogany, cedar, ramin, candelilla, agarwood, guaiacum and other plants topped the agenda of the conference.

Also present at the press conference were the Chair of the Committee John Donaldson and Kuwaiti representative of CITES Shereefa Sultan al Salem.

Prior to the press conference, the speakers discussed recommendation made by CITES Secretariat, which included amendment in certain rules in procedure.

Remarks were made both for and against the recommendations for amendments in the rules of procedure by representatives from the US, China, Mali, Venezuela, Japan, Britain and Egypt.

The speakers also recommended enhanced cooperation between Food and Agriculture Organisation and CITES and discussed protecting marine life, the vulnerable species in high as well as deep seas, sharks, elephants, etc.

CITES proposes 16% hike in budget

'Lack of proper financial mechanism and low annual budget major hurdles in CITES plans'

RAJESH MISHRA
DOHA

A proposal to increase the budget of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) by 16 percent was made at the 15th Conference for the Parties, on Monday, the third day of the world meet.

Addressing a press conference on the sidelines of the CITES summit being held at Sheraton Hotel, CITES Representative Juan Carlos Vasquez remarked, "The proposal to increase the CITES budget by 16 percent from the next biennial budget (from 2012), was made at one of the sessions dedicated to the management of budgets. The discussions are on as participants are divided over the issue."

Hinting at the consensus on the

increase in budget soon, Vasquez said that lack of a proper financial mechanism and a low annual budget of \$5 million were major hurdles in CITES carrying out its conservation programmes, and prevent illegal trading of endangered species of flora and fauna across the world.

Thanking Qatar for hosting the event on such a large scale, facilitating involvement of many smaller countries from the developing world, he said, "Though the European Union is the biggest contributor to CITES in terms of funds, supplying almost 80 percent of financial resources, CITES is eyeing substantial donation from some rapidly growing economies, such as China, India and South Africa."

Speaking on the occasion, Marceil Yeater from CITES Secretariat remarked that the strategic vision of CITES and several other complex issues were also discussed at the summit.

These issues related to reviewing national policy on conservation of wildlife and addressing conflicts between CITES policies and national reservation policies for certain animals.

Besides, she added, "The delegates also discussed in detail as to how to address the problems posed by countries, which indulged in ivory trade through middlemen. In most such cases, the middlemen are the real gainers while the concerned country gets a raw deal."

The representative from Qatar's Ministry of Environment Ghanim Abdullah said that detailed discussion on developing synergies among nations and across civil societies and NGOs was held on the third day of the world flora and fauna summit.

"Besides, the delegates also discussed the nomenclature of ranching, which apparently means the process of rearing eggs and juveniles procured from wild in a controlled environment", he added.

Meanwhile, at an earlier press conference, the delegates announced that a detailed discussion on initiatives that could be taken to dismantle criminal networks involved in tiger and rhino poaching would be held later this week.

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Protection for polar bears sought

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Senior Research Scientist at the All-Russian Institute for Nature Conservation.

Polar bears clearly meet CITES criteria for an Appendix I listing. Hundreds of polar bears are killed for commercial trade and they are suffering a marked decline in their populations in the wild. Fewer than 25,000 are left. Of the 19 polar bear populations around the world 15 of are either declining or of unknown status.

"Polar bears are facing an unprecedented threat from the cumulative effects of climate change, commercial trade, poaching and pollution. In light of this the only responsible action is to reduce any or all these threats wherever possible," said Dr Masha Vorontsova, Director International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), Russia.

"We still have a chance to save the polar bear. Listing on Appendix I is the important first step," Vorontsova added.

TRADE IN BLUEFIN TUNA



Chefs display a bluefin tuna for customers at a sushi restaurant, in Yokohama city, recently. (AFP)

CITES meet blasts Japanese 'lobbying'

AFP
DOHA

JAPAN was accused of scare tactics at world talks on wildlife protection on Monday as it campaigned against a proposal to curb trade in bluefin tuna, the succulent sushi delicacy.

The ongoing 175-nation Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) meeting is gearing up to vote on banning commerce in bluefin from the Mediterranean and eastern Atlantic, a motion that requires a two-thirds majority to pass.

"It is very much up in the air. There's a lot of jockeying," said Patrick Van Klaveren of Monaco, which is leading the charge.

"Japan's lobbying is formidable. Three or four people from the Japanese delegation are constantly crisscrossing the convention, arranging meetings," he said. "They are targeting developing countries, scaring them about what could

happen to their (own tuna) stocks, along the lines of 'your turn will come'," he said.

Monaco's proposal to list Atlantic bluefin on CITES' Appendix I, backed by the United States and the European Union, would not affect bluefin caught in the Pacific.

Even so, "the Pacific island nations and Asia are also quite sensitive" to Japan's arguments, Van Klaveren added.

Tokyo vowed last week to fight the moratorium, saying it would ignore any such measure voted into place by taking a "reservation".

"Japan will claim its unchanging position that [the solution is] resource control," not a ban, government spokesman Hirofumi Hirano said.

Tunisia, with major bluefin fisheries in the Mediterranean, is also working the halls in Doha, hoping to muster the support of Arab nations against the proposal, Van Klaveren said.

Protection for polar bears sought

RAJESH MISHRA
DOHA

TWO noted conservation specialists have sought greater protection for the polar bears whose numbers have dwindled to less than 25,000.

The pristine white animals are facing multiple threats due to the cumulative effects of climate

change, commercial trade, poaching and pollution.

Dr Nikita Ovsyanikov and Dr Andrei Boltunov, both from Russia, came out on Sunday in support of the US proposal to list polar bears on Appendix I of Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).

"There is unanimity among polar

bear specialists that Arctic Sea ice has been diminishing over the last few decades leading to polar bears losing their prime habitats," said the two scientists, both members of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Polar Bear Specialist Group.

"In Russia illegal shooting of polar bears remains at a high level. In fact, illegal marketing of polar bear pelts has increased," they said.

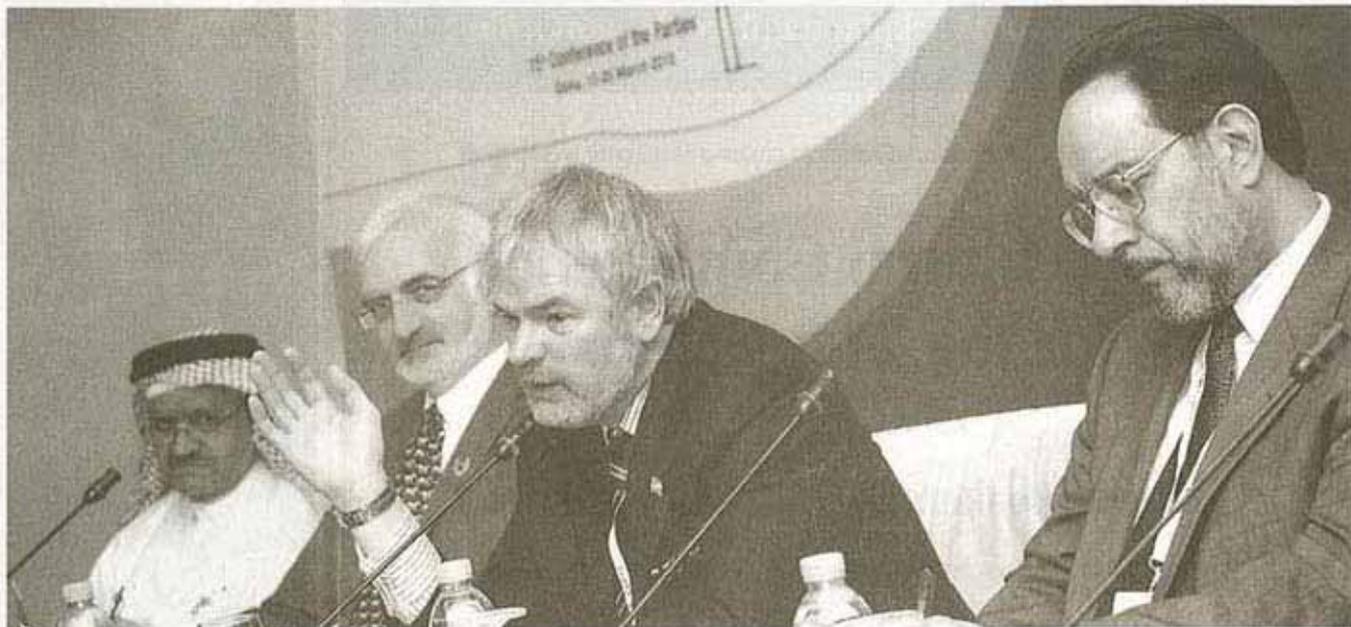
Moreover, the import of polar bear pelts from Canada is camouflaging sales of illegally taken pelts from Russia. This is stimulating poaching of polar bears in Russia, they told the 15th Conference of the Parties at Sheraton Hotel.

"As Russian polar bear experts, we support the proposal to list polar bears on CITES Appendix I," they said. Dr Nikita Ovsyanikov is Deputy Director for Science at Wrangel Island State Nature Reserve and Dr Andrei Boltunov is



Two polar bear cubs play at a zoo in St. Petersburg, Russia, on Friday. (AFP)

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SEE ALSO PAGES 16, 17 & 24 ►



Ghanem Abdulla Mohammed, Director of Wildlife Conservation at the Ministry of Environment-Qatar, Richard Charette, Wildlife Enforcement Directorate, Environment Canada, John Sellar, Chief Enforcement Assistant, CITES Secretariat and Benito Perez, Chief, Office of Law Enforcement, US Fish and Wildlife Service during the press conference at Sheraton Hotel yesterday.

SHAIVAL DALAL

Qatar to curb e-trade of flora and fauna

DOHA: Qatar is set to enhance its monitoring of online trade of flora and fauna, at the wake of increased illegal world wide e-trade. Along with revolutionizing communications and commercial and social networking, internet also facilitates the illegal trade of in wildlife, leaving devastating impact on eco-balance.

The delegates at the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) meeting are considering to take a more proactive approach to regulating the online trade in endangered species. This may include the creation of an international database of the trade, scientific research to gauge the correlation between wildlife loss and online trade, and closer collaboration with Interpol.

"In Qatar, we have already to link all the exit points to monitor any movement of species under the CITES Appendix," said Ghanem Abdulla Mohammed, Director of Wildlife Conservation, Ministry of Environment. "Qatari

law related to wildlife complies with the CITES requirement and we hope to have more amendments to enhance e-trade monitoring here. For this, we will also link all the sea ports and land border- Abu Samra."

Internet and new Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have huge impact on the conservation of wild fauna and flora, and countries have been turning their attention to their growing importance.

"It is sometimes tempting to see the Internet as the root of all evil", said CITES, Chief Enforcement Officer John Sellar. "Whilst it is undoubtedly being exploited by the criminal fraternity, and CITES has to find ways of responding to that, its considerable advantages must not be ignored, especially since they too can be exploited, but by the law enforcement community."

In a 2009 report released by an NGO, Campaign Against the Cruelty to Animals (CATCA), shows that 2252 sale offers of specimens of CITES animals

species were found over 19 internet services in Ecuador alone. The estimated value of the specimens offered on these advertisements was \$ 6,850,000.

Also another 2009 report by CEEweb, also an NGO, reveals that over 195,000 specimens offered for sale were discovered, during its annual monitoring in six Central and Eastern European countries. The report says that E-commerce of CITES Specimens has been booming phenomenon in the recent years and the monitoring covering Central and Eastern European countries shows that the number of items as well as the range of species offered for sale is increasing at a rate of approximately 57 percent annually.

"So far, in Qatar, we never had any incident of animal trade on internet. Still, we will introduce amendments in the existing wildlife protection law to enhance the e-trade monitoring," Mohammed said.

However, at the CITES meet, using the Internet to combat illegal trade in CITES-listed species is an important topic. Countries

developing enforcement measures to deal with illegal Internet-based activities are looking at US Fish and Wildlife's Internet technologies for investigations.

The Internet has important potential in connecting legitimate traders of wildlife to consumers. The biggest challenge for CITES is to find ways to help those consumers, who are becoming more and more used to ordering and paying on-line, to determine whether what they are being offered is legal and traded sustainably.

Some countries are already using new technologies to optimize trade procedures, facilitate legal trade and harmonize. CITES permit and certificate issuance procedures with new international norms and standards. The advent of CITES electronic permitting and the single window environment illustrate these trends. The Enforcement Branch of Environment Canada has also offered to begin development of an internet toolkit to monitor e-trade.

THE PENINSULA



Secretariat says aye to Zambia, nay to Tanzania

The CITES Secretariat has recommended that Tanzania's elephant and ivory proposal be rejected, citing concerns about poaching and enforcement.

Tanzania was pushing to weaken international protection for African elephants and promote trade in nearly 90 tonnes of ivory.

However, in an evaluation of the Panel of Experts reports, the Secretariat recommended supporting the Zambian ivory trade proposal, and the downlisting of elephants to Appendix II.

These developments took place at the 15th Conference of the Parties (CoP) of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) which is taking place until March 25 at the Sheraton Doha.

Tanzania and Zambia have submitted proposals seeking permission for a one-off sale of a total of 112 tonnes of ivory, hoping to open the door for future ivory trade by "down-listing" their elephant populations, which would mean that these elephants will lose the highest levels of protection.

The Appendix II of CITES includes species that are not threatened with extinction but may become threatened by international trade without strict monitoring and control.

The CITES Secretariat expressed concern about enforcement and compliance in Tanzania while rejecting the proposal.

"Anti-poaching efforts in some parts of the country (Tanzania) seem inadequate, the ivory stocks cannot



be fully verified, and controls of illegal trade in raw ivory originating from or transiting through Tanzania appear to be unsatisfactory," the Secretariat said.

"Parties need to apply their own rigorous evaluations of the Panel of Experts reports as neither proposal meets the biological criteria for downlisting," International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) Southern Africa director Jason Bell-Leask said.

Both populations have suffered significant declines over the past three decades and there is evidence to suggest that these populations are still recovering from intensive poaching in the 1980's, he observed.

At the last CITES conference in 2007, a nine-year moratorium on any further trade in ivory was agreed upon.

Shelley Waterland, programmes manager of the Born Free Foundation and chairwoman of the Species Survival Network's Elephant Working Group, stated yesterday: "Institutional corruption, the loss of more than 30,000 elephants in just three years, inadequate security measures, and the impact that ivory trade would have on the security of elephants across the continent all justify rejection of the Tanzania proposal."



This September 3, 2009 file picture shows Kenya Wildlife Service director Julius Kipng'etich (centre) lifting an elephant tusk from a wooden case at the Nairobi National Park. A booming black market in African ivory linked to Asian crime syndicates may scupper efforts by Zambia and Tanzania to hold a one-off sale of tusks, experts and delegates at the CITES meeting say in Doha.

The African Elephant Coalition of 23 African elephant range countries oppose the proposals for the downlistings and one-off sales, insisting that the nine-year resting period provides all African range states the opportunity to co-operatively secure elephants in their habitat.

Wildlife law enforcers honoured

Gulf Times

The Species Survival Network (SSN), a global coalition of 82 organisations from more than 30 countries, congratulated the recipients of the prestigious 2010 Clark Bavin Wildlife Law Enforcement Awards last evening at the CITES conference.

Hundreds of delegates attending the 15th Conference of the Parties to CITES gathered in the foyer of the Sheraton Doha Convention Hotel to honour the heroic efforts of wildlife law enforcement officers who often put their lives in jeopardy to protect wildlife and uphold the rule of law. Honourees included representatives from Israel, India, the US, Kenya, China, the UK, Denmark, and the Philippines. The awards have been named in memory of the pioneering former head of law enforcement for the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

SSN president Will Travers said, "Wildlife law enforcement is the front-line. It's a dangerous, sometimes deadly place. Sadly all too often the sacrifice made by law enforcement officers goes unrecognised -- but not tonight."

DJ Schubert, wildlife biologist with the US-based Animal Welfare Institute and sponsor of the Bavin Awards, added, "It is a privilege to work in wildlife conservation and to be an advocate for wild animals in desperate need across the globe -- and it is an honour to share this evening with the dedicated wildlife protectors who turn words into deeds and stop at nothing to end wildlife crime."

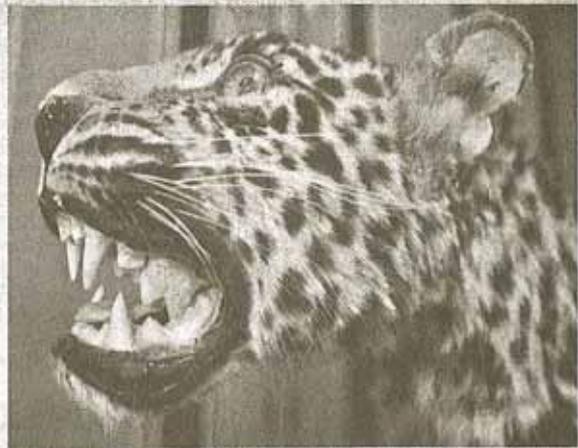
Among those receiving awards was Birgith Sloth, CITES representative for Denmark from 1977 to 1994 and now working as a nature conservation and management specialist.

She was nominated by the Croatian government for her outstanding work from 2003 to 2007 in providing intensive training to Croatian nature protection officials, thereby significantly enhancing the capacity of Croatia to implement CITES.

Sloth has dedicated her career to ensuring that CITES works. She has provided capacity building training sessions to support the proper implementation

of CITES to thousands of administrators, wardens, police officers, and customs agents in over 24 countries, along with providing other services crucial for the proper application and enforcement of CITES.

Her work in Africa, Asia, Eastern and Central Europe on biodiversity projects has included development of protected areas and nature-based tourism. A biologist and a keen birdwatcher, she was only told of the award yesterday morning. "I'm very excited, it's an immense honour," she told *Gulf Times*.



Picture shows a stuffed *Panthera Pardus* at the convention centre during the triennial meeting of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) in Doha yesterday.



Sellar (centre) speaks yesterday as Mohamed, Perez, Charette, and CITES official Juan Carlos Vasquez look on.

Call for Internet controls to check illegal trade

By Peter Townson
Staff Reporter

The emerging importance of information and communication technology (ICT) and its impact on the trade of endangered species was the subject of a discussion yesterday at the CITES conference, in which officials claimed that more needs to be done to ensure that the positive aspects of new technology outweigh the negatives.

Chief enforcement officer for CITES, John Sellar said: "It is sometimes tempting to see the Internet as the root of all evil. Whilst it is undoubtedly being ex-

ploited by the criminal fraternity, CITES has to find ways of responding to it. Its considerable advantages must not be ignored, especially since they too can be exploited, but by the law enforcement community."

Chief of the Office of Law Enforcement for US Fish and Wildlife Services, Benito Perez described how the US has used the Internet to pursue cases of illegal trade, explaining that the Internet has enabled law enforcement officials to pose as buyers and subsequently identify and apprehend the illegal traders.

Richard Charette from the Wildlife Enforcement Directorate of Canada explained the importance of

the Internet as a positive tool, noting that CITES are not intending to ban Internet trade but only to control it, and to ensure transactions are made according to the correct legal requirements.

Qatar's Ministry of Environment's wildlife conservation director Ghanim Abdullah Mohamed claimed that Qatar is developing its capacity to use Internet services and may make legal amendments to cover the area of illegal Internet trade.

Sellar argued that there are two aspects of Internet usage which need to be realised, the first of which is the lack of resources that wildlife protection agen-

cies possess, and the fact that many complaints and cases that are referred to them are simply not worth investigating.

"We need to deploy the small amount of resources we have in the most efficient manner," he argued.

"I think it is also important to inform the public about the large number of scam e-mails which are being sent, which claim that they are offering endangered species of animals and plants for sale," explained Sellar, adding that these are simply plots to gain money illegally, despite the photographs and documents that may be attached, which are counterfeit reproductions.



Lobbying heats up ahead of vote on bluefin tuna trade

By Bonnie James
Deputy News Editor

Suspense is mounting at the ongoing CITES conference as the proposal to ban all international commercial trade of Atlantic bluefin tuna is expected to be taken up tomorrow.

The US, lobbying in favour of the proposal, and Japan, its vehement op-



ponent, are leading the rival fronts and trying to garner as many votes possible from among the 175 member countries of CITES.

"We expect the bluefin tuna proposal to come up on Thursday," Committee I chair John Donaldson's announcement on Sunday was followed by anxious queries from Japanese journalists.

They were eager to know whether

the proposal would be taken up during the morning or afternoon session -- such was the anticipation.

"The discussions should move to a working group that will very likely meet during this weekend," an official of the US-based Pew Environment Group said yesterday.

"We are hearing that a committee to vote on the bluefin tuna Appendix I listing will happen by the middle of next week," he explained.

The CITES includes three appendices, which afford different levels of protection. Appendix I is the highest level and includes the most endangered species of plants and animals, including the tiger, mountain gorilla and all sea turtles. The PEW official revealed that some nations are thinking about proposing an Appendix II listing for the bluefin tuna. Appendix II includes species that are not threatened with extinction but may become threatened by international trade without strict monitoring and control.

"Please note that this would not change the status quo, and is just an effort to block what is really needed -- Appendix I and a trade suspension," he stated.

The CITES treaty is written in a manner that if the trade of a species listed in Appendix II is governed by an-

other treaty that predates CITES, then all trade management in that species defers to the initial treaty, not CITES.

"In the case of Atlantic bluefin, whose trade is governed by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), an Appendix II listing keeps the species management in the hands of the treaty organisation that has failed to set sustainable catch levels and has no enforcement authority.

"In November last year, ICCAT took some unprecedented steps to protect bluefin tuna, but they did not go as far as we felt they needed to go," a senior US official told Gulf Times on Sunday.

Deputy assistant secretary for fish, wildlife and parks, Jane Lyder and leader of the US delegation this week to the CITES conference, explained "We are still concerned about the quotas they set for 2010 and are still concerned about enforcement."

"The US 'intends to try very hard' to make the ban a reality," she said while stressing that the bluefin tuna is eligible for Appendix I.

"The Atlantic bluefin tuna, the staple of high-end sushi, has declined more than 80% since 1970," Pew Environment Group's deputy director Dr Susan Lieberman had said ahead of the CITES conference.

Conference to discuss approach to fight escalation in rhino poaching

The escalation of rhino poaching and the approaches to fight criminal networks involved in the increasing illegal trade in their horns in parts of Africa and Asia, will be considered at the ongoing CITES conference. "Rhinos are on the very same route

to extinction though they are not moving as quickly as the tiger," CITES enforcement chief John Sellar said yesterday.

The early and mid-1990s saw rhino numbers grow encouragingly in many of its range states.

There were dramatic recoveries and poaching became fairly infrequent. However, in the mid-2000s, rumours emerged that rhinoceros horn could stave off cancer or halt its spread in people suffering from the disease leading to the animal being poached.

Online operations raise threat to endangered species

DOHA: The Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) will today discuss cutting-edge technologies being used by organised criminals in the illegal trade of endangered species.

The parties to the Convention will discuss how to take a more proactive approach to regulating the online trade in endangered species. This will include the creation of an international database of the trade, scientific research to gauge the correlation between wildlife loss and online trade, and closer collaboration with Interpol, the international law enforcement agency.

The major focus of the



E-commerce poses a serious threat to the Iranian salamander

discussion would be how the organised criminals abuse the possibility of e-trade – a major threat to endangered wildlife that authorities are struggling

to address. The experts will hear about e-permitting systems to allow more efficient regulation of international trade in wildlife products.

The international convention yesterday pointed out how a little-known Iranian salamander is poised to become the first example of a species requiring international government protection because of e-commerce. The Kaiser's spotted newt, found only in Iran, is considered Critically Endangered and is believed to number fewer than 1,000 mature wild individuals. The amphibian is being proposed for an Appendix I listing during the ongoing Doha meet.

THE PENINSULA

CITES puts lipstick on at Doha conference

BY SATISH KANADY

DOHA: It's not all about protecting marine species and wild animals. The second day of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) offered a 'feel good' factor to the women as the panel on 'Timber, essences and other flora producers in international trade' announced its decision to discuss the possibilities of lifting controls for lipsticks containing candelilla, a wax derived from an endangered plant *Euphorbia antisiphilitica*.

"It's welcome news for women. This meet would discuss the merits of lifting the control for lipsticks and other products containing candelilla. Relaxing the current controls on finished products containing candelilla would allow enforcement officials to focus on the smuggling of endangered plants from their natural habitats", a panelist said.

Asked whether the decision was due to the pressures from the trade forces, a top CITES official said: "It's an indispensable

component of every woman's make-up. Huge money is involved in its trade. We also have to listen to the trade forces". The decision also shows that CITES can also be flexible, he said.

Euphorbia antisiphilitica is a succulent species of *Euphorbia* and was listed in CITES Appendix II since 1975. The US and Mexico are the species' only range states. Wild populations of the species are the only source of candelilla wax, a major ingredient of lipsticks.

The wax derived from *Euphorbia antisiphilitica* is used in many finished cosmetic products. A tube of lipstick with this ingredient contains about 0.3mg of candelilla wax, said an expert.

The panel on timber and wild plants would also discuss how best to regulate trade in wild plants and products such as musical instruments, cancer medicines, emulsions, polishes, gums, cosmetics, perfumes, and many other products containing wild plants protected by CITES.

THE PENINSULA

CITES concerned over online sale of ivory

Appendix I is the highest level of protection under the CITES appendices system and bans all commercial international trade in the species.

In 2006, an investigation by TRAFFIC, the wildlife trade monitoring network, into the sale of Kaiser's spotted newts revealed 10 websites claiming to stock the species.

One Ukrainian company claimed to have sold more than 200 wild-caught specimens in a single year. "The Kaiser's spotted newt, for example, is expensive and most people are not willing to pay USD300 for a salamander. But through the power of the internet, tapping into global market, you can find buyers", said Ernie Cooper, of TRAFFIC Canada. CITES is also concerned over other items sold and bought online; including elephant ivory, and precious corals, including red and pink coral, which currently are overharvested to make jewellery and collectables. Red and pink corals have been proposed for listing in Appendix II of CITES, a measure that would regulate their international trade.

THE PENINSULA



(From left) Ghanem Abdulla Mohamed, Director of Wildlife Conservation with Ministry of Environment Qatar, John Sellar, Chief of Enforcement Assistance with CITES Secretariat and Keshav Verma, World Bank Programme Director for Global Tiger Initiative, during the press conference at Sheraton Hotel yesterday.

CITES ready to protect tigers

DOHA: Delegates and enforcement experts attending the CITES summit is discussing the perilous state of tigers in the wild and the nature of poaching and illegal trade of the big cats.

The CITES Secretariat and the INTERPOL yesterday made a joint call for countries to submit information about crime against tigers, so that an effective anti-poaching strategies can be developed.

Addressing the media, John Sellar, Chief, Enforcement Assistance, CITES Secretariat said the tiger population is reducing at an alarming rate.

The estimated tiger population throughout Asia was 100,000 during the early century. Current estimates indicate that less than 3,200 of these remain in the wild.

Tigers are today primarily poached for their skins but almost every part of a tiger's body can be used for decorative or traditional medicinal purposes.

Most tigers are now restricted to small pockets of habitat, with several geographical populations literally teetering on the brink of extinction.

The CITES community will learn progress being made by the Global Tiger Initiative, a partnership of governments, international agencies and non-governmental organizations, who are working collaboratively to save the tiger. The initiatives next major event will be in Russia.

It is almost four decades since the world realized that tiger numbers were falling alarmingly. Between the 1970s and 2010, governments and the conservation community spent tens of millions of dollars trying to save tiger, he said.

The Doha meet will also discuss the escalation of rhino poaching and the approaches to fight criminal networks involved in the increasing illegal trade in their horns in parts of Africa and Asia.

Unlike tigers, rhino numbers grew encouragingly in many of its range states in 1990s. Due to public awareness, there

were dramatic recoveries and poaching of this animal became fairly infrequent.

However, the mid 2000s, rumours emerged that rhinoceros horn could stave off cancer or halt its spread in people suffering from the disease.

Rhinos in countries such as India, South Africa, Nepal and Zimbabwe now appear to be killed by organised crime groups that control the smuggling of rhino horns to the far east of Asia, where they are sold on the black market for thousands and thousands of dollars, said Keshav Verma, World Programme Director for the Global Tiger Initiative.

The 14 tiger range countries are

home to half of the world human population, with less and less space left for tigers. Compared with early 20th century, the total area of tiger habitat has decreased by 96 percent and the number of tigers found in the wild has dropped by 97 per cent.

South Africa and Zimbabwe have seen dramatic increases in rhino poaching in the past 2-3 years, where over 300 animals are estimated to have been illegally killed.

THE PENINSULA

CITES seeks Interpol, UNODC help to curb tiger poaching



Visitors at a CITES stall, in Doha, on Monday. (HANSON K. JOSEPH)

TRIBUNE NEWS NETWORK DOHA

PARTICIPANTS of the triennial general assembly of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES) have appealed to the Interpol, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the World Customs Organisation to join hands with CITES in its war against rhino, tiger poaching.

According to a press release circulated at the 15th Conference for the Parties, South Africa and Zimbabwe have witnessed a dramatic increase in rhino poaching during the last three years, where over 300 animals were estimated to be killed during

this period, for their horns. The sharp increase in poaching of rhinos by organised criminal gangs was caused by a rumour that spread in mid 2000s, which said that the horns of rhinos if consumed in a cer-

The current status of tigers would be known at the meeting in Vladivostok in the Russian Federation in September.

tain manner could both prevent and cure cancer, the release pointed out.

"The 'shoot to kill' policy adopted by some governments in Africa does not seem to be deterring poachers and one national park store was even robbed at gunpoint so that

horns removed by park staff from rhinos that had died naturally could be stolen", it said.

Criminal gangs engaged in poaching of rhinos also operate in India and Nepal, from where they smuggle the horns to Far East Asia, where they are sold for thousands of dollars on the black market.

The CITES Secretariat in conjunction with Interpol has also urged countries to submit information about crime against tigers so that it could be analysed and effective anti-poaching strategies developed.

CITES Secretary-General Willem Wijnstekers said, "If we use numbers of tigers as a performance indicator, then we must admit that we

have failed miserably and that we are continuing to fail. Why have we allowed this to happen?"

A flagship species and a marvelous indicator of the health of forests, tigers are protected from international commercial trade through its listing in Appendix 1 of CITES. However, they are still poached for their skins and body parts, which have both decorative and medicinal values.

The current status of tigers would be known at the meeting of the Global Tiger Initiative in Vladivostok in the Russian Federation in September this year to be hosted by Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin in which heads of states will commit political will for tiger conservation. (RM)

Tiger decline 'sign of failure'

By Richard Black

Environment correspondent, BBC News website

Governments need to crack down on illegal tiger trading if the big cats are to be saved, the UN has warned.

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) meeting in Doha, Qatar heard that tiger numbers are continuing to fall.

Organised crime rings are playing an increasing part in illegal trading of tiger parts, CITES says, as they are with bears, rhinos and elephants.

Interpol is working with CITES to track and curb the international trade.

Last year, World Bank chief Robert Zoellick said the global black market in wildlife products was worth about \$10bn per year, making wildlife the third most valuable illicit commodity after drugs and weapons.

Global medicine

Despite attempts to protect tigers, numbers have approximately halved over the last decade, with fewer than 3,200 remaining in the wild.

The decline is seen across sub-species and in most range states. Many populations are small, and are threatened by deforestation as well as poaching.

"If we use tiger numbers as a performance indicator, then we must admit that we have failed miserably and that we are continuing to fail," said CITES secretary-general Willem Wijnstekers.

"Although the tiger has been prized throughout history, and is a symbol of incredible importance in many cultures and religions, it is now literally on the verge of extinction."

CITES enforcement officials said government agencies including police and customs needed to step up efforts to combat the illegal trade.

Although China and other East Asian countries are the principal consumers of tiger parts, exports travel much further afield.

Earlier this month, Operation Tram, co-ordinated by Interpol and including enforcement authorities in 18 countries, netted medicines containing wildlife products worth an estimated \$10m.

Tigers, bears and rhinos were among the animals used in making the medicines.

Traditional cures

Conservationists also point to China's tiger farms as a threat to the wild animals.

Although China does not officially permit the sale of goods from these farms, in practice several investigations have revealed tiger parts are being sold.

Campaigners warn this perpetuates a market into which wild tiger parts can be sold, often commanding a higher value as products made from wild animals are perceived to be more "potent."

Just before the CITES meeting opened, the World Federation of Chinese Medicine Societies (WFCMS) called on traditional medicine practitioners to abandon the use of tiger parts.

"We will ask our members not to use endangered wildlife in traditional Chinese medicine, and reduce the misunderstanding and bias of the international community," said WFCMS deputy secretary Huang Jianyin.

"The traditional Chinese medicine industry should look for substitutes and research on economical and effective substitutes for tiger products."

A resolution before the fortnight-long CITES meeting calls for greater co-operation between regional enforcement authorities to cut down the tiger product trade, and to ensure that breeding operations are "consistent with the conservation of wild populations".

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Story from BBC NEWS:
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/science/nature/8568035.stm>

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UN Agency: Tiger on verge of extinction

(AP) - 1 hour ago

DOHA, Qatar — The world has "failed miserably" at protecting tigers in the wild, bringing an animal that is a symbol for many cultures and religions to "the verge of extinction," a top official with the United Nations wildlife agency said Monday.

Just 20 years ago there were 100,000 tigers in Asia, but now only 3,200 remain in the wild, according to U.N. Willem Wijnstekers, the secretary general of the 175-nation Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, or CITES.

He called on countries to come up with strategies, and cooperate with international agencies such as Interpol, to end poaching and illegal trade in tiger products.

"We must admit that we have failed miserably," Wijnstekers said at the two-week conference in the Gulf state of Qatar. "Although the tiger has been prized throughout history ... it is now literally on the verge of extinction."

Tigers are poached for their skins and parts of their bodies are prized for decoration and traditional medicine.

Delegates at the U.N. conference will also consider the spike in rhino poaching and ways to combat criminal networks involved in the illegal trade in horns in parts of Africa and Asia. All in all, there are 42 proposals on the table, ranging from stopping elephant poaching to banning trade in polar bear skins.

Later this week, an all-out ban on the export of Atlantic bluefin will also be discussed, a contentious issue that has the countries of Asia and the West locking horns over a fish prized in sushi.

Global stocks of bluefin are dwindling, especially in the Atlantic, and some governments around the world are increasingly supporting a complete trade ban to let the fish recover.

The issue pits the Europeans and Americans against fishing nations in North Africa and Asia, especially Japan, which has already vowed to ignore any bluefin ban.

About 80 percent of the species fished ends up in Japan. Raw tuna is a key ingredient in traditional dishes such as sushi and sashimi, and the bluefin variety — called "hon-maguro" in Japan — is particularly prized.

A bid to regulate the trade in red and pink corals — harvested to make expensive jewelry — could also divide the delegates.

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Japanese tuna 'lobbying' blasted at CITES talks

By Anne Chaon (AFP) – 6 hours ago

DOHA — Japan was accused of scare tactics at world talks on wildlife protection on Monday as it campaigned against a proposal to curb trade in bluefin tuna, the succulent sushi delicacy.

The 175-nation Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), meeting here until March 25, is gearing up to vote on banning commerce in bluefin from the Mediterranean and eastern Atlantic, a motion that requires a two-thirds majority to pass.

"It is very much up in the air. There's a lot of jockeying," said Patrick Van Klaveren of Monaco, which is leading the charge.

"Japan's lobbying is formidable. Three or four people from the Japanese delegation are constantly criss-crossing the Convention, arranging meetings," he told AFP.

"They are targeting developing countries, scaring them about what could happen to their (own tuna) stocks, along the lines of 'your turn will come'," he said.

Monaco's proposal to list Atlantic bluefin on CITES' Appendix I, backed by the United States and the European Union, would not affect bluefin caught in the Pacific.

Even so, "the Pacific island nations and Asia are also quite sensitive" to Japan's arguments, Van Klaveren added.

Tokyo vowed last week to fight the moratorium, saying it would ignore any such measure voted into place by taking a "reservation".

"Japan will claim its unchanging position that [the solution is] resource control," not a ban, government spokesman Hirofumi Hirano said.

Tunisia, with major bluefin fisheries in the Mediterranean, is also working the halls in Doha,

hoping to muster the support of Arab nations against the proposal, Van Klaveren said.

He voiced regret that the EU had not taken a stronger stand.

The 27-nation bloc favours the ban amid mounting evidence that stocks of the precious fish -- which sells for more than 100,000 dollars a head in Japan -- have crashed over the past 30 years.

But it has asked for implementation to be postponed until a November meeting of ICAAT, the inter-governmental fishery group that manages tuna stocks in the Atlantic and adjacent seas.

"The EU is not very active. It is absorbed by its own internal negotiations," Van Klaveren complained.

The rotating EU presidency is currently held by Spain, which, along with France and Italy, accounts for 50 percent of Mediterranean bluefin catches.

Norway, Switzerland, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador and Serbia also support the bluefin moratorium, he added.

The CITES secretariat, which makes recommendations on proposals before the Convention, declared on Saturday that bluefin tuna fisheries in the two sea zones were in crisis and met the criteria for a total ban on international trade.

The issue will be debated on Thursday, although the vote is unlikely to take place before next week, officials said.

Japan has argued that tuna fishing should be regulated through quotas, such as those set by the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission and the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission.

"Japan has accepted cuts in its quota for the catches. It's unfair to introduce a trade ban," Tadao Ban, president of the tuna traders' association at Tsukiji market in Tokyo, said last week.

Environmentalists argue that quota limits have been systematically exceeded as high-tech fishing fleets -- using spotter aircraft and giant freezer ships -- have reduced East Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin stocks by 80 percent.

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African Ivory Still Making Its Way To Asia

Posted on: Tuesday, 16 March 2010, 12:33 CDT

Redorbit

The black market trade of African ivory has been linked to Asian crime organizations and may affect the efforts made by Zambia and Tanzania to sell off their legally acquired tusks, according to experts at a UN wildlife trade meeting.

When the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species last held a conference in 2007, they voted on a nine-year suspension on exports of African ivory. The ban started in 2008, after South Africa, Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe had a one-time sale of their ivory stockpile to Japan and China.

But at the new meeting held in Doha, Qatar, Zambia and Tanzania are asking the 175-nation council for permission to sell off their ivory stocks, which have been taken legally from animals that were either culled or died naturally. The two countries need a two-thirds majority ruling in their favor to get the permission granted.

23 of the nations in the council that have elephant-range habitats in their countries, not only oppose the measure, but want the ban to be extended to 20 years.

"The 2007 moratorium was meant to ensure there would be no markets (for ivory) in neighboring countries. At first, it created panic among the poachers," said Cosma Wilungula Balongelwa, a delegate from the Democratic Republic of Congo. But now they regrouped and operate with military tactics, he told AFP.

"They fire on herds with rocket launchers. In Salonga Park -- at 14,000 square miles the largest in Africa -- our 140 rangers are completely

overwhelmed," he added. Hundreds of elephants in just a few short months have been illegally slaughtered. "These are not amateurs. A local network would never be able to handle this volume of contraband," he said.

Experts have questioned allowing the sale of state-held ivory, as poaching has continued to rise. Officials for CITES argued in 2007 that the one-time sale to unload the ivory would depress the price of illegal ivory and thus discourage poaching.

However, elephants killed by poaching have soared, particularly in central Africa. In Kenya, the numbers went from 47 killed in 2007, to 234 in 2009. And in Chad, the numbers of tusked elephants in the wild has dropped from nearly 4,000 to only 617 at the end of 2009.

Celine Sissler-Bienvenu, an expert on illegal ivory trade at the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), told AFP that poachers have taken on military style tactics in these countries. "In December, 80 poachers entered the Central African Republic from Sudan and killed 36 elephants. Then they moved into the DRC and Cameroon. They had heavy arms and were divided into three units -- shooters, cutters and transporters," she said.

There is also evidence of Asian-run crime organizations "moving large volumes of ivory from Africa to Asia," said Tom Milliken, who monitors illegal trade in east and southern Africa for green group TRAFFIC.

"At home, China claims to have a tightly controlled regime for trading in ivory, and imposes the death penalty for large-scale infringements. Chinese nationals living in Africa seem oblivious to this," Milliken told the news agency.

A study published in the journal Science last week recommended that proposals from Zambia and Tanzania be denied until the impact of ivory trade is better understood.

"The immediate fear is that ... allowing one-off sales in any African nation will stimulate the market for illegal ivory everywhere, particularly in those countries where law enforcement is inadequate," said one of the co-authors, Rene Beyers, a researcher at the University of British Columbia.

Zambia holds 21 tons and Tanzania 89 tons of legally taken ivory stocks. But both countries are also among the most significant source of illegal ivory, based on DNA testing of seized contraband, according to the study.

New analysis points to ivory enforcement failures in parts of Africa, Asia

Doha, Qatar, 16 March 2010 – Urgent law enforcement action by governments in Central and West Africa and South-east Asia is crucial to addressing the illicit ivory trade, according to a new analysis of elephant trade data released today.

Detailed regional summaries of the data held in the Elephant Trade Information System (ETIS), the world's largest database on ivory seizures, highlight the failure of law enforcement in key elephant range States facing an increasing threat from organised crime and the presence of unregulated markets.

The re-analysis comes as 175 governments meet in Qatar for the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species in Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), where they will consider ivory trade issues.

"It's clearer than ever that governance shortfalls and weak enforcement allow illicit ivory trade to go unchecked in West and Central Africa and in South-East Asia, where large domestic ivory markets openly sell ivory illegally," said Tom Milliken of TRAFFIC, who undertook the ETIS analysis.

"What's needed is urgent action by government enforcement agencies in these regions and strong collaboration with counterparts in Asia where many of the current seizures are being made."

"If there was adequate political will, a commitment to law enforcement would shut down the illegal markets and check corruption. That isn't happening," Milliken said.

ETIS is compiled by TRAFFIC on behalf of CITES, and comprises more than 15,400 ivory seizure cases compiled over the last 21 years.

The re-analysis of the data was made by region rather than by country, and was carried out to align the data with MIKE (Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants), another of the CITES tools

used to monitor poaching, which also shows that the Central African region is losing the most elephants.

"Until this strengthened law enforcement happens, ivory will continue to leak out of Africa" said Elisabeth McLellan, Species Manager, WWF International.

"We're not talking small-time smugglers here, we're talking hardened, organized criminal gangs," McLellan said.

The analysis can be downloaded from the CITES website at: <http://www.cites.org/common/cop/15/infr/E15I-53.pdf>

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Tuna ban: EU squabbling, China opposed

By Anne Chaon (AFP) - 3 hours ago

DOHA — A bid to ban catches of bluefin tuna in two major fisheries ran into problems on Tuesday as European Union (EU) countries squabbled over the proposal while China was reported to be opposed to it.

Halting cross-border trade in bluefin caught in the eastern Atlantic and the Mediterranean is headlining the meeting of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), running in Doha until March 25.

Japan, which consumes three-quarters of the global catch of this dwindling species, is campaigning fiercely against the proposal.

But signs of cracks emerged on Tuesday within the 27-nation European Union (EU) which, with the United States, is the motion's biggest backer.

The EU countries finalised the position they will adopt on Thursday, when the issue comes up for discussion at CITES.

But the result came only after "tough ... difficult and even tense" talks, said French environment ambassador Laurent Stefanini.

"Malta and Portugal wanted to reopen discussions on what had been agreed as the European stance," said Stefanini. "The outcome (of the CITES talks) is probably going to make some member states unhappy."

At a meeting in Brussels last week, EU nations overruled opposition from Malta to say they accepted evidence stocks of tuna in the two fisheries had crashed over the past 30 years, bringing the species to the verge of extinction.

The idea is to include fish from the Mediterranean and eastern Atlantic under CITES' Appendix 1,

although catches in the Pacific and elsewhere will still be allowed.

The EU has also asked for implementation to be postponed until a November meeting of International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), the inter-governmental fishery group that manages tuna stocks in the Atlantic Ocean and adjacent seas.

In Tokyo, meanwhile, Japanese Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Minister Hiroataka Akamatsu said Japan now had China's support.

"China has not announced its stance officially, but is actively lobbying other countries to oppose" the ban, Akamatsu told reporters. "There also are countries which are neutral or wavering."

CITES has 175 nations, around 150 of which are attending the conference in the Qatari capital.

Under its rulebook, a two-thirds majority of those voting is needed to approve a proposal, although Japan has already said it will ignore any ban.

Tokyo argues that bluefin is not facing extinction, although it acknowledges that the current size of catch is probably unsustainable. The solution, it insists, is stricter management of fisheries.

Bluefin is used especially in sushi and sashimi and can fetch more than 100,000 dollars per fish on the Tokyo market.

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Myanmar a gateway for wildlife trade to China: report

(AFP) - 2 hours ago

DOHA — Demand in China is stoking a black market in neighbouring Myanmar in tiger-bone wine, leopard skins, bear bile and other products made from endangered species, a report released on Tuesday said.

"China's border areas have long been considered a hotbed for illegal trade, with remote locations often making surveillance difficult in sparsely populated areas," Xu Hongfa, top China investigator for environmental group TRAFFIC, said in the report.

Enforcement efforts within China appear to have curtailed the open sale of many animal parts and products taken from species banned under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), he said.

Market surveys in 18 Western Chinese cities in 2008 found only two sites where tiger and snow leopard skins were on sale, far less than in previous years, said Xu.

But transactions may have simply moved underground and onto the Internet, and Myanmar has emerged as a fast-growing supply node.

"There is clearly ongoing demand for leopard and tiger products, but the trade appears to be becoming less visible year-on-year," Xu said.

"The current trade is more covert, organised and insidious, making it harder to detect and crack down on."

TRAFFIC said that in December 2008, its investigators checked three markets on the Chinese side

Markets on the Chinese side were legal, but one and a half kilometres (a mile) across the border they found a grim range of wildlife products sold by Chinese merchants.

These included a clouded leopard skin, pieces of elephant skin, batches of bear bile extracted from live animals, a dead silver pheasant, a monitor lizard and a bear paw, which is considered a delicacy in Chinese cuisine.

Nearby, another shop specialised in "tiger-bone wine" costing 88 dollars (64 euros) for a small bottle.

The shop owner said buyers were mostly Chinese tourists, and customers could order the supposedly health-boosting tonic by phone for delivery to Daluo, a river-port town in China.

Like China, Myanmar also had national laws forbidding trade in endangered species.

"But enforcement is non-existent in Special Region 4 as it is an autonomous state... controlled by the National Democratic Alliance Army," a rebel group, said Xu Ling, the China programme officer for TRAFFIC, who did the survey.

The 175-member CITES, meeting in Qatar's capital Doha until March 25, will review measures to boost enforcement of wildlife bans already in place, as well as proposals to halt or limit commerce in species not yet covered by the Convention.

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Scientists urge treaty panel to reject ivory sale by Tanzania, Zambia

Posted March 16, 2010, 10:59 a.m.

by Staff

<http://www.princeton.edu/main/news/archive/S26/87/S1032/index.xml?section=topstories>

The fate of many African elephants, according to a group of scientists, hinges on a decision to be made this week in Qatar by a host of countries operating under an international agreement.

The countries, part of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), are gathering to decide, among other proposals, whether to grant requests to Tanzania and Zambia to lower the protection status of their elephants, allowing them to conduct one-time sales of stockpiled ivory.

Such sales, however, according to an international team of 27 scientists and conservationists writing in the March 12 edition of *Science*, could lead to the increased slaughter of elephants for their ivory throughout Africa. CITES is an international agreement between the governments of 175 member countries. Its goals center on ensuring that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival. The two-week meeting began March 13 in Doha.

In the "Policy Forum" article, the scientists -- including two from Princeton University -- argue that the convention should reject requests to conduct the sales, which are supposed to be on ivory taken from dead animals or those culled under legal animal control efforts. In the past, such sales, they argue, have created a demand for ivory on the black market, where the substance fetches prices 10 times those obtained in legal auctions. This leads to poaching and threatens to reverse the recovery of African elephants observed since the ban on international ivory trade was put in place two decades ago.

"CITES has a tendency to be swayed by proposals suggesting that large species such as elephants can be exploited sustainably and the profits set aside to provide funds for future conservation when there is no evidence that these have ever worked other than superficially in the short term," said Andrew Dobson, one of the article's authors and a professor of ecology and

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evolutionary biology at Princeton. "In contrast, there is evidence that shows how rapidly these schemes lead to loss of the resource and only short-term profitability to the few individuals who ran the scheme."

The scientists said Zambia and Tanzania are major sources and trafficking corridors for Africa's illegal ivory, demonstrated by tons of contraband ivory seized in 2002, 2006 and 2009. DNA sampling on the 2002 and 2006 seizures traced the majority of that ivory back to those two nations.

In the last 30 years African elephants have declined to about 35 percent of their original numbers, and their population today stands at less than 500,000.

"CITES must consider the precedent that will be set if these petitions are approved," said Katarzyna Nowak, a postdoctoral fellow at Princeton and an author of the article. "Such sales could have far-reaching implications on elephant populations and their habitats in not only Tanzania and Zambia but in those neighboring countries with shared elephant populations, as well as in central African states whose illegal ivory passes through Tanzania and Zambia on its way to Asian markets."

An international ban on ivory trade was enacted in 1989, and for nearly a decade, elephant poaching dropped dramatically and elephant populations recovered. However, in 1997, the first petitions to lessen the endangered protections for elephants to allow for occasional limited ivory sales were made. Both the occasional limited sales and also economic growth in China, Japan and Thailand renewed demand for ivory, which led to a sharp increase in poaching since 2000.

At present, the convention imposes two levels of protection for elephants. The strictest level, which currently applies to both Zambia and Tanzania, does not allow any sales of ivory. To be allowed limited trade, the countries are supposed to demonstrate that their elephant populations are secure, that law enforcement is effective in combating poaching and that the ivory sales will not be detrimental to elephants.

However, neither nation has met these criteria, according to the scientists. In addition, China and Japan, the only nations approved to import ivory, are among the largest consumers of illegal ivory and have done little to ensure the ivory they sell was obtained legally. That means they also have not met the convention's standards for taking part in legal ivory trade.

"We're making decisions that have a huge impact on the world's ecosystems, and we're not relying on the best available science," said Samuel Wasser of the University of Washington, the article's lead author. "This is a problem with the convention's decisions in general, even the potential long-term impacts of those decisions are immense."

March 16, 2010

Fidelis E Satriastanti

Jakarta Globe

Race to Save Tigers Not Yet Lost: Indonesia Official

A senior forestry official on Tuesday dismissed as premature an announcement by the UN's wildlife trade body that efforts to save the world's tiger populations were a failure.

"Indonesia is the only country that has managed to release tigers back into the wild, so it is too early to make statements like that," said Darori, director general of forest protection and nature conservation at the Ministry of Forestry, citing two tigers released into the wild in Lampung last month and plans to soon release two more.

Willelem Wijnstekers, secretary general of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, said on Monday that 35 years of efforts to save tigers in the wild had "failed miserably" and that the big cat was closer than ever to extinction.

"If we use tiger numbers as a performance indicator, then we must admit that we have failed miserably and that we are continuing to fail," Wijnstekers said in Doha, Qatar, where delegates from nearly 150 nations are gathered to vote on proposals to restrict or ban trade in endangered animals and plants.

Less than a century ago, more than 100,000 tigers roamed the world's jungles and forests. Today, less than 3,200 remain in the wild with up to 93 percent of their habitats being lost to farming and settlement.

Several tiger species, including the Sumatran tiger, are now teetering on the brink of extinction. The Balinese and Javan tigers were driven to extinction in the 1930s and 1980s, respectively. "2010 is the Chinese Year of the Tiger and the International Year of Biodiversity," Wijnstekers said. "This must be the year in which we reverse the trend. If we don't, it will be to our everlasting shame."

But Darori said that with the government's current rehabilitation programs, he was confident Indonesia would be able to reverse the decline of the Sumatran tiger population in the wild, although he conceded it would not be easy.

"They are just big cats and cats are normally easy to breed," he said, "but it's expensive to feed them if they're kept at a zoo.

"But for those in the wild, it's a bit challenging for us because their habitats are being destroyed, not to mention the high rate of illegal poaching."

However, Hadi S Allikodra, a wildlife expert at the Bogor Institute of Agriculture (IPB) in West Java, said the future did not look good for the Sumatran tiger.

"If you look at the numbers, then I'm very pessimistic because Sumatra's forests — their habitat — are continuing to be destroyed at a rapid pace," he said.

Hadi said the Sumatran tiger population had decreased by more than 10 percent every year since the 1990s, dropping steadily to reach just 300 left today.

Additional reporting from AFP

Sharks need protection, says report

DOHA: Sharks, once of the deadliest creature on Earth, are going down in numbers in the waters of the region with the surging human appetite for shark fin soup. According to studies of the shark fin market, up to 73 million sharks are killed each year, primarily for their fins to satisfy the demand of international shark fin market.

Up to 10 m kg of shark fins are exported annually to Hong Kong by nearly 87 countries, according to "The International Trade of Shark Fins: Endangering Shark Populations Worldwide," a new report on global shark fin trade by Oceana, a marine conservation group.

The report shows that in 2008, United Arab Emirates was one of the top five exporters of dried

and frozen shark fin to Hong Kong alone, with 511197 kg. This is followed by Oman supplying 55757 kg, Saudi Arabia-8858 kg, Kuwait-1865 kg and Bahrain supplying 114 kg.

During the on-going Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the countries will decide on the inclusion of eight shark species in CITES Appendix II. An Appendix II listing would require the use of export permits to ensure that the species were caught by a legal and sustainably managed fishery.

The species on to be listed include spiny dogfish, oceanic whitetip, porbeagle and scalloped hammerhead, great hammerheads

smooth hammerheads, dusky and sandbar sharks. Of this, the gulf water hosts, scalloped and great hammerheads, sandbar sharks, and oceanic whitetips. Most of these are listed either as being vulnerable or endangered globally.

Experts say sharks are disappearing around the globe at an alarming rate. Numbers in some species are down 90 percent. Among the worst affected are hammerhead sharks

A recent data suggests that the North Atlantic population of oceanic whitetips declined by an estimated 70 percent in the 1990s and scalloped hammerheads by 83 per cent in the Northwest Atlantic since the 1980s.

THE PENINSULA



Call for new policy, funds for wildlife conservation

Apart from assisting in restoring much of the depleted wildlife resources, the fund will help in alleviating poverty among the rural poor

By Helmut Oberwiesler
Staff reporter

Delegates at the ongoing 15th Conference of Parties to the Convention for International Trade in Endangered Species of the Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) have called for the development of a new policy aimed at raising funds for wildlife conservation.

"Wildlife trade and conservation are two big businesses in

the rural poor.

"CITES can contribute to poverty reduction among the local people, who are custodians of most of these wildlife areas," the official said.

Local communities can benefit from the budget through building of schools, hospitals and providing opportunities to engage in organised trade in wildlife resources with supervision and price control regulations. The committee also discussed the review of national wildlife policies among some parties and already Madagascar, Uganda and Vietnam are reviewing their policies," CITES legal affairs and trade policy support chief Marcell Yeater said.

She mentioned that they were being assisted by academics and researchers to conduct basic studies on the planned review, adding that all Arab countries were also mulling the idea.

"Based on this discussion, a new policy on wildlife trade is being considered and it could be

announced before the end of the meeting," she added.

Other issues raised by delegates at the committee II meeting was increasing the CITES budget by as much as 16%.

"The yearly budget of CITES is \$5m, which is being pooled in a trust fund by all 175 parties. This budget is far too small for the implementation of issues on the ground and part of the activities were being supported with the help of donors like the European Union, who are making available up to 80%, the US and Japan," Vaquez explained.

He thanked the Qatar government for its generous donation, which he said had assisted in dying in many of the participants as well as covered all their expenses while in the country.

Ministry of Environment's wildlife conservation director Ghannem Abdullah Mohamed said the issues discussed by the conference's first committee yesterday included strategic co-operation between organisations, synergies between CITES and other related conventions, capacity building and amendment of taxes on some species.



Vasquez (right) speaks as Yeater and Mohamed look on.

Superior preparedness needed to combat poaching, says official

By Bonnie James
Deputy News Editor

There is a need for institutional architecture to handle crime against wild animals in a meaningful manner, World Bank's Global Tiger Initiative programme director Ken-ichi Yamada urged yesterday.

"Poachers and illegal traders are very well organised and sophisticated, the present system is not equipped to stop them," he said on the sidelines of CITES.

The enforcement chief of CITES, John Sellar, quoted current estimates which indicate that less than 3,200 tigers remain in the wild.

The figure was over 100,000 in the early 1900s when the majestic animals were found throughout Asia.

"If we lose the tiger, a flagship species, it will be a terrible indictment on the human race," the 'top cop' of CITES declared.

Millions have been spent for tiger conservation over the past few decades since the world realised that the big cat's numbers were falling alarmingly.

"We must admit that we have failed miserably and that we are continuing to fail. Although the tiger has been revived throughout history, and is a symbol of incredible importance in many cultures and religions, it is now literally on the verge of extinction," Sellar warned.

"One tiger is being poached every day and we are not able to stop it," Varma maintained while stressing that the World Bank is willing to use its financial and political power to save the animal.

Describing tiger as the face of biodiversity, he said the planet is

losing wilderness and habitat as the number of the endangered animal continues to dwindle.

Wildlife Institute of India's P. R. Srinivas stated that tiger is not in viable numbers except in Indonesia's Sumatra. For a viable population it is estimated that there should be 20 breeding females in 1,000sqkm, free from human disturbance and with a buffer area.

Qatar's Ministry of Environment, official Ghannem Abdullah Mohamed added that the country has always supported tiger conservation measures.

Appeal to launch crackdown on tiger trade

With perhaps less than 3000 tigers left in the wild, we must hopefull messages to poachers," she stated. Habitat destruction is one cause for the drop in numbers. In Qatar, China a report in February this year revealed that an incredible 1500 captive-bred tigers - half the entire number - are estimated to be in the wild - are kept in the most inhumane conditions and they are and are jumbled for the trade. - Fran Gillespie

Protection for polar bears sought

Two internationally recognised Russian polar bear scientists have called for greater protection of polar bears, in the background of the 15th Conference of the Parties of the CITES.

Dr Nikita Ovsyanikov and Dr Andrei Boltunov, both members of the IUCN Polar Bear Specialist Group, have made an urgent plea for support of the US proposal to list polar bears in Appendix I.

"It is currently indisputable among polar bear specialists that Arctic sea ice during the last decades is diminishing and polar bears are losing their prime habitats," they said. The scientists went on to say, "in Russia illegal shooting of polar bears remains at a high level and illegal marketing of polar bear pelts has increased."

"The import of polar bear pelts from Canada is camouflaged sales of illegally taken pelts from Russia. This is stimulating poaching of polar bears in Russia. As Russian polar bear experts, we support the proposal to list polar bears on CITES Appendix I," said the two scientists.

Hundreds of polar bears are killed for commercial trade and they are suffering a marked decline in their populations size in the wild with fewer than 25,000 left. A total of 15 of the 19 polar bear populations around the world are either declining or their status is unknown. "Polar bears are facing an unprecedented threat from the cumulative effects of climate change, commercial trade, poaching and pollution. In light of this, the only responsible action is to reduce any or all of these threats," International Fund for Animal Welfare (Russia) director Dr Malsha Vorontsova said.

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FANFARE MARKS BEGINNING OF 26TH GCC TRAFFIC WEEK



Have a Break, Have a Kaka

Weather Today

NOT CLOUDY

Sunrise	5:46 am
Sunset	6:42 pm
High	30°C
Low	20°C
Wind	9 mph
Visibility	good
Pressure	1003 mb
Rel. Humidity	51%

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PAGE 24 | CITY LIGHTS

Qatar Tribune
Nation
 Tuesday, March 18, 2010

PRAYER TIMING

Fajr	4:25 am	Ihram	11:41 am
Zuhr	12:08 pm	Maghrib	5:43 pm
Asr	3:08 pm	Isha	7:13 pm

Nationline

SPEND MORE TO SAVE ENDANGERED SPECIES

Emir sends message to Saudi monarch

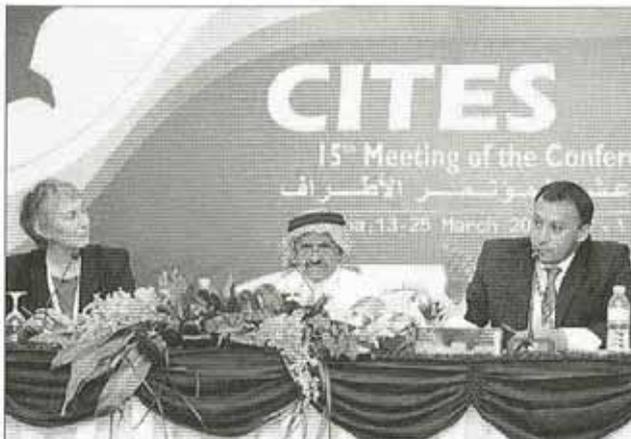
The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz al Saud of Saudi Arabia, received a verbal message from the Emir His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al Thani, Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs HE Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabor al Thani, conveyed the message during a meeting with the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques at his palace, in Riyadh, on Monday. During the meeting, HE the Premier and Foreign Minister also conveyed greetings of HH the Emir to the Saudi Monarch, who in turn asked HE the Prime Minister to convey his felicitations to HH the Emir. Talks during the meeting covered relations between the two countries and means of bolstering and developing them. The meeting was attended by HRH Foreign Minister Prince Saud al Faisal, HRH Deputy Chairman of the National Guard for Executive Affairs Prince Miteb bin Abdulaziz and HRH the Adviser of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques Prince Abdulaziz bin Abdullah bin Abdulaziz. It was also attended by the members of the delegation accompanying HE the Prime Minister. (QNA)

Deputy Emir issues Law No 3 of 2010

HE Deputy Emir and Heir Apparent His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani issued Law No 3 of 2010 amending some provisions of the commercial companies' law No 5 of 2002, on Monday. The law provides for putting it into operation and is to be published in the official gazette. (QNA)

Deputy Emir receives German officials

HE Deputy Emir and Heir Apparent His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani received at his Emiri Dwan office on Monday morning both Chairman of the Supervisory Board of Volkswagen Ferdinand Pi ch, Prime Minister of Lower Saxony in Federal Republic of Germany Christian Wolf, who is also a member of the Board of Management of Volkswagen, Porsche AG Holding Supervisory Board Chairman Dr Wolfgang Porsche, and Volkswagen and Porsche Holding Chairman Martin Wotzek. Accompanying them were German Ambassador to Qatar HE Dr Dirk Baumgartner. The aforementioned German officials called on HH the Deputy Emir to greet him on the occasion of their current visit to the country. (QNA)



From left Marcel Yeuser from CITES secretariat, Ghanim Abdullah, representative of the Ministry of Environment, and Juan Carlos Vasquez, CITES representative, at a press conference, in Doha, on Monday. (QNA NEWS/OC)

CITES proposes 16% hike in budget

'Lack of proper financial mechanism and low annual budget major hurdles in CITES plans'

RAJESH MISHRA
DOHA

A proposal to increase the budget of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) by 16 percent was made at the 15th Conference of the Parties, on Monday, the third day of the world meet. Addressing a press conference on the sidelines of the CITES summit being held at Sheraton Hotel, CITES Representative Juan Carlos Vasquez remarked, "The proposal to increase the CITES budget by 16 percent from the next biennial budget (from 2012), was made at one of the sessions dedicated to the management of budgets. The discussions are on as participants are divided over the issue."

Hailing at the consensus on the

increase in budget soon. Vasquez said that lack of a proper financial mechanism and a low annual budget of \$5 million were major hurdles in CITES carrying out its conservation programmes, and prevent illegal trading of endangered species of flora and fauna across the world. "Thanking Qatar for hosting the event on such a large scale, facilitating involvement of many smaller countries from the developing world, he said, "Though the European Union is the biggest contributor to CITES in terms of funds, supplying almost 80 percent of financial resources, CITES is eyeing substantial donation from some rapidly growing economies, such as China, India and South Africa."

Speaking on the occasion, Marcel Yeuser from CITES Secretariat remarked that the strategic vision of CITES and several other complex issues were also discussed at the summit. These issues related to reviewing national policy on conservation of wildlife and addressing conflicts between CITES policies and national reservation policies for certain animals.

Besides, she added, "The delegates also discussed in detail as to how to address the problems posed by countries, which indulged in ivory trade through middlemen. In most such cases, the middlemen are the real gainers while the concerned country gets a raw deal."

The representative from Qatar's Ministry of Environment Ghanim Abdullah said that detailed discussion on developing synergies among nations and across civil societies and NGOs was held on the third day of the world flora and fauna summit.

"Besides, the delegates also discussed the nomenclature of ranching, which apparently means the process of rearing eggs and juveniles procured from wild in a controlled environment", he added. Meanwhile, at an earlier press conference, the delegates announced that a detailed discussion on initiatives that could be taken to dismantle criminal networks involved in tiger and rhino poaching would be held later this week.

SEE ALSO PAGE 24

Deputy Emir okays pact with Interpol

QNA
DOHA

HE Deputy Emir and Heir Apparent His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani has issued a ratification instrument approving a draft agreement between the government of Qatar and the International Police Organization (Interpol) on granting privileges and immunities to Interpol staff during the two sessions of the executive committee and general assembly due to be held in Doha on November 5 to 11, 2010. The agreement was signed in Lyon City on November 16, 2009.

HH the Deputy Emir also ratified an instrument approving a draft agreement on cultural cooperation between Qatar and the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), signed in Doha on

January 31, 2010. HH the Deputy Emir also ratified an instrument approving a draft MoU for establishing bilateral consultations between Qatar and Brazil, signed in Brasilia, on January 20, 2010.

HH the Deputy Emir also issued an instrument approving the ratification of an agreement between Qatar and Georgia exempting nationals of the two countries who hold diplomatic and special passports, of getting an advance entry visa, which was signed in the Doha, on Nov 4, 2009.

HH the Deputy Emir also issued a ratification instrument approving a draft MoU for tourism cooperation between Qatar and Croatia signed in Doha on February 8, 2010. HH the Deputy Emir has also ratified the instrument on exchange and cooperation between Qatar and Malta signed in Doha on August 26, 2009.

SEC, QU sign pact to train teachers

TRIBUNE NEWS NETWORK
DOHA

MINISTER of Education and Higher Education and Supreme Education Council (SEC) Secretary-General HE Saad bin Ibrahim al Mahamad and Qatar University (QU) President Dr Sheikhha Abdulla al Minad, on Monday signed an agreement to adopt high school graduates to join the teaching profession. The strategic partnership is part of the SEC's continuous efforts to improve teacher quality, create capacity-building and encourage Qatar graduates to become teachers in independent schools. This they can do through their enrolment in the Bachelor of Primary Education programme offered by the Faculty of Education at QU.

According to the agree-

ment, the SEC will provide scholarships to 300 secondary school Qatari female graduates to enrol in the four specialisations in the Bachelor of Primary Education programme at QU. In addition, the SEC will provide respective students a monthly stipend not less than QR7,000 during the four-year study. Contracts will be signed between trainees and the SEC in accordance with the policies and regulations.

At the signing ceremony, HE Saad al Mahamad said the Bachelor of Primary Education programme implemented in partnership with QU, is aimed at upgrading the academic and professional levels of teachers set by the SEC. The Bachelor of Primary Education programme has been designed keeping in mind the national curricular standards.

Expo on Georgian India brings glimpses of yore

JOSEPH VARGHESE
DOHA

AN exhibition, 'India: East/West', giving an insight into the age of Discovery as late Georgian India, was inaugurated by the Indian Ambassador to Qatar HE Deepa Gopinath Wadhwa on Monday. It is organised by the Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar (VCU-Q). The exhibition, curated by Jochen Sukoly and Alison Ohta, shows Georgian India as seen through the collec-

tions of the Royal Asiatic Society, London. It will remain open till April 17. Speaking to Qatar Tribune Wadhwa said "It is a truly an amazing experience to watch all these wonderful collections of yore. The coolness and elegance of these paintings makes the visit worthwhile and a true reflection of Indian culture and a correct depiction of Indian flora."

Before the inauguration of the exhibition, there was an opening lecture by Alison Ohta who gave a detailed overview of the collections by the Royal Asiatic Society. Jochen Sukoly guided the audience through some of the

The exhibition looks at a critical period in the history of colonial India at the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th Centuries. Important paintings as well as their characteristics. The exhibition looks at a critical period in the history of colonial India at the end of the

18th and the beginning of the 19th Centuries, when enlightenment brought about a quest to discover the geography, history, cultures and architecture of the Indian subcontinent. During that period, administrators and representatives of the East India Company were involved in projects to map India's history, culture and environment, and collect and record their findings. In doing so, they employed both British artists who had ventured to India in search of

opportunities, as well as Indian artists who had been employed by local rulers. This resulted in an artistic exchange that altered traditions of Indian painting and exposed British artists to new subjects. The works, paintings, drawings and prints - are from three prominent collections within the society that of Sir William Jones, a scholar of Sanskrit and Botany, Ram Raz, a historian of Hindu architecture, and James Tod, a historian of Rajasthan.



From left) Indian Ambassador HE Deepa Gopinath Wadhwa, Second Secretary at Indian Embassy M R Gureishi and VCUQ Dean Alyson Varolova, in Doha, on Monday. (NEWS/OC)



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PRESS RELEASE

CITES spices the bluefin tuna debate with oils and essences

Governments also voted against a proposal to relax trade controls on skins of the American bobcat

Doha, 17 March 2010 – Governments attending the triennial general assembly of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) have decided today to protect two trees from South America used in the cosmetic industry and discussed all the plant proposals on the agenda.

John Donaldson, Chair of the Committee I, announced today that CITES trade controls would enter into force in 90 days for The holywood (*Bulnesia sarmiento*) and Brazilian rosewood (*Aniba rosaeodora*). "The holywood is a tree of great cultural and economic value praised for its aromatic properties and the texture of its wood", he said. This tree only occurs in the Gran Chaco ecosystem in the centre of the South-American, shared among Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay and a small sector of south-western Brazil. Historically, the harvest of the species for its timber had a traditional character: handicrafts, wood-turned items, posts, tools and so on. Recently, its timber has started being used in flooring and fine furniture that fetches very good prices in the international markets.

The essential oil of this tree, known as 'guayacol', 'guajol' or 'guayaco', is obtained by distillation and it is widely used in the perfume industry because of its mild and pleasant fragrance, which is similar to the rose and, to a lesser extent, to the violet. Its ethyl acetate is used as a natural fixative in rose aromatic compositions. It can also be used to perfume luxury soap by masking the unpleasant smell of synthetic components and as an excipient in the manufacturing of cosmetics. It is also mixed with pyrethrum to make mosquito coils. Residual sawdust, a by-product, is treated with solvents to produce 'palo santo' resin, which can be used to manufacture varnish and dark paints.

This wood is also appropriate for turning on the lathe. It is used to produce numerous items that are highly valued because of their attractive colours and the delicate aroma of the wood. Some of these items are walking sticks, cigar boxes, ashtrays, fine pens, vessels for drinking "mate", napkin rings, cigarette cases, fans, chests, candy boxes, sewing boxes, flower holders, sculpture pedestals, and many other regional and decorative objects.

The Brazilian rosewood has historically been subject to unsustainable exploitation to obtain linalool-rich essential oil from its timber. The essential oil is used as a fragrance ingredient in fine perfumes and as a fixative for perfumes. Linalool is also used to produce several highly valuable compounds for the perfume and fragrance industry. Between 18 tons and 20 tons of timber are needed to produce one drum of essential oil (180 kg), and a tree of appropriate size weighs about 1.75 t.

Close to 13,000 tons of rosewood essential oil were exported between 1937 and 2002, but the 1990s witnessed a dramatic decrease in the production of this commodity. In 1994, Brazil produced

only 59 tons of essential oil. The main importing countries of the product from the State of Amazonas at the time were the United States, France, Spain, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. In the markets of Manaus, a litre of essential oil reached the selling price of USD 80.00. The drop in supply was due to several reasons, including decades of unsustainable harvests.

The CITES member States have also removed the controls for lipsticks and other products containing candelilla (*Euphorbia antisyphilitica*). These products are traded in enormous quantities through a complex supply chain.

Before the end of the day, the Conference started discussions on trade rules for animals. The proposal to relax controls on American bobcat (*L. rufus*) was defeated after a vote took place at the end of the afternoon session in Committee I. On the agenda for tomorrow are polar bears and the bluefin tuna.

Note to journalists: For more information, contact Juan Carlos Vasquez at +974-4175621 or +974-5692804 (cell), or juan.vasquez@cites.org

CITES to study Bluefin Tuna issue today

Fish stocks depleting in Atlantic Ocean

BY SATISH KANADY

DOHA: With the CITES Summit expected to take up the issue of including Bluefin Tuna in the Appendix I of the international Convention today, Monaco, the country that was instrumental in pushing the issue to the agenda, called for a voluntary moratorium on the consumption of this critically endangered species.

Talking on the sidelines of the CITES meet here yesterday, Patrick Van Kaveren, Permanent delegate for international environment and scientific organisation who heads the Monaco delegation told *The Peninsula* that his country has already declared a similar moratorium two years ago. An international hotel chain has followed the suit by dropping bluefin tuna sushi from their menu across Europe.

"We are at the end of the line. We can't wait more. The biomass of bluefin tuna is fast depleting in the Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean sea", Kaveran said.

The estimated biomass of bluefin tuna was 200,000 in 1992. The recent studies show that the stock has alarmingly plummeted to 60,000 tonnes. "It is not the question of twenty or thirty years. In next two to five years the bluefin tuna will simply vanish from Mediterranean Sea. It was this



Patrick Van Kaveren

realization that forced us to push for the international trade ban on the tuna", he said.

On Japan's demand for the international community to come out with an effective management of the fish stock rather a blanket ban on the fish Kaveran posed: "How many years we have been waiting for that? The international community proposed the ban in 1992. But nothing happened. The countries that largely consume the tuna must show their commitment to protect the species", he said.

It is the Mediterranean tradition to eat sushi. But let us avoid eating the endangered tuna and include other tuna species in the menu. It is a collective responsibility and the highly consuming nations must impose a voluntary moratorium on the fishing, he added.

Kaveran said the dominant consuming countries lack specific measures to conserve bluefin tuna and they should come up with proposals to convince the Parties of the Convention that they are sincere in their efforts.

Japan must self impose a reduction in international trade or drastically cutting its quota. They can also impose a heavy price on the limited catch as a strategy to reduce the consumption rate.

Under The Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation, Monaco is focusing on the fields of Water, Climate Change and Biodiversity of Arctic, Africa and the Mediterranean region. The Foundation played a key role in including the ban issue on the agenda of CITES Doha meet.

THE PENINSULA

CITES not in favour of Tanzania's plan to curb ivory trade

DOHA: The CITES Secretariat yesterday recommended that Tanzania's elephant and ivory proposal be rejected, citing concerns about poaching and enforcement.

However, in a disappointing evaluation of the panel of experts, the Secretariat recommended supporting the Zambian ivory-trade proposal, and also supports the downlisting of elephants to Appendix II.

"Parties need to apply their own rigorous evaluations of the Panel of Experts reports as neither proposal meets the biological criteria for downlisting," said Jason Bell-Leask, Director IFAW Southern Africa.

"Both populations have suffered significant declines over the past three decades and there is evidence to suggest that these populations are still recovering from intensive poaching in the 1980's."

Tanzania and Zambia have submitted proposals seeking permission for a one-off sale of 112 tons of ivory. These two countries hoped to open the door for future ivory trade by 'downlisting' their elephant populations, which would mean that these elephants will lose the highest levels of protection.

THE PENINSULA

China's Illegal Wildlife Trade in Tigers, Turtles, Timber

DOHA, Qatar , March 17, 2010 (ENS) - "Porous borders" are allowing vendors in Myanmar to offer a door-to-door delivery service for illegal wildlife products such as tiger bone wine to buyers in China, finds the wildlife trade monitoring network TRAFFIC's latest look into China's wildlife trade.

Rare and endangered wild animal and plant species are poached in Myanmar, or sourced from neighboring countries, and then smuggled into China through many small trails without checkpoints, TRAFFIC researchers report.

"China's border areas have long been considered a hotbed for illegal trade, with remote locations often making surveillance a difficult problem in sparsely populated areas," said Professor Xu Hongfa, director of TRAFFIC's program in China.

The report, "State of Wildlife Trade in China 2008," was released Tuesday at the ongoing triennial meeting of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, CITES, which continues through March 26.

Some 1,500 delegates representing 175 governments, indigenous peoples, nongovernmental organizations and businesses are in attendance.

Over-exploitation of wildlife for trade has affected many species and is stimulating illegal trade across China's borders, concludes the TRAFFIC report, the third in an annual series on emerging trends in China's wildlife trade.

The illegal trade in Asian big cat products is a key issue at the CITES meeting with tigers in the spotlight during this Year of the Tiger in the Chinese lunar calendar. With only 3,200 tigers left in the wild, all international trade in tigers and their parts is banned. CITES delegates will vote on measures that, if properly enforced, could end the illegal tiger trade for good.

For the report, in December 2008 TRAFFIC investigators conducted market surveys of illegal trade in towns on the Myanmar side of the China-Myanmar border and in three cities on the Chinese side.

The surveys found no illegal trade in endangered wild species in the three Chinese cities of Yunnan Province, or in Muse market in Myanmar. However, many wildlife products were found for sale in Mongla, Myanmar, which is opposite Daluo port in Xishuangbanna, Yunnan Province, China.

In the Mongla agricultural produce market, close to the China-Myanmar border checkpoint, outdoor stalls selling wildlife products were mostly ethnic Chinese. Products of endangered species identified in the survey included: a clouded leopard skin, pieces of elephant skin, bear bile, a bear paw, pangolin scales, a silver pheasant and a monitor lizard foot.

"Near Mongla Stadium was a shop called Burma Yurma Tiger-bone Wine where tiger bone wine was openly displayed for sale," the report states. A 335 gram bottle was priced at Chinese yuan 600 (US\$88) and a 700 g bottle at CNY1200 (US\$176).

To prove the wine was genuine, the shop owner showed the TRAFFIC investigators a whole animal skeleton, which was identified as being from a tiger. The shop owner and his wife were Myanmar nationals, speaking fluent Chinese. They claimed that buyers were mostly Chinese tourists and a telephone ordering service was available for the wine, which could be delivered to Daluo port in China.

Tiger and leopard parts were found openly for sale in western China, although market surveys in 18 cities found just two places where such items were encountered.

One of them, Bei Da Jie Market in Linxia city, has a history of trading in tiger products. There, a total of five surveys between late 2007 and 2008 found one tiger, 15 leopard and seven snow leopard skins for sale.

"There is clearly ongoing demand for leopard and tiger products, but the trade appears to be becoming less visible year-on-year," said Professor Xu, possibly because there is less trade in big cat products or possibly because it has become more covert and organized.

On March 1, the Chinese newspaper "People's Daily" reported, "Roaring demand for tiger bone tonic wine during the Year of the Tiger has delighted those taking part in the underground industry but sent chills through conservationists."

Chinese animal rights groups have launched an online campaign for more protection of wild animals, but consumers still want the illegal tonic wine, a tincture made from steeping bones, either whole or crushed, in a vat of wine for at least a year. "Tiger bone tonic wine will surely be popular this year," a seller from the Beijing Xinghuo Company, told the newspaper.

China joined the CITES treaty in 1981. It imposed a ban on the harvesting of tiger bones and outlawed all trade in tiger body parts in 1993. In China, only about 20 tigers are thought to be left in the wild.

In southern China, the human consumption of freshwater turtles threatens the survival of many wild populations.

TRAFFIC's 2008 wild meat market surveys identified 26 species of turtles for sale and warns that the emergence of a greater variety of turtle species in farms is cause for concern.

The majority of turtles were claimed by vendors to be supplied from freshwater turtle farms, many of which do not practice closed-cycle captive breeding and therefore rely on wild-sourced breeding stock.

"If no action is taken, sourcing from the wild coupled with increased captive production to meet an expanding market demand will pose a serious threat to wild species through unsustainable harvesting from wild populations in China and beyond," warned Professor Xu.

The report predicts that the scale of turtle farming in China is likely to grow as the supply of freshwater turtles and the value of the trade increase.

"Increased farming production could easily catalyse greater demand, and thereby increase the largely unsustainable demand from wild populations," the report states.

The report also highlights research into the legality of timber imported into China from source countries in Africa and Southeast Asia. Researchers found up to 30 percent discrepancies between reported import and export timber volumes and they believe that "some of the timber imported to China was illegally felled in source countries."

As a major timber processing country, China needs to import a large amount of timber to meet consumer demand in domestic markets, and processing for overseas markets, the TRAFFIC report notes.

"Among China's major timber supplying countries, illegal timber felling and trade are rife in Russia, Indonesia, Malaysia and Papua New Guinea, according to WWF estimates and Greenpeace reports. Illegally felled timber in Indonesia accounts for 70.80% of gross output, while the proportion is 10.20% for Russia," the report states.

Other topics covered include sustainable utilization of traditional medicinal plants, tackling cross-border illegal wildlife trade on the China-Nepal border, stopping illegal wildlife trade online, and the illegal coral trade in East Asia.

Red coral is a highly valuable lower marine invertebrate, distributed mainly in the East Sea, South Sea and Taiwan areas of China. In recent years, red coral resources have been seriously depleted due to over-harvesting and environmental pollution. Long-lived and slow-growing, corals are particularly vulnerable to exploitation.

"Some illegal traders smuggle and trade red coral and its products for profit, resulting in market disorder and management difficulties," the TRAFFIC report states.

China listed red coral as a Grade 1 protected species in 1988, and in 2008, China listed red coral in Appendix III of CITES to warn fellow CITES Parties to be vigilant regarding any imports of corals from China.

Delegates at this CITES meeting will consider a proposal by the United States and Sweden, on behalf of the European Community, to list all 31 species of the coral family on CITES Appendix II.

This listing would allow international trade in pink coral, red coral, noble coral, angel skin coral, Sardinia coral, and Midway coral only under a strict permit system.

China has strengthened management of ivory processing and trade, the TRAFFIC report finds. As a result, China was approved by the CITES Standing Committee in July 2008 to bid in the legal one-time sale of 108 tonnes of ivory from registered government-owned ivory stockpiles from four southern African countries: Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

China now has strict controls on new ivory processing enterprises and sales aimed at improving the labeling and information management of ivory products. The annual consumption of ivory is restricted and the use of raw ivory materials must be optimized. The new rules aim to strengthen the self-regulation of the industry, collaborative law-enforcement mechanisms, and publicity on elephant conservation issues.

"Both TRAFFIC and WWF will be encouraging CITES Parties to enforce the law effectively in their own countries in order to end all illegal trade," said Colman O'Criodain, wildlife trade analyst with WWF International.

The report focuses on the impact of China's trade on globally important biodiversity "hotspots." TRAFFIC says these hotspots have a crucial influence on the survival of endangered species, and they are places where conservation action to reduce wildlife trade threats can bring about the greatest benefit.

Click [here](#) to view the report, "State of Wildlife Trade in China 2008," in English and Chinese.

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Agony and Ivory

The Chinese lust for ivory has led to the vast killing of Africa's elephants. Is it too late to save them?

The Telegraph, UK

By David Harrison

Published: 1:10PM GMT 17 Mar 2010

Johnson Kitheka had been on patrol for just a couple of hours when he saw his first dead elephant. He was out scanning every tree trunk or bush for snares, the lethal metal traps used by poachers to catch, maim and kill their prey.

Yet about 200 yards ahead, partly obscured by trees on Kenya's vast Tsavo West national park, lay the unmistakable grey bulk of an adult elephant on the ground.

Walking gingerly towards the giant creature, his worst fears were confirmed: it had been killed by poachers firing poisoned arrows. The tusks were crudely hacked off, along with the trunk.

"It was the work of professional poachers," Kitheka says, flinching. "They had sawn into its head to cut out the tusks from the root. The trunk and most of his face had gone. I could see the gaps where the tusks had been. The blood had clotted, liquid seeping out. I felt sick."

His experience has become an alarmingly common one of late. Twenty-one years after a worldwide ban was imposed on the ivory trade, elephant poaching is on the rise all over Africa.

Things are much worse in countries cursed by poor security, corruption and civil war, where animal protection is a low priority. US conservationists estimate that 36,000 elephants were poached last year. Sierra Leone says it lost its last few elephants in November, leaving Africa with 36 rather than 37 elephant range states.

Elephant populations in Senegal, Mali and Niger are on the brink of extinction. Chad has just over 600 elephants left, more than 80 per cent down from the 3,800 it had in 2006, while Zimbabwe lost more than 3,000 elephants last year, according to conservationists.

In the war-torn Democratic Republic of Congo, militias sell ivory from elephants to buy weapons. 'Elephants are being killed all over Africa,' says Ian Redmond, a British wildlife biologist and elephant expert. 'The ivory trade is rampant.'

Ninety miles north-east of the Kenyan capital, Nairobi, a baby elephant hobbles slowly towards a water hole on the slopes of Mount Kenya. Its rear leg is caught in a snare which it drags around with it.

The snare has torn open the elephant's flesh which has become infected. Unable to keep up with the herd, the elephant has been abandoned and without help will soon die of its wounds.

The elephant was not a target of ivory poachers (it has no tusks) but was caught in a snare placed in the forest by another breed of poacher who is back in serious business. This is the 'bushmeat' poacher, who kills animals for their meat.

Some are after 'one for the pot', an occasional killing to put food on the table of their impoverished families. But bushmeat is big business.

Gangs of poachers are wiping out wildlife on an industrial scale and selling thousands of tons of bushmeat to traders in Nairobi, and other big cities in Kenya and other countries. Some is smuggled to Western Europe and the United States.

Every creature, from giraffes and gorillas to buffaloes and antelopes, is the bushmeat poacher's prey. In some countries, such as the Central African Republic and Congo, elephants are skinned in situ, and the killers cut out large quantities of meat to be sold in street markets.

Soldiers in Zimbabwe have reportedly been given elephant meat as a cheaper alternative to beef in their rations.

The bushmeat poacher's favourite weapon is the snare, a simple but deadly metal loop placed on the ground and attached to a bush or tree. When an animal steps into the snare and tries to move away, the loop tightens around the bottom of its leg and cuts deep into the flesh, crippling and eventually killing the victim.

For giraffes the snare is placed higher in the tree so that the head goes into the loop which then strangles the animal and slices its neck, causing an agonising death.

I join a newly formed anti-poaching team, part-funded by the Born Free Foundation and Land Rover, on patrol in the Mount Kenya national park, a 550-square-mile Unesco World Heritage site.

The area used to be teeming with wildlife; but no more. There are elephants here but the dense

jungle, hilly terrain and tight security is enough to deter elephant poachers. The bushmeat poachers and their snares, however, are busier than ever.

'Snares are terrible things,' says Edwin Kinyanjui, 29, the leader of the Born Free scouts, as he cuts a path through the thick jungle. 'They are simple pieces of metal but they are indiscriminate and they can wound or kill any animal.'

Within minutes of starting the patrol, the team spots three would-be poachers. They run away but the rangers give chase. Fortunately the men are not armed and they are soon caught without much of a struggle.

'Sometimes they try to fight us,' Kinyanjui says. 'They use guns and spears and can be dangerous so we have to be careful.' The poachers are bundled into the back of a Land Rover and taken to the local police station but the patrol team say they will probably be given a fine too small to deter them from trying again.

As we trudge slowly through the mountain forest we find scores of snares. 'The poachers replace the snares as fast as we can remove them,' Kinyanjui says.

The Born Free team consists of four wardens who work with two armed rangers from the Kenya Wildlife Service with powers of arrest. They often stay in the forest for several days, camping out and waiting for the poachers to return to inspect the snares to see what they have caught.

The forest can be unpredictable. We are on a day patrol but are almost forced to spend a night among the wildlife after we come across a herd of elephants and have to change our route. We are soon lost, in the dense forest nightfall, and it takes the anti-poaching team three hours to find a way out.

The next day, I join another patrol at the Ngonj Forest sanctuary, about 10 miles from central Nairobi and here, closer to the city markets, we find more snares. The team found 291 snares in one three-day blitz of the forest. The smallest number they have found in one day is 58.

Little wonder then that Susie Weekes, the executive officer of the Mount Kenya Trust, says: 'The bushmeat trade is out of control.'

It is a view echoed by Dame Daphne Sheldrick, who runs the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust and whose lifelong conservation work includes running anti-poaching teams in national parks and an orphanage for baby elephants in Nairobi.

'We know from our own experience that thousands of animals are being killed for the bushmeat trade and more resources are needed to tackle it,' she says at her home near the orphanage.

The poachers are not small-time operators. Most elephants are slaughtered by organised gangs who ship huge quantities of ivory to lucrative markets in Asia, including Japan and particularly China, where it is used to make jewellery, carvings, chess sets, chopsticks and personal seals.

Poachers are also ruthless and violent criminals prepared to kill those who try to stop their lucrative trade. More than 20 rangers have been killed in Kenya alone since 1990, the year after the ivory ban was introduced.

The increase in poaching is reflected in a record number of ivory seizures. There were more than

2,000 hauls between 2007 and 2009, according to the Elephant Trade Information System. Most of the ivory is on its way to China.

Last month, customs officers in Thailand seized a record two tons of China-bound ivory – 239 tusks – in crates labelled 'mobile phone parts'.

Some of the more spectacular hauls last year included nearly 10 tons in two seizures in Vietnam; 3.3 tons in the Philippines; and three quarters of a ton in Kenya. 'These are enormous quantities of ivory,' Ian Redmond says. 'That's a lot of slaughtered elephants.'

Yet it seems not long ago that the African elephant had been saved. The horrific elephant poaching in the 'ivory wars' of the Eighties more than halved Africa's elephant population, from 1.3 million in 1979 to just over 600,000 in 1989. This provoked worldwide outrage and prompted a campaign to save one of the world's most complex, intelligent and loved animals.

The result was a decision by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (Cites) in 1989 to impose a complete ban on ivory sales. Conservationists rejoiced. Some elephant populations gradually started to grow again.

So why has the killing started once more? In truth, the ban reduced poaching but never stopped it. There are now fewer than 500,000 elephants left, more than 100,000 down on the number in 1989. In the best conditions elephant populations can grow by five per cent a year.

Wildlife experts say the increase in killings is no mystery. They blame it squarely on a decision taken by Cites in 2007 to allow four countries to sell 105 tons of 'stockpiled' ivory – tusks confiscated from poachers and removed from elephants who have died naturally – in what they described as a 'one-off' sale.

To the horror of conservationists, many countries – including Britain – argued that the sale would satisfy demand and reduce poaching.

In fact, it has had the opposite effect and led to a surge in elephant slaughter by poachers who launder their ivory through the legal trade. The decision to allow the sale led to China and Japan being approved as trade partners and demand for ivory, in China in particular, has soared. Last year, China approved 37 new retail ivory stores.

Increased demand has pushed up the price. A kilogram of ivory now fetches \$40 (£26) in Kenya, but up to \$1,500 in the Far East, according to some conservationists.

A small pair of tusks might weigh 10kg – enough to bring a Kenyan poacher \$400, more than casual workers earn in a year, while a big bull carrying 100kg of ivory would bring in up to \$150,000 in China.

The first post-ivory ban sale, the first to be called a 'one-off', was agreed by Cites at its meeting in Harare in 1997 under the auspices of President Robert Mugabe.

The Cites decision in 2007 for a second 'one-off' sale, 'sent out a signal to the world that ivory was available and legal', according to Will Travers, the chief executive of the Born Free Foundation who has attended every Cites meeting since 1989.

'The poachers knew this was a great opportunity for them.'

Now, incredibly, the situation may be about to get even worse. At the Cites meeting in Doha, Qatar, this week, Zambia and Tanzania will table a proposal that they should be allowed to 'downlist' their elephants' protected status from Appendix 1 to Appendix 2, which, if granted, would allow them to sell 110 tons of stockpiled ivory.

Wildlife experts are aghast and say it will lead to another surge in poaching. Britain and many African states have come out against any more ivory sales but the European Union – which controls Britain's vote – and the US have yet to show their hand.

'There are fewer elephants alive today than when the ban was brought in, so it is beyond belief that anybody would want to weaken the ban. If you can't launder illegal ivory through the legal ivory trade then why would you bother?' Redmond says.

'In an ideal world we could take ivory from natural deaths and carve it into beautiful objects. But as long as there are young men with guns and no job, and dealers who say they have a market, and ask the young men to get them ivory, then elephants will not be safe unless they are heavily protected.

And the cost of protection from illegal hunters and traders is much more than you can earn from the ivory trade.' The only answer, he says, is 'a total ban on ivory sales'.

China has long been the biggest market for ivory but there is growing evidence – and concern – that the Chinese are heavily involved in elephant poaching in Africa.

They have moved into Africa on a huge scale in recent years, building roads and other infrastructure – often in national parks – in return for minerals and timber needed to fuel their domestic boom.

Thousands of Chinese have left their homes to work on these huge projects worth billions of pounds. 'The Chinese are buying up ivory, worked and raw all over Africa,' says Esmond Bradley Martin, a leading ivory trade expert.

The Chinese government denies any links between increased elephant killings in Kenya and the influx of Chinese workers and says it is fighting to stop ivory smuggling.

Officials say that ivory seizures by Chinese customs officials have almost doubled in recent years. At just one airport, Baiyun airport in Guangzhou, southern China, customs officers had dealt with 138 cases of ivory smuggling, totalling more than 182kg, in the 12 months to August last year, up 90 per cent year on year.

Under new Chinese laws, smugglers can be punished with up to 12 years in jail.

Critics insist, however, that these hauls are the 'tip of the iceberg' and maintain that criminal gangs in China are placing ivory orders with Chinese in Africa who hire local poachers and arrange for the tusks to be smuggled to China by sea or by air.

'When you have so many Chinese in Africa, and China allowed to buy ivory, it is easy to understand how the Chinese can become middlemen in the wildlife product broking system,' Will Travers says.

He says the Chinese government should put money into conservation and environmental

protection to counter 'what could be the fallout' of their presence in Africa. The US and EU also need to do more, including putting pressure on China, he says.

At the headquarters of the Kenya Wildlife Service in Nairobi, Julius Kipng'etich, the service's director, sits back in his chair.

'Poaching has risen sharply in areas where the Chinese are building roads,' he says. 'Is that a coincidence? Ninety per cent of the ivory confiscated at Nairobi airport is in Chinese luggage. Some Chinese say we are being racist, but our sniffer dogs are not racist.'

The poachers are part of a 'sophisticated network', he says. Many are switching from guns to poison arrows because arrows kill silently.

Kipng'etich tells me of a new weapon in the poachers' armoury: planks of wood with poison-tipped nails sticking out of them. They are placed in the undergrowth and when the elephants walk onto them, they suffer excruciating pain and are eventually killed by the poison.

'The poachers are cruel and clever but we are more determined than ever to tackle them,' he says. 'We cannot afford to lose our animals. They are our heritage and our future.'

Tourism is Kenya's second biggest employer, providing work for up to 160,000 people and bringing in revenue of \$1bn.

He rejects claims that some rangers have colluded with poachers and says he is proud of his team, pointing to a board on the wall with coloured markers showing where his officers are deployed.

The rangers are armed and use helicopter patrols to catch the elephant-killers but he wants to see better intelligence and wider use of 'community scouts'.

Deep in the bowels of the building I am given a glimpse of the thousands of tusks confiscated and retrieved by the wildlife service; all sizes and all thicknesses stacked on shelf after shelf and kept locked in a vault behind thick steel doors.

This stockpile is not for sale, says the director, who remembers the day in 1989 when the then President Daniel Arap Moi ceremonially and with great symbolism, lit a bonfire to burn tons of ivory to mark the trade ban.

'The alarm bells are ringing,' Kipng'etich says. 'We will tell Cites: "Look what you have triggered with your one-off sales. You must ban the ivory trade".'

A few miles outside Nairobi, at Jomo Kenyatta international airport, the luggage glides along on a carousel behind the check-in desks and away from passengers' eyes.

A black Labrador-collie cross called Charles leaps on to the conveyor belt and moves quickly and excitedly from bag to bag. He stops at a small pink suitcase wrapped in cellophane and starts to rip it open with his teeth. Inside he finds a large elephant tusk and shakes it about triumphantly.

The sniffer dogs belong to the Kenya Wildlife Service Dogs Unit, set up 10 years ago with the help of the British Army, and they are playing an increasingly important role in the fight against the illegal ivory trade.

When the dogs identify ivory in luggage or in freight containers security officers move quickly to find and arrest the passengers or the container owners.

Sometimes they catch the big players but often they find only the 'mules' who are used to get the ivory out of the country. But conservationists believe that, in many countries, officials are bribed to smooth the smugglers' way.

The number of ivory seizures at Nairobi's airport rose to nearly 60 last year, almost all of them thanks to the sniffer dogs. In September, the Wildlife Service seized half a ton of ivory at Nairobi airport, the largest haul at the airport for many years.

"We are losing more elephants and finding more ivory since the ivory ban was lifted," says Corporal Frank Kesho, the head of the unit.

He is in no doubt who is behind most of the illegal trade. "Ninety per cent of what we find is heading for China. The Chinese have no restrictions on buying ivory, they are doing business in this country and they have ivory factories over there. You don't have to be a genius."

Jolson Kitheka, the volunteer ranger, is still haunted by one detail of his encounter with the poachers' handiwork.

The body he found was strewn with mud, leaves and twigs, tossed there by other elephants who had tried to cover up their friend; this is how elephants mourn their dead.

For more information on Born Free's work, please visit bloodyivory.org

Japan leading charge against bluefin ban

By MICHAEL CASEY (AP) - 2 hours ago

DOHA, Qatar — Opposition grew Wednesday against a proposal to ban the export of Atlantic bluefin tuna, with several Arab countries joining Japan in arguing it would hurt poor fishing nations and was not supported by sound science.

Other countries including Australia, Peru have expressed support for a weakened proposal which is expected to be introduced Thursday at the 175-nation Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, or CITES.

They want the trade regulated for the first time by CITES but not banned outright as demanded by conservationists who contend the Atlantic bluefin is on the brink of extinction.

"Most Mediterranean countries are afraid because they export this tuna," said Ahmed Said Shukaili, a delegate from the Persian Gulf country of Oman, whose nation will follow the Arab League position opposing the ban.

"They see this as an economic issue," he said. "There is a lot of concerns for the fishermen who depend on this fish."

Japan says it has the support of China while several other countries were undecided. China has not said publicly where it stands.

Monaco — the sponsor of the proposed ban on the export of Atlantic bluefin tuna — says numbers have fallen by nearly 75 percent since 1957. But most of the decline has occurred over the last decade with demand driven by sushi lovers in Japan and elsewhere for the bluefin's succulent red and pink meat.

Supporters of the ban, including the European Union and the United States, say it is necessary

the growing threat from illegal fishing fleets and the failure of existing measures to keep the population sustainable.

"The North African countries are concerned about fishermen losing their jobs. But nevertheless the jobs will be lost when there will be no more bluefin tuna," said Patrick Van Klaveren, a delegate with the Monaco delegation. "With bluefin tuna, it's not a question of 10 or 20 years but five or six years or less to see the stock collapse."

Raw tuna is a key ingredient in traditional dishes such as sushi and sashimi, and the bluefin variety — called "hon-maguro" in Japan — is particularly prized.

Japan, which imports 80 percent of Atlantic bluefin and has led the opposition to the ban, argued on Wednesday that CITES should have no role in regulating tuna and other marine species. It said that it is willing to accept lower quotas for bluefin tuna but wants those to come from the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas, or ICCAT, which currently regulates the trade.

Masanori Miyahara, chief counselor of the Fisheries Agency of Japan, told The Associated Press that CITES was "unfair and partial" and that a tuna ban would allow the Europeans and Americans to continue fishing tuna domestically while Japan suffers from a steep drop in exports.

"The big players will continue fishing," Miyahara said. "If necessary, let's stop fishing using ICCAT measures. Then everyone must give up the fishing. But here, it is very unfair."

Critics, however, argue that ICCAT consistently ignores its own scientists in setting quotas and does little to stop countries from exceeding already high quotas or cracking down on widespread illegal fishing.

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Botswana and Poland win INTERPOL award for combating environmental crime

17.03.2010 | Author: Your Story | Posted in Crime | Press Release Tags: Botswana, INTERPOL, Poland

DOHA, Qatar – The INTERPOL Environmental Crime Programme has presented wildlife crime law enforcement representatives from Botswana and Poland with the INTERPOL Ecomessage Award for their outstanding efforts in combating international wildlife crime.

The EUR 10,000 award is funded by the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) and is presented to the country or countries which have contributed most significantly to the international exchange of intelligence relating to environmental criminals. Botswana and Poland were recognized, in particular, for the value of their information and their consistency in submitting ecomessages.

"The authorities in Botswana and Poland, from all areas of law enforcement, have shown exemplary dedication to submitting criminal intelligence to INTERPOL, information which can be shared with our 188 member countries and thus play a vital role in combating international wildlife crime," said INTERPOL Environmental Crime Programme Manager David Higgins as he presented the award in Doha, Qatar, on Wednesday.

"Botswana and Poland are setting a positive example to others that intelligence exchange on international wildlife crime is vital and that it is only by working together, with shared knowledge and resources, that we can build an impenetrable international law enforcement net against environmental criminals," Mr Higgins added.

The award was presented at the 15th Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in front of representatives of 175 signatory countries and international organizations. The award was given to the INTERPOL National Bureaus of Botswana and Poland by Mr Higgins.

"IFAW congratulates Poland and Botswana for embracing Ecomessage and sharing information which enables authorities to crack down on wildlife crime," said Mr Azzedine Downes, Executive Vice-President of IFAW. "A previous award winner, Kenya, used the award to implement a training programme in subjects as diverse as wildlife forensics, criminal intelligence analysis and human rights and wildlife law enforcement. IFAW is certain that Poland and Botswana will benefit from a similar programme that will help them meet their local enforcement challenges, and we encourage them to continue using Ecomessage to fight the insidious illegal wildlife trade," he concluded.

The Ecomessage system is a standardized form used by member countries to submit intelligence to the INTERPOL General Secretariat headquarters in Lyon, where it can be entered into INTERPOL's databases for analysis and be made available to INTERPOL's 188 member countries. The award can be used to conduct training programmes on combating environmental crime and criminals, or it can be used to build law enforcement capacity. The first Ecomessage Award was presented in 2005 to the Kenya Wildlife Service.

UN animal conference tackles Mideast animal trade

By ZEINA KARAM (AP) - 10 hours ago

BEIRUT — A 2-year-old lion, emaciated and barely breathing, is found in a tiny cage off a Beirut highway. Monkeys are hauled through the dark tunnels of Gaza, bound for private zoos. Rare prize falcons are kept in desert encampments by wealthy Arab sheiks.

The trade in endangered animals is flourishing in the Middle East, fueled by corruption, ineffective legislation and lax law enforcement.

"It's a problem in the Arab world that we can no longer ignore," said Marguerite Shaarawi, co-founder of the animal rights group Animals Lebanon.

The group is pushing for Lebanon to join the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, whose signatories are meeting this month in Qatar. It is the first time the 175-nation convention is meeting in an Arab country.

Lebanon and Bahrain are the only Arab countries yet to sign the convention.

Delegates at the U.N. conference are considering nearly four dozen proposals on a range of endangered species from rhinos to polar bears.

John Sellar, chief enforcement officer for CITES, said it is difficult to estimate the extent of the illegal trade in the Arab world, but Animals Lebanon estimates that it is the third largest illegal trade in the region, after weapons and drugs.

"Much of the illegal trade that takes place here is of a specialized nature," Sellar said, citing the example of prize falcons, kept by many Arab sheiks in desert encampments, particularly in the United Arab Emirates.

"We've also seen some smuggling of very exotic species ... like very rare parrots, young chimpanzees, gorillas and leopards that seem to be for the private collections of some of the rich

individuals in the Gulf area," he said.

Several recent incidents have underscored the plight of animals in Lebanon — a country where the only law that refers to animal rights stipulates that anyone who purposely harms an animal has to pay a fine of up to \$15.

Willem Wijnstekers, the secretary-general of CITES, said countries must have strong laws in place to discourage animal smuggling. Otherwise, he said, smugglers will simply see the penalties as part of the cost of doing business, and not a deterrent.

In December 2009, Animals Lebanon began a campaign against Egypt's Monte Carlo Circus after it received a tip that the circus animals — six lions and three tigers — did not have proper certificates and had not received water or food during the six-day trip from Egypt to Lebanon.

The group sent several activists and a veterinarian to the circus grounds to investigate, and they reported the animals were malnourished and that one cub had been de-clawed.

The circus was declared illegal in January after Agriculture Minister Hussein Hajj Hassan sent the ministry's own experts to investigate, but the circus has appealed. While the case continues, the circus is still giving daily performances attended by small crowds.

"The case of the circus, and the trade of the lions and tigers, highlighted the urgent need to have Lebanon join CITES and protect these endangered species," Hajj Hassan said.

A circus employee at a recent performance denied the animals were treated badly.

"They say we are not feeding them. Look at them, do they look hungry to you?" the employee asked the audience as lions and tigers dutifully performed acrobatics around a caged tent near a highway just north of Beirut.

There was no official comment from the circus.

The animals looked healthy at the performance, weeks after the allegations were made.

In February 2009, Animals Lebanon managed to close down a zoo and rescue its 42 neglected and dying animals that had become a health hazard to its neighbors.

The starving animals languishing in dirty, rusty cages included bears, jackals, a chimpanzee, monkeys and a vulture that had apparently spent years tied by a chain that prevented it from flying or moving out of its cage, which measured just 20 square feet (2 square meters).

"The lion and chimpanzee died, but we flew the monkeys to a sanctuary in Wales and two bears to a sanctuary in Turkey," Shaarawi said. "I cannot describe the happiness I feel when we are able to rescue abused animals and find new homes for them."

In September, a 2-year-old lion cub was rescued by members of another local animal welfare organization after he was apparently abandoned off the main road in Beirut by the owner of the pet shop that imported him.

The severely dehydrated "King of the Jungle" was emaciated and malnourished with open sores

on his body, according to Beta, the organization that rescued him. Beta tried to save the animal — which the group named Adam — but it died shortly after it was found.

There are similar problems across the region.

In Egypt, a gateway from Africa to the Middle East, there is a flourishing chimpanzee trade and exotic animals are frequently smuggled in and out. The owners are believed to bribe airport officials to look away.

Last year, panic broke out on a flight from the United Arab Emirates to Egypt when a foot-long baby crocodile wriggled out of a passenger's hand luggage.

In blockaded Gaza, residents smuggle animals through tunnels that link the territory to Egypt to supply their private zoos. Smugglers proudly speak of hauling lions, monkeys and exotic birds through the underground passageways, making deals with animal smugglers in Egypt.

Most animals are drugged first, but in a particularly cruel practice, zoo owners usually rip out the teeth of lions to ensure they don't bite visitors.

Activists say many of the pet shops in Lebanon are unlicensed and keep the animals in appalling conditions without proper health care.

One pet shop owner who identified himself only by his first name, Elie, to avoid "trouble" from activists, scoffed at the allegations.

"Everything in here is legal," he says of the dogs, cats, parrots and rabbits he sells. Asked whether it was fair to keep a puppy locked up in a cage the size of a bird cage, he shrugged: "They are fine. It is only until I sell them."

Associated Press writers Diaa Hadid in Gaza and Sarah El Deeb in Cairo contributed to this report.

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Japan and China Help Defeat Shark Conservation Proposal at UN Meeting

by Jaymi Heimbuch, San Francisco, California on 03.17.10

Travel & Nature

<http://www.treehugger.com/files/2010/03/japan-and-china-help-defeat-shark-conservation-measure-at-un-meeting.php>

China, Japan, Russia and a handful of other countries are at the heart of a defeat of a proposal that would have benefited sharks by requiring increased transparency in the shark trade. Finning - the practice of cutting off just the fins of sharks and throwing the rest of the shark, often still alive, back onboard for a slow death and wasteful treatment of a food source - is responsible for killing somewhere between 40 million and 100 million sharks per year (the latest estimate from Oceana is 73 million per year). No one really knows because the practice isn't well tracked, and is often done illegally. So while the species collapses, the members of the UN meeting on shark conservation debate and ultimately make zero progress to protect one of the most important animals in our oceans. The defeat of this measure - far less controversial and easier to enforce than others on the table at the week-long meeting - is a bad sign for our oceans, and us.

CBS News reports that the nonbinding measure simply called for increased transparency in the shark trade, as well as more research into the threat posed to sharks by illegal fishing. It needed two-thirds majority vote, but unfortunately supporters, including the US and European Union weren't able to drum up enough votes.

The critics said it would be harmful to poor nations, however that is an intensely shortsighted view. Studies have shown that hundreds of millions of people depend on coral reefs for food and income - a roughly \$172 billion dollar industry - and that healthy coral reefs are dependent on shark species. And we don't even need to get started on how important they are to healthy fisheries on which our fishing industry depends. In the long run, we absolutely need sharks, but we can't even pass a measure that requests more transparency in their trade.

It's no surprise that China is a critic of the measure - it is, after all, home of shark fin soup. Hong Kong alone imports around 10 million kilos of shark fin annually from up as many as 87 different countries. It'd be an economic hit to the country to be more diligent about shark fin trading..but only on the short term. Without strong measures, there will very, very soon be no sharks at all left to trade.

According to Yahoo news, "The Chinese delegation said there was no scientific evidence that the shark's survival is threatened and CITES was not the right forum to handle the issue. The Chinese would prefer to leave regulation to existing tools like the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization and regional bodies which conservationists argue have failed to crackdown on illegal fishing and even uphold their own modest quotas."

If that doesn't make your jaw drop open, we aren't sure what will.

More controversial marine measures, including the ban on bluefin tuna, are on the table for the two week meeting. If a measure written this mildly can't pass, it's a bad sign for our seas. Luckily, around eight shark species are being considered for CITES listing and that means there will be at least some controls over their export beyond what this measure had called for

E-commerce in protected wildlife booming

By Anne Chaon (AFP) – 8 hours ago

DOHA — From ivory trinkets to live parrots, the Internet has become a virtual supermarket in imperilled species that is hard to track and even harder to crack, say experts.

With a quarter of humanity coming online over the last 15 years, the scale of the problem has caught global wildlife police offguard, according to the 175-nation Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), meeting through March 25 in Doha.

"Contemporary international law has fallen behind in its consideration of wildlife trade conducted via the Internet," CITES admits.

With few resources of its own, CITES has delegated the task of assessing the scope of illicit e-commerce to non-governmental organisations.

An ambitious, 11-nation investigation carried out by the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), released in Doha, has uncovered a flourishing traffic in live animals, including primates, rare reptiles and exotic birds.

It also found thousands of products -- supposed culinary delicacies and health potions to jewellery -- extracted from big cats, rhinos, elephants and bears.

All the contraband came from flora and fauna listed on CITES Appendix I, which bans international commerce.

Specimens and items spotted during a six-week survey in mid-2008 had an advertised value of nearly four million dollars (three million euros).

"Overall, the results show a high volume of wildlife trade conducted via the Internet, with thousands of CITES-listed specimens offered for sale on the Internet every week," according to a report of the probe.

Seventy percent of the trade was based in the United States, with China and Britain each accounting for about eight percent.

Among live species, exotic birds dominated, while ivory was by far the top category among derived products.

"It is rarely whole tusks. Usually it is small items," said Celine Sissler-Bienvenue, IFAW's senior elephant expert.

Grace Ge Gabriel, who heads the organisation's China operations, has seen a boom in online sales of tiger wine, a combination of rice wine and tiger bones that has been typically aged three, six or nine years.

"Online, these ads are mainly targeting the Chinese diaspora," she said.

Likewise potions containing bear bile, used in traditional Chinese medicines to treat ailments ranging from liver disorders to haemorrhoids to hepatitis.

The fluid is extracted over months or years from live bears through a drip tube surgically inserted through the animal's abdomen.

"The Chinese market is saturated, but Canadian and US customs are constantly seizing shipments," Ge Gabriel said.

In some cases, Internet sales may be driving species not yet listed under the Convention toward extinction.

In Doha, CITES officials highlighted the plight of a small cousin of the salamander called Kaiser's spotted newt (*Neurergus kaiseri*), native to Iran, which has submitted a proposal for Appendix I status to be voted next week.

Only 1,000 specimens remain in the wild, experts estimate, but a 2006 Internet survey found several sites advertising the colourful creatures for 300 dollars (220 euros) a piece.

"One Ukrainian company said they had sold more than 200 -- all caught in the wild -- in one year," said Ernie Cooper, an investigator in Canada for an environmental NGO called TRAFFIC.

Most wildlife sales on the Internet are small-scale, the surveys showed. "The large crime syndicates have much better ways to sell their merchandise, even in shops," said Ge Gabriel.

Since 2007, major online auction sites -- including eBay and Chinese giant taobao.com -- have prohibited trade in ivory and live species.

But even as law enforcement has begun to crack down, online vendors have become more wary, obfuscating their wares with descriptions such as "made from the teeth of the world's largest land mammal."

And even if police can trace an offer to a fixed address, products have often been sold within a matter of hours, officials say.

Kenyans honoured at CITES meeting in Doha

Written By:KNA , Posted: Wed, Mar 17, 2010
KBC

Two Kenyans have been honoured at the ongoing international wildlife conference in Doha, Qatar.

Mr. John Laigwani and the late Joel Muga, both from the Kenya Wildlife Service, were the only ones in Africa to receive the 2010 Clark R. Bavin Wildlife Law Enforcement Award for their exemplary work in protecting wildlife from illicit trade.

Mr Laigwani, a sergeant at KWS, was recognised for his immense contribution to the security of wildlife in Meru and other Kenyan national parks and reserves.

He successfully confronted elephant poachers and his actions led to the apprehension of several gang members and the seizure of a large cache of weapons.

Mr. Joel Muga, who served as a ranger at KWS until his untimely death, was posthumously honoured for repeatedly risking his life to protect wildlife and enforce wildlife laws and regulations.

After four years of service, ranger Muga tragically lost his life on Christmas night in 2009 when he was ambushed and shot by ivory poachers and dealers north of Meru National Park.

The awards were presented by the CITES General Secretary, John Scanlon, KWS Deputy Director, Biodiversity Research and Monitoring, Dr Samuel Kasiki, received them on behalf of the two.

Other honorees included representatives from Israel, India, the United States, China, the United Kingdom, Croatia, and the Philippines.

Kenya was the only country in Africa which got the awards during this year's CITES meeting.

Hundreds of delegates attending the 15th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES gathered at Al Dafina Foyer of the Sheraton Doha Convention Hotel on Monday evening to honour the heroic efforts of 11 wildlife law enforcement officers who often put their lives in jeopardy to protect wildlife and uphold the rule of law.

The Clark R. Bavin Wildlife Law Enforcement Awards are named in memory of the late Chief of the US Fish and Wildlife Service's Office of Law Enforcement, who pioneered the agency's highly effective use of covert investigations and "sting" operations to uncover illegal wildlife trade.

The awards have traditionally been presented during CITES meetings in cooperation with the Species Survival Network, an international coalition of over 80 non-governmental organisations.

Beirut set to sign accord to protect endangered species

By Dailia Mahdawi

Daily Star staff

Lebanon

Wednesday, March 17, 2010

BEIRUT: Lebanon looks set to join a key international convention protecting endangered species and plants, a local animal welfare organization has said.

Agriculture Minister Hussein al-Hajj Hassan traveled to Qatar to discuss with Willem Wijnstekers, the secretary general of Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the possibility of signing up, Animals Lebanon's co-founder and vice president Maglie Shaarawi told The Daily Star on Monday.

Delegates from almost 150 countries have gathered in Doha for the March 13-25 conference, being held in the Middle East for the first time, to debate and vote on 40 proposals curbing or banning trade in endangered animals and plants. Lebanon and Bahrain are the only Arab states not to have signed the 1975 agreement, to which 175 states are party.

But Lebanon could come in from the cold as soon as 2011, according to Animals Lebanon officials who were invited to sit in on Hajj Hassan's talks with Wijnstekers Monday. "The minister made it clear to the secretary general of CITES that he has every intention of having Lebanon join CITES within one year," the organization's president, Lana al-Khallil, said in a press release from Doha.

While Lebanon is technically required to monitor any trade of animals between countries that have ratified the convention, the lack of training in animal policing and rife bribery means it is an easy base for animal smugglers to import and export endangered species. Elephants, big cats and chimpanzees are just some of the species known to have been smuggled in and out of Lebanon.

Last September, a lion cub was discovered abandoned in a cage in a Beirut alleyway. The severely dehydrated animal, which had been kept illegally, died shortly after being rescued. Endangered monkeys and other species are also commonly found in unregulated pet shops or

private zoos.

In December, Animals Lebanon alerted Hajj Hassan to the presence of the Egyptian Monte Carlo circus in Beirut's Dora suburb.

Investigations into the circus showed it had entered Lebanon without the correct paperwork and with several of its animals, including three tigers and six lions, in need of urgent veterinary treatment.

Hajj Hassan declared the circus illegal in January and ordered it be closed immediately. He also ruled that the circus should leave Lebanon, although the animals and employees of Monte Carlo still appear to be at the circus ground.

"The case of the circus and the trade of the lions and tigers highlighted the urgent need to have Lebanon join CITES and protect these endangered species," Animals Lebanon quoted Hajj Hassan as saying in Doha. If Beirut signs CITES, smugglers will be left with fewer countries to exploit as bases for illegal trading in wildlife.

Lebanon will also be able to take punitive action, with backing from the international community, against those who attempt to illegally trade endangered species.

Upon joining the convention, Lebanon should take care to introduce and enforce adequate penalties for individuals who fail to comply with its obligations, Animals Lebanon quoted Wijnstekers as telling Hajj Hassan.

"In many countries the penalties are so minimal that they do not act as any form of deterrent. Smugglers, if punished, can just consider the penalties as 'part of doing business' and not something which will stop illegal trade," he said.

Khalil meanwhile urged Lebanon to stay true to the spirit of CITES.

"Joining CITES is more than being part of an international accord – it is a historic initiative to position Lebanon with the rest of the nations that recognize the importance of protecting its environment and wildlife," she said.

Japan, detractors trade bars on eve of tuna debate

By Anne Chaon (AFP) - 3 hours ago

DOHA — Japan threw down the gauntlet Wednesday ahead of a key debate over bluefin tuna, saying that if the species were truly facing extinction its defenders should seek a halt to all fishing rather than just cross-border commerce.

Monaco, meanwhile, also worked the corridors at the 175-nation Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) in Doha, seeking votes for its proposed trade ban on bluefin caught in the eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean.

When the issue comes to a vote next week, the future of a species and a multi-billion-dollar business could hang in the balance.

Japan, which buys three-quarters of the global catch of bluefin, is campaigning fiercely to prevent catches from these two fisheries from falling under CITES' Appendix I, which outlaws all international commerce.

Up to now, this status has been primarily reserved for iconic fauna such as big cats, primates and elephants rather than a mainstream commercial species.

In an interview with AFP, top Japanese negotiator Masanori Miyahara described the proposed ban as unworkable and unfair, and took aim at supporters of the moratorium.

"We are very serious about bluefin tuna," he said.

"If they are really concerned about the future of the bluefin tuna, let's stop the fishing -- that's the best way," Miyahara said.

For Monaco, Appendix I is a lifeline without which the species will slip towards extinction.

"We have gotten to the point where the collapse of stocks in the wild is inevitable," said Patrick

Van Klaveren, the principal's top negotiator in Doha.

Scientists agree that bluefin stocks in the Atlantic and Mediterranean have crashed, with populations declining by up to 80 percent from only three or four decades ago.

"Let's leave the species alone for five or 10 years to give it a chance to avoid certain catastrophe," said Van Klaveren.

Miyahara sniped at the United States and the European Union, saying they backed a ban knowing that under CITES rules they could still harvest the species in their domestic waters for consumption at home.

"They are saying Appendix I is okay because their fishermen will continue the fishing and sale for the domestic market," he said. "That is unfair."

Tokyo acknowledges that bluefin are in trouble, but says the solution lies with enforcing existing quotas set by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), the inter-governmental fishery group responsible for tuna stocks in the Atlantic Ocean and adjacent seas.

Japan is pressing for support from neighbours South Korea and China to thwart the two-thirds vote needed from delegates. It has also been campaigning hard with African countries, say sources.

If no agreement is reached on Thursday -- a near certainty -- CITES will form a working group to hash out the issue behind closed doors, and perhaps craft a compromise proposal.

Europe, which remains divided internally, "risks getting into some very complicated discussion," said Laurent Stefanini, head of the French delegation.

Australia has called for an Appendix II listing for Atlantic bluefin, which would allow cross-border trade to continue, but under more stringent monitoring and rules.

Environmental groups retort that this would simply serve as a cover for business as usual, and point out that ICCAT has failed over three decades to enforce its own quotas.

Miyahara insisted Japan could do without the prized delicacy, which sells for up to 170,000 dollars (125,000 euros) a fish in Tokyo, and 25 dollars a morsel in high-end restaurants.

"If bluefin doesn't come to the Japanese market, no problem, we can give it up!" he said.

The species only accounts for three percent of the "high quality tuna" consumed in Japan, he added.

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The complex proposal called for further discussion of the bluefin tuna's plight. Europe, the United States, Monaco and Norway were hoping to move to an adjournment, which would have allowed a proper investigation of the issues over the weekend. Kevern Cochrane, the representative from the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), agreed. He also acknowledged that the official FAO panel had decided that the species met the scientific criteria for listing as a sufficiently

IT WAS a moment of some drama when delegates assembled in Doha came to vote on a ban in the trade in bluefin tuna on March 18th. The previous evening many representatives of the 175 member nations of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) had been at a reception at the Japanese embassy. Prominent on the menu was bluefin tuna sushi. On the agenda the next day at the CITES meeting was a proposal to list the bluefin tuna as sufficiently endangered that it would qualify for a complete ban in the trade of the species (*The Economist* supports such a ban).



A ban on the trade in bluefin tuna is rejected

From Economist.com
Mar 18th 2010

Eaten away

Bluefin tuna

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

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endangered species qualifying for a trade ban--the bluefin tuna population has dropped below 15% of its maximum historical level.

At this stage, eyewitnesses report that the Libyan delegation made an unusual intervention. According to David Allison of OCEANA, a marine charity, the Libyan delegate started "screaming and calling everyone liars...He said the science was no good and that it was part of a conspiracy of developed countries. It was theatre. Then he stopped screaming and called for an immediate vote". Another witness, Sergi Tudela, a fisheries expert with the WWF, agreed. "The Libyan representative accused the FAO of serving political interests and said there was no scientific basis for the listing."

After this the talking stopped. The call for a ban, proposed by Monaco, was put to an immediate vote using a procedural ploy and rejected with 68 votes against, 20 in favour and 30 abstentions. The Americans, in particular, are disappointed. A number of agencies had been working hard to prepare for the meeting, none more so than the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The NOAA responded to the vote by committing to ensure that the organisation which currently manages bluefin tuna (albeit wearily) would implement fully its commitments and would continue to try to reduce fishing levels in line with scientific advice. The Japanese, however, will be delighted. The country has been lobbying hard against the ban for some time.

The outlook for the bluefin tuna is not good. Scientists already agree that the population is crashing, and that quotas allocated to fishermen remain too generous to give any reasonable degree of certainty of a recovery. The extent to which illegal fishing can be brought under control will also have a big impact on whether the population has a chance of recovering. It is technically possible that bluefin tuna could be put back on the agenda before the meeting closes on March 25th, but this is unlikely to happen. It seems likely that a fresh attempt to list bluefin tuna will have to wait until the next CITES meeting in three years time.

That may be too late for the bluefin tuna. Libya has used a procedural ruse to force a vote without any substantial discussion of the scientific, technical or economic issues. It has sidestepped the only public forum that exists to discuss whether action is needed to save a species that is being fished, traded and eaten to extinction. Had the discussion taken place before a vote to reject the trade ban, this would at least have counted as an honourable victory.



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PRESS RELEASE

Governments not ready for trade ban on bluefin tuna

Earlier today a proposal to ban trade in polar bears was also rejected.

Doha, 18 March 2010 – The triennial general assembly of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) reached a climax today when governments rejected by vote trade bans for polar bears and bluefin tuna.

This morning the polar bear proposal was rejected by a majority of Governments, led by Canada (62 votes against, 48 in favour, 11 abstentions). They recognized the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples living in the harsh conditions of the Arctic sea and the role of polar bears in their culture and economy. "We do not have trees, we do not have plants to cultivate, we only have the polar bears", said a representative of the Inuvialuit hunters present at the meeting. They were not convinced about the conservation benefits of banning trade in these species already included in CITES Appendix II.

Polar bears exist entirely in the circumpolar Arctic sea ice environment within five range States: Canada, Denmark (Greenland), Norway, Russian Federation, and the United States. According to the defeated proposal, the combined threats of the decrease in polar bear habitat – sea ice – and other potential threats, including utilization and trade, disease or predation, contaminants, might endanger the species. The proposal sought to ensure that primarily commercial trade does not compound the threats posed to the species by loss of habitat.

In the afternoon, the main course of the CITES Conference was on the table. Monaco introduced its proposal to ban trade in bluefin tuna, followed immediately by the European Union which suggested an amendment to delay the entry into force of the ban until May 2011. Japan, Canada and several members States of the Arab league opposed the proposal arguing that regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs) as ICCAT were best placed to tackle the decline of bluefin tuna stocks. They added that an Appendix I listing would not stop the fishing of the species. After a passionate but relatively short debate, the representative of Libya requested to close the deliberations and go for a vote. Iceland called for a secret ballot. The amendment introduced by the European Union and Monaco's proposal were defeated (20 votes in favour, 68 against, 30 abstentions) in the middle of much confusion about the voting procedures and mixed feelings of satisfaction and frustration from participants.

During a press conference at the end of the day, the head of the Japanese delegation, Mr Masanori Miyahara, Ambassador Patrick Van Klaveren from Monaco and Mohamed Saeed Al-Mohannadi from Qatar recognized that the bluefin tuna stocks are depleted and jointly declared that now is time for ICCAT to be effective. The Secretary-General of CITES, Mr Willem Wijnstekers, offered to cooperate to ensure compliance without delay of the required conservation measures.

Note to journalists: For more information, contact Juan Carlos Vasquez at +974-4175621 or +974-5692804 (cell), or juan.vasquez@cites.org

Bluefin tuna, polar bear lose survival vote

RAJESH MISHRA
DOHA

US-BACKED proposals for conserving the Atlantic bluefin tuna and polar bear were defeated at a conservation meet on Thursday.

The 15th Conference of the Parties (CoP 15) of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) voted 20 to 68 against Monaco's proposal to prohibit international trade of Atlantic bluefin tuna. There were 30 abstentions.

The other proposal that sought to place polar bear in Appendix I of CITES was defeated by 14 votes with 62 parties voting against the motion, 48 for it and 11 abstaining.

The move would have banned international trade in polar bear products.

Japan, which imports 80 percent of Atlantic bluefin tuna caught globally, led the opposition to the ban. CITES should not have any role in regulating the trade in tuna or other marine species, it argued. Monaco advocated extreme measures to conserve the fish species. Bluefin tuna has been subject to so much over fishing that its stocks had fallen by 75 percent over the years, it said.

"Today's CITES committee vote not to protect Atlantic bluefin tuna is an unfortunate step backwards. This deeply disappointing and irresponsible vote sig-

nals a bleak future for this iconic fish," Director of International Policy for the Pew Environment Group Susan Lieberman, said in a statement issued soon after the voting.

The proposal to ban the international trade in polar bear skins, teeth and claws was defeated over concerns that it would hurt indigenous economies and arguments that the practice did not pose significant threat to the animals, observers said.

Soon after the voting, the

Washington DC Office Director of the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) for Polar Bears and Latin American issues Jeff Flocken said, "Having turned their backs on this iconic species by failing to support its inclusion in Appendix 1, the CITES parties have hastened the polar bear's demise."

An IFAW release quoted Flocken as saying, "With only 20,000 to 25,000

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15 ►►



(From left) Abdulla Ghanem Mohamed of Ministry of Environment, Mohamed Sayyid al Mohannadi, Director of Fisheries Department, Patric Van Klaveren, head of Monaco delegation, John Donaldson, Chair Committee 1 (South Africa), and CITES official Juan Carlos Vasquez, in Doha, on Thursday. (LJALAL PATHYDOORI)

Bluefin tuna, polar bear lose survival vote

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

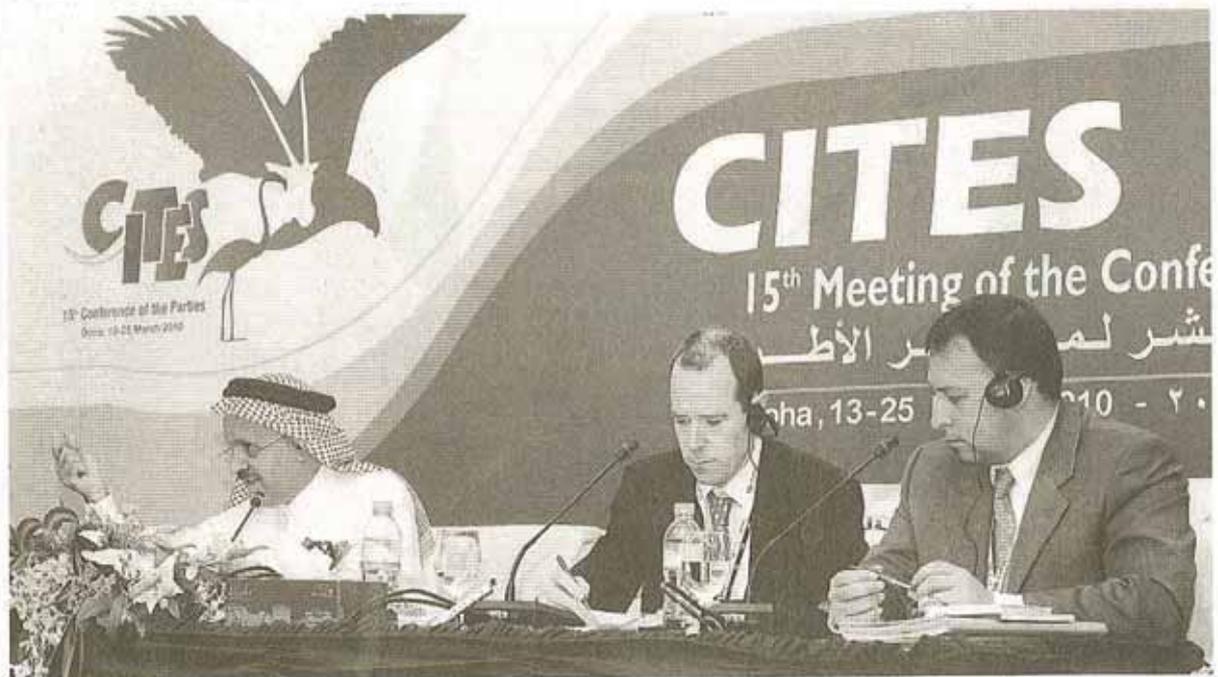
polar bears remaining, CITES parties have chosen to ignore the latest science which predicts the population will decline by two-thirds by 2050."

Flocken pointed out that the up-listing would have banned all international commercial trade in polar bears, whose existence was threatened not only by poaching but also climate change. According to him, hundreds of bears are killed every year for their skins, claws and jaws, which have high commercial value.

"Polar bears clearly meet the criteria for an up-listing to Appendix I for these reasons yet, parties used the threat posed to the species by climate change as an excuse for doing nothing about the immediate threats hastening decline of its population," he remarked.

"Parties had an opportunity to take action to save more than 3,000 polar bears from commercial trade over the next decade - yet they turned their backs upon them. In years to come, people will look back on this moment with great shame."

Jeff Flocken is also a member of a polar bear coalition which consists of the Animal Welfare Institute, Defenders of Wildlife, Eurogroup for Animals, Humane Society International, International Fund for Animal Welfare, Natural Resources Defenses Council, ProWildlife and the Species Survival Network.



FROM LEFT: Ghanem Abdulla Mohammed, Director of Wildlife Conservation at the Ministry of Environment-Qatar; David Morgan, Chief Scientist at the Geneva Secretariat of the CITES and Juan Carlos Vasquez, Senior Resource Mobilisation Officer of CITES during a press conference at Doha Sheraton yesterday. **SALIM MATRAMKOT**

Shark document fails

US makes move to protect depleting shark population

BY HUDA NV

DOHA: A document to support conservation and management of sharks and stingrays was defeated at the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species on Tuesday.

But the US, as a step forward to protect the depleting shark population, is expected to amend its proposal to list some of the species in CITES Appendix II.

The defeated document had recommended monitoring and reporting of the trade of shark and stingrays. The measure was taken down largely by China, Japan and Russia who argued that shark populations were not in trouble, despite a decline in some shark populations of 90 percent. The countries also argued that CITES involvement in the shark and stingray management was not necessary.

"It was a set back for the proposal as various parties had issues with the different clauses of the proposal. We are now working with the delegates on the issue and hope to be successful," said Jane Lyder, Deputy Assistant

Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, US Department of Interior and the Head of US CITES delegation in Qatar.

The United States had proposing to include Scalloped Hammerhead, Great Hammerhead, Smooth Hammerhead, sandbar Shark, Dusky Shark and Oceanic Whitetip in the CITES Appendix II, which would make trade of the fish sustainable. It is also supporting EU proposal for Porbeagle shark to be included in the list.

"We are supporting hammerheads and porbeagle, but not spiny dogfish as it is in better condition than the others. Sharks are not managed by any regional fishery management directly and are targets of huge commercial fishing. The US would like to have sustainable shark fishing which will not effect domestic trade. This is a sort of insurance that we will not have to consider listing them under Appendix I in future," she told *The Peninsula*.

Since some of the hammerheads included in the listing are look alike, US is willing to withdraw them from the listing if

countries want it to happen. "Many parties are worried about the inclusion of look-alike varieties. We are considering dropping two species if parties find it difficult to come to consensus."

China, Japan, Russia and a handful of other countries were against the CITES management of shark and stingray trade that come up on Tuesday. If it had come into being, there would have been an increased transparency in the shark trade, mainly for the shark-fin soup in which, fins of sharks are cut and rest is thrown back to the sea. The practice is responsible for killing some 73m sharks each year according to a recent study. The proposal had failed due to lack of a two-third majority supporting it.



Jane Lyder

THE PENINSULA

Saudi wildlife expert calls for curbs on falcon hybridisation

DOHA: A Saudi wildlife expert, attending the CITES meet here, has called for international norms to control hybridisation of falcons, which, he said was posing a threat to the original wild species.

Mohammed Shobrak, a member of the Birdlife Global Council and advisor to the Saudi wildlife conservation commission said CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna) should lay down regulations in this regard.

"Hybrid falcons that escape from the owners could breed with wild falcons such as Saker that can result in the genetic extinction of the original wild species. This poses a major threat to bio-diversity," Shobrak told *The Peninsula* on the sidelines of the conference, after he gave a presentation on falcons yesterday.

He said there was a need for international regulations to deal with this threat.

"Some of the countries that breed and export falcons have their own rules to regulate hybridisation. However, there is no effective monitoring of the hybrids in many countries. I hope CITES would take up this issue," said Shobrak.

Earlier in his presentation, Shobrak said, Saker, which is a globally threatened species was the most popular in the Gulf region thanks to its beauty and larger size. They are considered the most suitable to hunt bigger prey birds, particularly the Hubara Bustard, that is commonly found in the region.

Besides hybridisation, illegal trapping and trade, decline in

the prey base and loss of habitats, mortality due to electrocution on high power lines also pose major threats to this endangered species.

During the period from 2003 and 2009, about 154 migratory falcons had been caught in Saudi Arabia through illegal trapping, said Shobrak. Most of these birds are then traded illegally.

To have accurate data about the falcons in the country and prevent illegal trading, Saudi Arabia has made it mandatory to register all the falcons and to obtain permits. The Gulf countries have introduced special passports and identity chips for falcons. Such measures, however, have not helped fully eliminate illegal trading of this highly expensive bird, noted Shobrak.

THE PENINSULA

BY Huda NV

DOHA: The fate of Atlantic bluefin tuna, polar bears, and many other species are set to be decided today with the Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) putting the proposals for vote today. A huge divide is already evident with the delegation from 175 countries switching sides on various proposals.

The transfer of polar bear from CITES Appendix II to Appendix I will be the first species to be discussed today. Proposed by the United States, the listing of polar bears in Appendix I will bring an automatic ban on trade.

The proposal is based on information on polar bear habitat and reflects a concern that caution is necessary to ensure commercial trade does not compound the existing threats to the species' continued existence such as climate change.

US warns that the threat from climate change to the survival of the polar bear is so great that the world must grant it the highest possible protection.

Melting sea ice in the Arctic will kill thousands of bears in coming years. Biologists say there are 20,000 to 25,000 polar bears in the Arctic, spread across 19 geographical sub-populations. However, at the present rate of climate change destroying sea ice habitat, experts predict a two third decline in polar bear population by 2050.

Added to these man-made climatic changes, continued commercial trade is making the situation worse. So to cut at least one part of the threat, an Appendix I listing is being called for by US supported by Egypt and Rwanda. However, other nations, including Europe, are expected to vote against.

Canada, which exports skins and products from about 300 polar bears legally shot each year, says the trade is insignificant compared to the threat of global warming.

Also CITES secretariat is against the proposal as they doubt if it meets the required criteria for Appendix I listing. It also says that there is sufficient evidence that the species has undergone a marked decline in

population size in the wild large enough.

Also seeking Appendix I listing is North Atlantic bluefin tuna, proposed by Monaco. Thanks to Sushi and Sashimi market, bluefin numbers have fallen by nearly 75 percent since 1957. According to Japan, which imports 80 percent of the tuna, the issue should be handled regional bodies.

Experts are skeptical of any proposal coming to being as a majority of two-thirds is needed to pass the proposals. Due to this issue, Sharks and Stingrays management proposal received a set back, on Tuesday

CITES votes against U.S. proposal to ban trade on polar bears

By Delliiah J. Williams (aka DelliiahStarling)
Doha : Qatar | Mar 18, 2010

The United States submitted a proposal to the international community at a Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), to extend greater protection to polar bears.

Unfortunately, the announcement was made on March 18, that the ban was not approved by the 175-country international panel, which was formed in 1973 to protect endangered and threatened species from poaching and illegal trade.

• The United States proposal would have banned the international commercial trade in polar bear parts and products and

• during debate by the participants, virtually all parties agreed with the serious threat posed to the polar bear's survival by climate change.

However, taking the stand against the ban was Canada, Norway and Greenland. They felt that hunting done by Aboriginal communities was critical to their economies and trade posed a nominal threat.

Defenders of Wildlife expressed its disappointment over the decision by the Parties at (CITES) not to give greater protection to the polar bear.

The following is a statement by Peter Jenkins, Defenders' Director of International Conservation:

"We were proud the United States made this ground-breaking proposal, the first attempt within CITES to clearly confront the looming threat of global warming and its impact on an iconic animal like the polar bear. The U.S. effort has already stimulated more protections to be put in place by Canada in terms of a reduced harvest quota for a key bear population."

Saudi wildlife expert calls for curbs on falcon hybridisation

Web posted at: 3/18/2010 3:38:54

Source :: : The Peninsula

DOHA: A Saudi wildlife expert, attending the CITES meet here, has called for international norms to control hybridisation of falcons, which, he said was posing a threat to the original wild species.

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Candellilla plant taken off CITES appendix

By Noimot Olaiwola

Gulf Times

As the 15th conference of the parties of CITES completed its fifth day yesterday, delegates continued to enlist and delist animal and plant species on the convention's appendices with a two-thirds majority.

At a briefing yesterday, Committee I chair John Donaldson, from South Africa, said a series of proposals on plant and animals submitted by different countries were discussed.

"The amendment proposals are the most interesting part of the meeting as this is where people want to get a species listed or removed from CITES appendices," he said.

A proposal to remove from CITES appendix a plant producing candellilla, an essential raw material for cosmetics (especially lipsticks), inks, dyes, adhesives, coatings, emulsions, polishes, pharmaceutical products and gum base, was accepted by two-thirds majority.

Candellilla is a shrubby plant whose natural range extends from the southwest of the US (New Mexico and Texas) to Mexico, having densely clustered stems that yield the multi-purpose candellilla wax.

"Another proposal to include a species of one of the essential oil producing trees on CITES appendix listing was also accepted, alongside a number of proposals from Madagascar, a country which is known to be facing series of wildlife threats such as habitat destruction," Donaldson said.

The proposal to enlist under CITES regulation, two threatened by the Madagascar palm series including their seeds, was accepted by the parties.

The committee also agreed on delisting a number of plant species from CITES appendices.

"The South African rosewoods is no longer under the regulation of CITES as it has been delisted," he added.

The official said that the proposals to recognise different species of dogs for domestic use were also discussed, with a majority view agreeing that domestic dogs should not be regulated by CITES.

"However, a proposal by the US to delist bobcats from CITES appendix II because the animal species were no longer endangered did not make it," he added.

Giving an account of Committee II, Qatar's Ministry of Environment's Wildlife Conservation director Ghanem Abdullah Mohamed said the group was able to amend some appendices.

"We amended and accepted the US proposal to list some orchid species on appendix I and also two proposals from South Africa to lift the ban on some plants species because the international trade in them is no longer threatening their existence," he said.

Brazil's proposal to enlist rosewood and its stems, shoots and leaves in appendix II was accepted.

"Argentina's proposal to include some wood plants species on appendix II was accepted and adopted but also with special amendment approved by the European Union," Mohamed said.

The official added that the committee also accepted a Switzerland

Trade curbs upheld on look-alike bobcat

(AFP) - 6 hours ago

DOHA — The UN body regulating commerce in endangered wildlife on Wednesday slapped down a US plea to remove cross-border trade restrictions on a common bobcat.

Lynx rufus has never been threatened with extinction and today roams much of North America in numbers ranging from 1.4 to 2.6 million.

But the spotted, medium-sized cat closely resembles its critically endangered European cousin the Iberian lynx, whose numbers have dwindled to less than 150, scattered mainly across the southern tip of Spain.

Concerned the two species could be confused -- deliberately or by accident -- the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) decreed in 1977 that exports of pelts and fur products of the American feline must be registered and accompanied by permits.

Having recently created a fur identification guide to help customs and wildlife officials distinguish between species in the Lynx genus, the United States argued that the US bobcat could be stricken from CITES' books.

But the proposal -- backed by fur industry experts -- was voted down, falling short of the needed two-thirds majority of delegations present.

"There are generally signs of a revitalised international trade in cat furs for fashion, and illegal trade problems are emerging," the wildlife monitoring NGO TRAFFIC said in recommending the measure be rejected.

For the period 2002-2008, just under 350,000 L. rufus skins were exported from the United States, Canada and Mexico.

The Iberian lynx, L. pardinus, has been on a downward spiral due to fragmented habitat, disease, hunting and a severe depletion of its primary prey, the European rabbit.

The 175-nation CITES, meeting through March 25, will vote on dozens of measures affecting trade in ivory, sharks, polar bears and coral, among other plants and animals.

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From The Times
March 18, 2010

Conservationists condemn Japan's passion for coral

Leo Lewis: Asia Business Correspondent

It glows from the neck, wrists and ears of fashionable women from Tokyo to Tonbridge, but coral is fast becoming as controversial as it is lustrous.

While it remains popular, jewelers as influential as Tiffany have been queuing up recently to say they do not sell real coral. And now Japan's \$100 million a year industry has come under attack for harvesting the endangered species.

The assault on its coral exports has been mounted in Qatar, at the Conference of Parties to the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora — an event that was always likely to leave the Tokyo delegates reeling from a welter of criticism.

The country already attracts international condemnation for its insistence on fishing minke whale and bluefin tuna. Indeed, the conference has already raised the prospect of a ban on cross-border trade in Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin tuna. Consistent with the traditionally robust defences of its own tuna-fishing industry and its status as the importer of 80 per cent of the world's bluefin catch, Japan has said it will not comply with a ban.

But, to the surprise of Japanese delegates, the conference has also produced a proposal by the US and European Union for a ban on all unlicensed trade in coral for use in jewellery. That ban would hit Kochi especially hard: the central Japanese region is one of the world's biggest harvesters of coral and has deep economic problems.

Why Bluefin Tuna Talks Were Recipe for Disaster

Updated: 27 minutes ago

Carl Franzen Contributor

(March 18) -- Sink or swim? For one especially valuable fish, failed conservation talks mean the former is far more likely.

A United Nations-backed wildlife conference in Qatar canned a proposal aimed at protecting the world's dwindling stock of Atlantic bluefin tuna Thursday, just hours after rejecting a similar trade ban on polar bear parts.

The bluefin debate has been going on since the early 1980s, Bloomberg noted. The fish has been a prize catch since the early 1900s for its use in sushi and other dishes. Recently, a number of scientists have come forward with data indicating that the fish faces a biological watershed and may even go extinct in the wild.

Delegates entered the Qatar conference with high hopes they could agree on a temporary ban on bluefin fishing, a last-ditch effort to save the species before an imminent collapse of stocks. But a contingent of countries led by Japan (the world's leader in bluefin consumption) were intent on scuttling the idea from the get-go, arguing that a ban on bluefin fishing would be "unworkable and unfair."

To see why the bluefin trade-ban proposal failed, take a look at the key ingredients involved in the ban talks:

Start With 2 International Wildlife Bodies

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) is the name of the U.N. conference and also one of the world's largest voluntary wildlife conservation pacts, including 175 parties. Agreements reached are binding but do not supersede international law. The pact categorizes species into three groups: those that are protected in at least one country, those that are "not necessarily threatened with extinction, but in which trade must be controlled" to ensure their survival, and finally those that are "threatened with extinction," which are only permitted to be traded under "exceptional circumstances." In order to impose the ban, members would have had to agree to reclassify the bluefin in the third category.

The International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) describes itself as an "inter-governmental fishery organization responsible for the conservation of tunas and tuna-like species in the Atlantic Ocean and its adjacent seas." It includes 58 nations. The organization has long been criticized for failing to act on the reports prepared by its own scientific researchers: "ICCAT members routinely ignore the advice of their own scientific committee and set catch quotas at double recommended levels. National fleets then regularly exceed even these quotas," Scientific American magazine said.

Add 1 Prized Fish

The Atlantic bluefin tuna (scientific name *Thunnus thynnus*) is a torpedo-shaped, metallic blue and white, warm-blooded fish that measures an average 6.5 feet long and 550 pounds, according to National Geographic. The bluefin lives in the North Atlantic, can travel at a top speed of 43 mph and has been recorded migrating anywhere from the spawning grounds in the Mediterranean all the way to the Gulf of Mexico.

As far as current numbers go, the ICCAT and other groups agree that the portrait is particularly grim. One report from ICCAT described the situation in stark detail:

Continued fishing at current fishing mortalities is expected to drive the spawning stock biomass in the East to very low levels; i.e. to about 18 percent of the 1970 level and 6 percent of the unfished level. This combination of high fishing mortality, low spawning stock biomass and massive fishing overcapacity results in a high risk of fisheries and stock collapse. A study by Mackenzie et al. (2009) concludes that even if a near-complete ban on all bluefin tuna fishing in the Northeast Atlantic and Mediterranean were implemented and enforced from 2008 to 2022, the population would still probably fall to record lows in the next few years.

Still, as the numbers of fish go down, the price goes up: A year ago, The Washington Post reported that "a single bluefin can sell for \$100,000 or more." More recently, The Japan Times highlighted several indications of how valuable the bluefin has become in recent years, including this illustrative example: "Two months ago, the owners of two sushi restaurants in Japan and one in Hong Kong banded together to pay \$175,000 for a 233-kg bluefin tuna at Tokyo's Tsukiji fish market."

1 Proposed Ban

Last year, the tiny Mediterranean country of Monaco (south of France) spearheaded the current effort to implement a temporary global ban on the international trade of bluefin. Collaborating with CITES, Monaco submitted a proposal that calls for "banning fishing of bluefin in the eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean until each fishing nation crafts measures towards the recovery of bluefin tun stocks, and establishes a system to monitor poaching," according to Japan Today. Monaco's proposal would make an exemption for the domestic fishing and sale of bluefin.

175 Nations

A few major players emerged from the multitude of representatives at the conference.

Initially, the ban was greeted by hesitation from many nations. Nature reported that the

European Union initially declined to vote on Monaco's proposal, despite the fact that several countries with large fishing industries supported it. But by early 2010, more European nations were ready to support it, as detailed in The New York Times.

The U.S. eventually joined those calling for a ban, announcing via the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration that it supported Monaco in calling for "the strongest possible management for the conservation of Atlantic bluefin tuna, a fish which is in serious trouble."

Japan, which numerous sources note consumes the vast majority of the worldwide bluefin tuna catch annually, has long resisted the idea of curtailing access to bluefin stock. Japanese officials argue that bluefin are not sufficiently endangered and that a ban would give an unfair economic leverage to Europe, where most of the bluefin fishermen are based.

In the latest round of talks, Japanese delegates secured support from China and other Asian countries. The Associated Press reported that Australia, Peru and several other nations were also only willing to back a weaker proposal.

A Smattering of Famous Foodies

The bluefin is also known as "blue ahi tuna," according to *Steaks Guide*, and is prized by chefs for its "remarkable" flavor; it is "considered to be the cream of the crop when it comes to tuna." The Web site advises grilling it, and observes that it is popular in Japanese and Caribbean dishes. Meanwhile, the ICCAT says it is "traditionally consumed fresh in Mediterranean countries, and it is also one of the most appreciated species for the sashimi market in Japan and in the overall global market."

The French news agency AFP pointed out that several high-class U.S. restaurants are famous for serving it:

As chefs at the upscale New York sushi restaurant Megu slide huge knives through their latest bluefin tuna, the possible extinction of the species is far from their minds. ... The Nobu chain, co-owned by actor Robert De Niro, continues to serve the endangered fish, despite being targeted by environmentally-minded celebrities such as Elle Macpherson and Sting.

However, as Sasha Issenberg, author of "The Sushi Economy," told *Slate* magazine in an interview: "By definition, these tuna have to be laundered, sometimes on multiple continents, and it's hard to envision any sort of reputable system for many species of fish that would give a guarantee to a diner or chef that they actually know where their fish came from and how they were caught."

Andrew Zimmern, host of the hit Travel Channel TV show "Bizarre Foods," noted a potential unintended consequence of the ban on his Minneapolis St. Paul Magazine blog:

Here's the rub. Ban the fishing of Atlantic Bluefin and what does that do to the Pacific fish stocks? I am not saying the Atlantic ban shouldn't happen, but if it does, and if it's listed on Appendix 1, requiring the strictest limits/penalties, the whole "global sushi economy" would go topsy turvy and the prices for Pacific tuna would quintuple (or worse) ... seriously.

A Liberal Helping of Activist Groups

Greenpeace attempted to leverage the major media sources in Qatar to promote support for the ban. On the Greenpeace Campaign Blog, a campaigner argued: "I put forward how silly the Japanese position is -- if they want to keep eating the stuff, why on earth wouldn't they support a temporary trade ban to protect it for the long-term?"

In January, the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society announced that it was sending its two main vessels into the Mediterranean to disrupt commercial fishing of bluefin tuna.

Last year, following the ICCAT's vote in favor of lowering the total bluefin catch by 40 percent, to a total quota of 13,500 tons for 2010, a spokesperson for the Pew Environment Group told the London Times: "Only a zero catch limit could have maximised the chances that Atlantic bluefin tuna could recover to the point where the fishery could exist in the future."

And You May Have a Final Meal

The Times reported that at current fishing rates, the fish would be extinct within two years.

UN body rejects bluefin tuna ban

By Richard Black
Environment correspondent, BBC News website

A proposal to ban international trade in Atlantic bluefin tuna, which is a sushi mainstay in Japan, has been rejected by a UN wildlife meeting.

Thursday's decision occurred after Japan, Canada and many poor nations opposed the measure on the grounds it would devastate fishing economies.

Monaco tabled the plan at the meeting of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).

Stocks have fallen by about 85% since the industrial fishing era began.

Monaco argued that the organisation responsible for managing the bluefin fishery - the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (Iccat) - had not implemented measures strict enough to ensure the species' survival.

Scientists and campaigners working with conservation organisations were disappointed with the outcome.

"We think it is quite a blow," said Glenn Sant, leader of the global marine programme with Traffic, the international wildlife trade monitoring network.

" Today's vote was a setback for the Atlantic bluefin tuna "
Tom Strickland, US delegation

"Iccat has not been able to demonstrate that it is able to implement procedures that will lead to [the bluefin's] recovery.

"There was really no question that it met the [scientific] criteria for listing," he told BBC News from the conference in Doha, Qatar.

"Listing" is the technical term for imposing restriction on international trade through CITES.

Bluefin tuna was slated for listing on Appendix One - a complete ban.

Mr Sant was a member of the expert panel convened last year by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization to examine whether the Atlantic bluefin's plight was severe enough to meet Appendix One criteria.

A majority of the panel believed it did, though consensus was not achieved. Earlier, Iccat's scientific advisers had concluded a trade ban was justified.

The US, which supported and lobbied for the ban, also described the outcome as "disappointing". Today's vote was a setback for the Atlantic bluefin tuna," said Tom Strickland, head of the nation's CITES delegation.

"But we will keep fighting to ensure that the fishery is managed sustainably, so that future generations may see it return to health."

US officials said they would be pressing governments to live up to promises to control fishing through Iccat.

- CITES EXPLAINED
- Threatened organisms listed on three appendices depending on level of risk
 - Appendix 1 - all international trade banned
 - Appendix 2 - international trade monitored and regulated
 - Appendix 3 - trade bans by individual governments, others asked to assist
 - "Uplisting" - moving organism to a more protective appendix; "downlisting" - the reverse
 - Conferences of the Parties (COPs) held every three years
 - CITES administered by UN Environment Programme (Unep)

Japan - the principal bluefin-consuming nation - had made its opposition to the proposal clear before the CITES meeting started.

It argues that commercial fisheries should be managed through bodies such as Iccat.

The debate - described by one observer as "passionate" - saw two votes.

The first, on an EU amendment that weakened the original Monaco proposal but still endorsed the ban, was defeated by 72 votes to 43 in a secret ballot.

(The EU is supposed to vote as a bloc in these negotiations. Nations with active tuna fleets such as France, Italy and Spain had been unwilling to support an outright, immediate ban.)

The vote on the original motion then went down by 68 votes to 20.

In theory, EU nations had to abstain on the second vote as not all delegates had authority from their governments to vote for it.

However, some - including the UK - did support the motion, BBC News has learned - a move that potentially risks sanctions from the European Commission.

Bear facts

Sue Lieberman, director of international policy with the Pew Environment Group, suggested lobbying from the fishing industry was ultimately responsible for the defeat.

"This meeting presented a golden opportunity for governments to take a stand against overfishing, and too many governments failed to do so," she said.

"The market for this fish is just too lucrative, and the pressure from fishing interests too great, for enough governments to support a truly sustainable future for the fish."

CITES votes can be reviewed on the meeting's final day, but the substantial margin of defeat suggests this one will not be.

Earlier in the day, a US-sponsored motion seeking to ban international trade in products made from polar bears was also defeated.

Opponents argued that the species' main threat was not trade, but climate change. Some conservation groups - including Traffic - did not support the proposal, therefore.

Bid to ban trade in bluefin tuna defeated

By Jennifer Rankin
18.03.2010 / 17:26 CET

EU fails to win enough support for ban at international conference.

The EU has failed in its attempt to get trade in Atlantic bluefin tuna banned at an international conservation summit being held in Doha, Qatar.

The EU had wanted a ban on the trade of bluefin tuna from 2011 because stocks are at dangerously low levels.

But the EU and other countries supporting a ban failed to get the necessary majority of two-thirds of countries which have signed up to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) to add tuna to a list of banned species.

Janez Potočnik, the European commissioner for environment, and Maria Damanaki, the European commissioner for fisheries, said in a statement: "We are disappointed with the outcome of the CITES meeting as regards the EU proposal for a listing in Appendix I of bluefin tuna." Species listed under CITES appendix I cannot be traded.

The commissioners added: "If action is not taken, there is a very serious danger that the bluefin tuna will no longer exist."

Stocks of bluefin tuna in the Mediterranean have fallen by 85% since the 1950s.

Japan and Canada were among the countries that opposed the ban at the meeting in Doha.

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Bluefin Tuna, Polar Bear Trade Ban Rejected

A U.N. wildlife meeting has rejected two proposals that would stop poaching and trade of these endangered species.

Thu Mar 18, 2010 12:00 PM ET | content provided by Associated Press

A proposal to ban the export of Atlantic bluefin tuna prized in sushi has been rejected by a U.N. wildlife meeting.

Thursday's decision occurred after Japan, Canada and scores of poor nations opposed the measure on the grounds that it would devastate fishing economies.

Monaco introduced the proposal at the 175-nation Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, or CITES. It argued that extreme measures are necessary because the stocks have fallen by 75 percent and current managing agencies have done nothing to rebuild the stocks.

Only the United States, Norway and Kenya supported the proposal outright. The European Union asked that implementation be delayed until May 2011 to give authorities to respond to concerns about overfishing.

Another U.S.-backed proposal was defeated this morning at the wildlife meeting: placing a ban on the international trade of polar bear skins, teeth and claws. The proposal was shot down over concerns it would hurt indigenous economies and arguments the practice didn't pose a significant threat to the animals.

The Americans argued that the sale of polar bear skins is compounding the loss of the animals' sea ice habitat due to climate change. There are projections that the bear's numbers, which are estimated at 20,000 to 25,000, could decline by two-thirds due by 2050 due to habitat loss in the Arctic.

"We're disappointed," said Jane Lyder, the Department of Interior's deputy assistant secretary for fish and wildlife and parks. "But we understand that CITES is still trying to understand how to incorporate climate change into its decision making."

Canada, along with Norway and Greenland, led the opposition to the U.S. proposal. They said the threat from trade was minimal and the hunting done by Aboriginal communities was critical to their economies. Only 2 percent of Canadian polar bears are internationally traded and the country strictly manages the commerce, Canada said.

"There is no doubt that action must continue to ensure the conservation of polar bears. Canada's goal is long term survival of polar bears," Canadian representative Basile Van Havre said. "But Canada does not think the proposal is supported by facts."

Frank Pokiak, an indigenous leader from Canada, said communities in the Arctic have hunted bears for generations, mostly for meat for food and pelts for clothing and shelter. He said they hunt them in a sustainable way and would continue doing so with or without an international ban. "We have always cared for land and the wildlife because we have a lot to lose," Pokiak told delegates. "If it wasn't for polar bears and other wildlife that we harvest, we wouldn't exist today."

The big white bear, the world's largest land meat-eater, "nanuq" to the Inuit, may be uniquely susceptible to climate change as rising temperatures fast shrink its habitat, the Arctic sea ice.

Many bears spend their whole lives on the ice, mating, giving birth and hunting for their main prey, the ringed seal. But Arctic summers may be almost free of sea ice within 30 years, the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration predicted last April.

Data available on polar bear trade shows that since the early 1990s the market for polar bear carcasses and parts has increased. From 1992 to 2006, approximately 31,294 live polar bears, carcasses or parts were exported to 73 different countries, according to data collected by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species.

Skins are the most popular export item, and Canada is the largest commercial exporter.

In May 2008, the U.S. classified the polar bear as a threatened species, the first with its survival at risk due to global warming. The determination made all but subsistence hunting illegal.

Conservationists criticized the vote rejecting a broader, international ban, accusing countries of ignoring the plight of a bear that for many has become the poster child for global warming.

"CITES parties have turned their backs on this iconic species," said the International Fund for Animal Welfare's Jeff Flocken, whose group is part of a polar bear coalition which several environmental groups.

"Polar bears clearly meet the criteria for an uplisting to Appendix I," he said, referring to the designation that was proposed by the United States. "Yet parties are using the fact that climate change poses to the greater long-term threat to the species as an excuse to do nothing about immediate threats hastening their decline."

Andrew Wetzier, director of NRDC's Wildlife Conservation Project, called the vote "a setback" in what otherwise has been a successful effort to protect the bear.

"It keeps some the most important populations of polar bears squarely in the crosshairs," he said. "We will continue work to find a new way to protect polar bears from this unsustainable hunt."

No trade reprieve for polar bears

By Anne Chaon (AFP) -- 7 hours ago

DOHA — Polar bears, the global mascot in the fight against climate change, were denied a reprieve Thursday when a UN body shot down a US proposal to ban cross-border trade in the animals or their parts.

In a vote at the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), meeting in Doha through March 25, the measure fell far short of the required two-thirds majority.

The United States had called for a "precautionary approach," noting the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) classifies the animal as "vulnerable," with their numbers down by 30 percent in the past 45 years.

"The current level of trade has a detrimental impact ... and may further stimulate the international market in countries that allow it, such as Russia," said Jane Lyder, head of the US delegation at the Doha talks.

Recent data showed that as many as 700 of the bears may be killed illegally each year, especially in Russia, she told journalists.

But opponents of the ban argued that the main threat facing the snow-white carnivore, the largest of the bear family, is climate change, not poaching or over-exploitation.

There are currently 20,000 to 25,000 in the wild across Canada, Greenland, Russia, Alaska and Norway, and about 600 are legally harvested each year by indigenous peoples, especially the Inuit.

Only Canada -- home to 65 percent of the global population -- allows exports, which are limited to about 300 specimens a year.

They are killed mainly for their fur, teeth and bones, or sought as hunting trophies. Several states invoked the rights of aboriginal peoples for whom hunting the bears is a way of life and an economic lifeline.

"Polar bears are a valuable source of food, and an important contribution to our livelihood," said an Inuit member of the Canadian delegation.

"We have a lot to lose if polar bear trade doesn't exist any more," he told journalists.

The polar bear has been registered since 1975 in Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), which allows controlled trade.

Inclusion in Appendix I, as requested by the United States, would have totally banned exports.

In 2008, Washington listed polar bears under the Endangered Species Act, ending importation to the US of trophies killed by sports hunters. Greenland imposed a total ban on exports the same year.

The International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) decried the outcome in Doha as a "death knell" for the bears.

"This is a missed opportunity, a final chance to respond to threats" facing the bear, said Jeff Flocken, director of conservation group the Global Fund for Animal Welfare.

Other environmental groups, however, said hunting for export is limited and well-managed, and that the ban would not boost the animal's chances for survival.

"The polar bear does not meet any of the biological criteria for inclusion in Appendix I. Trade is not a significant threat to the species," said TRAFFIC, an NGO that monitors wildlife trade.

Several NGOs said the drive to uplist the animal was largely "emotional."

The final tally was 48 votes in favour of the Appendix I listing, 62 against and 11 abstentions, according to IFAW.

The 175-nation CITES will vote on dozens of measures affecting trade in tuna, ivory, sharks and coral, among other plants and animals.

Proposal for Worldwide Ban on Polar Bear Trade Defeated

by Brian Merchant, Brooklyn, New York on 03.18.10

Business & Politics

A ban backed by the United States to ban the international trade of polar bear skins, teeth and claws at the UN Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species has been shot down, due to opposition led by Canada and Norway. The US argued that the international trade of the bear parts was damaging populations that are already endangered by habitat loss caused by climate change. And yet,

The arguments evidently weren't strong enough, as the ban failed, leaving the 20,000-25,000 polar bears believed to be in existence susceptible to trade. The proposal failed due to arguments from Canada, Norway, and Greenland that the "threat to polar bears from trade was minimal," according to the AP. They argued that polar bear hunting was important to Aboriginal people, and was central to their economies.

But it seems clear that the polar bear trade, while perhaps not the primary threat to the species' existence, is having a significant effect on the animals' population.

From the AP:

Data available on polar bear trade shows that since the early 1990s the market for polar bear carcasses and parts has increased. From 1992 to 2006, approximately 31,294 live polar bears, carcasses or parts were exported to 73 different countries, according to data collected by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species.

Skins are the most popular export item, and Canada is the largest commercial exporter.

With perhaps only 20,000 believed to be in existence, that's a pretty hefty percentage of the population that's falling to the bear-skin trade.

The counter-argument came from a spokesman for the Aboriginal people. He said:

communities in the Arctic have hunted bears for generations, mostly for meat for food and pelts for clothing and shelter. He said they hunt them in a sustainable way and would continue doing so without an international ban. "We have always cared for land and the wildlife because we have a lot to lose," Pokiak told delegates. "If it wasn't for polar bears and other wildlife that we harvest, we wouldn't exist today."

It again comes down to the ever-thorny dilemma--preserve and protect tradition, and an ages-old livelihood? Or protect a single, diminishing, and endangered species?

Via Huffpo Green

Dubai: A rare whale shark that was a hotel attraction in Dubai has been returned to the wild, the resort said on Thursday, following an international campaign against the captivity.

Sammy, a freckled whale shark that is an internationally protected species, had been kept inside a lobby aquarium at Dubai's upscale Atlantis resort since September 2008.

The 14-foot female, was returned to the Gulf waters where it had been "rescued" said the hotel, where guests pay up to 7,500 dollars a night for a top suite.

The shark was a top crowd puller, but also attracted unwelcome publicity for the hotel, after animal rights groups began a worldwide campaign to free Sammy.

A "Free Sammy" Facebook campaign attracted more than 26,000 members.

The hotel announcement came as a 175-nation Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) met in nearby Qatar.

Atlantis said that the shark had been tagged for monitoring and research.

PTI

Trade in polar bears, bluefin tuna can continue, UN conference says

Posted : Thu, 18 Mar 2010 16:02:08 GMT

By : dpa

Doha - Thousands of delegates from hundreds of countries gathered in Qatar on Thursday decided not to ban trade in polar bears, the Atlantic bluefin tuna, or the ornate spiny-tailed agama. Participants in a conference of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered and Threatened Species, rejected the three proposals after lengthy debate.

The United States had sought to ban trade in polar bears or their parts for profit and curb hunting of the animal, but Canada successfully led opposition to the ban.

William Wijnstekers, secretary general of the treaty organisation, told the German Press Agency dpa that he had asked representatives of state parties to consider the effects of climate change on the polar bear's habitat.

But Steven Nash, of the treaty body's Capacity Building unit, said representatives of arctic communities had successfully argued that hunting and trading polar bears were essential to their livelihood.

Canada argued that trade in the animal, which it said affected only 2 per cent of the 28,000 polar bears in the world, did not threaten the species' survival.

Delegates also rejected a proposal from Monaco to ban trade in the Atlantic bluefin tuna, prized around the world as a delicacy, saying its population had declined by 75 per cent following overfishing.

Japan, which imports 80 per cent of the fish, successfully led opposition to the ban, but said it would continue to work to ensure the massive fish's survival.

Delegates likewise rejected an Israeli proposal to classify the ornate spiny-tailed agama - a large lizard that lives in mountainous regions, including in Egypt's Sinai peninsula - as in urgent danger of extinction because of trade in the reptile by collectors.

Egypt and Mexico had backed proposals to take the Nile and Mexican crocodiles, respectively, off the list of creatures classified as facing an urgent threat of extinction, but only the Mexican crocodile was re-classified in the end, after the proposal was amended to exclude the Guatemalan crocodile.

Mar 18, 2010

UN: No ban on bluefin tuna, polar bear parts

12:23 PM
USA Today

The member nations of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species voted Thursday not to prohibit international trade in Atlantic bluefin tuna, a species that has been extensively overfished, or polar bear parts.

Japan, which imports about 80% of bluefin for sushi and sashimi, led those opposed to the ban. Many developing countries voted against it due to fears it would affect their fishing economies, the Associated Press reported from Doha, Qatar, where the meeting is taking place.

Only the United States, Norway and Kenya supported the proposal. It can still be reconsidered at the final plenary session on Thursday, March 25.

Conservation and fisheries groups have argued that the large, migratory fish need protection because their populations have fallen as much as 75% due to overfishing.

"The market for this fish is just too lucrative and the pressure from fishing interests too great, for enough governments to support a truly sustainable future for the fish," Susan Lieberman, director of international policy for the Pew Environment Group, said in a statement.

With no ban, the tuna will be regulated by the group that has long overseen their trade, the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas, or ICCAT.

Monaco and conservation groups said that historically ICCAT's quotas had been too high to allow the fish stocks to replenish.

"Today's vote puts the fate of Atlantic bluefin tuna back in the hands of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), the very body that drove the species to the disastrous state it is now in," Lieberman said.

The delegates also rejected a U.S. proposal to ban the international sale of polar bear skins and parts. Canada and Greenland in turn said that a small enough number of polar bears are killed and thus wouldn't affect the population as a whole, while potentially devastating indigenous communities that rely on polar bear hunts for money.

U.S. delegates said that hunting only compounded the difficulties faced by the bears as their habitat degrades with climate change. By some projections, the iconic animals could decline by as much as two-thirds by 2050.

Readers, do you think tuna and polar bear trade should be banned?

By Elizabeth Weise

Japan's Prime Minister Welcomes Vote Against Bluefin Tuna Ban

March 18, 2010, 10:21 PM EDT

By Stuart Biggs and Takashi Hirokawa

March 19 (Bloomberg) -- Japanese Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama said he welcomed the decision by a United Nations-sponsored conference on endangered species to vote against a ban on the international trade of Atlantic bluefin tuna.

"It's good that tuna prices won't rise for now, but the situation is still unpredictable," Hatoyama told reporters in Tokyo today. "We must remain cautious."

Members of the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, meeting in Doha, Qatar, voted by 68 to 20 against a ban yesterday after about three hours of debate, with 30 countries abstaining. Japan lobbied against the ban and hosted a sushi buffet for delegates, Nikkei English News reported yesterday.

Japan, which consumes about 80 percent of the global bluefin catch, said a ban would be unfair to importing countries. The country's delegates said Atlantic bluefin populations are better managed by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas, a regional fishery organization known as ICCAT.

The bluefin is the most prized among tuna for making sushi or sashimi in Japan. A 5-centimeter (2-inch) piece of the fattest part of the fish, called otoro in Japanese, can cost more than 2,000 yen (\$22) in a Tokyo restaurant.

Bluefin can weigh as much as 300 kilograms (661 pounds) and can swim at speeds of 70 kilometers (43 miles) an hour.

Declining Populations

"It's scandalous that governments didn't even get the chance to engage in meaningful debate about the international trade," Sergi Tudela, Head of Fisheries at environmental group WWF Mediterranean, said in a statement yesterday. ICCAT "has repeatedly failed to sustainably manage this fishery," he said.

Bluefin populations in the eastern and western Atlantic declined 74 percent and 82 percent respectively between 1957 and 2007, according to ICCAT studies cited by Monaco, which sponsored the ban.

Eastern Atlantic bluefin will probably vanish within the next decade, according to a study by marine scientist Brian Mackenzie at Denmark's National Institute of Aquatic Resources. Over-fishing in the Mediterranean, where most eastern Atlantic bluefin are caught, has contributed to the declining population. The problem is exacerbated by tuna fattening ranches, which exceed legal catch limits, according to ICCAT data.

Fishermen caught as much as 60,000 metric tons a year from 1999 to 2007, almost twice the ICCAT-imposed quotas of between 29,500 and 32,000 tons, ICCAT data shows. ICCAT lowered the 2010 quotas to 13,500 tons at a meeting last year.

Countries supporting the ban included the U.S. and U.K. A European Union proposal that would have delayed the ban's implementation by a year was also rejected by delegates yesterday.

"It is now more important than ever for people to do what the politicians failed to do - stop consuming bluefin tuna," the WWF's Tudela said in the statement.

--Editors: Aaron Sheldrick, Hwee Ann Tan.

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By Huda NV

DOHA: A document to support conservation and management of sharks and stingrays was defeated at the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species on Tuesday.

But the US, as a step forward to protect the depleting shark population, is expected to amend its proposal to list some of the species in CITES Appendix II.

Jane Lyder



The defeated document had recommended monitoring and reporting of the trade of shark and stingrays. The measure was taken down largely by China, Japan and Russia who argued that shark populations were not in trouble, despite a decline in some shark populations of 90 percent. The countries also argued that CITES involvement in the shark and stingray management was not necessary.

"It was a set back for the proposal as various parties had issues with the different clauses of the proposal. We are now working with the delegates on the issue and hope to be successful," said Jane Lyder, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, US Department of Interior and the Head of US CITES delegation in Qatar.

The United States had proposing to include Scalloped Hammerhead, Great Hammerhead, Smooth Hammerhead, Dusky Shark and Oceanic Whitetip in the CITES Appendix II, which would make trade of the fish sustainable. It is also supporting EU proposal for Porbeagle shark to be included in the list.

"We are supporting hammerheads and porbeagle, but not spiny dogfish as it is in better condition than the others. Sharks are not managed by any regional fishery management directly and are targets of huge commercial fishing. The US would like to have sustainable shark fishing which will not effect domestic trade. This is a sort of insurance that we will not have to consider listing them under Appendix I in future," she told The Peninsula.

Since some of the hammer heads included in the listing are look alike, US is willing to withdraw them from the listing if countries want it to happen. "Many parties are worried about the inclusion of look-alike varieties. We are considering dropping two species if parties find it difficult to come to consenses."

China, Japan, Russia and a handful of other countries were against the CITES management of shark and stingray trade that come up on Tuesday. If it had come into being, there would have been an increased transparency in the shark trade, mainly for the shark-fin soup in which, fins of sharks are cut and rest is thrown back to the sea. The practice is responsible for killing some 73m sharks each year according to a recent study. The proposal had failed due to lack of a two-third majority supporting it.

France opposes immediate tuna ban: Kouchner

The Peninsula

France wants to wait for a scientific report on bluefin tuna due next year before the world community bans trade in the fish, Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner said in a Japanese interview.

The French fishing industry has backed Japan in opposing the proposed ban, which is supported by the European Union and the United States at ongoing talks of the UN Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).

Members of the 175-nation convention gathered in Doha should "wait for" the report on bluefin tuna stocks due to be issued by a CITES panel in May next year, Kouchner told Thursday's edition of the Yomiuri Shimbun newspaper.

"I hope that an irreversible decision will not be made until the danger of extinction is scientifically proved," he was quoted as saying in the interview published in Japanese.

Kouchner was due to arrive in Japan Thursday to meet with Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama and Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada.

Japan, which buys three-quarters of the global bluefin haul, is campaigning fiercely to prevent Mediterranean and Atlantic catches from falling under CITES' Appendix I, which outlaws all international commerce.

Environmental groups warn that bluefin tuna faces disappearance because of overfishing in the two seas, mainly for the lucrative market in Japan, where the species is the costly mainstay of sushi and sashimi.

While the EU as a whole backs a ban, French ministers have called for a breathing space to allow scientists to determine precise stocks of the fish.

Any ban should only come into force in 18 months, French Ecology Minister Jean-Louis Borloo said last month.

Next year's CITES report will be based on a fresh evaluation of the bluefin tuna population by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas that is expected by November, the Yomiuri said.

Saving the bluefin tuna: an expert explains Canada's bind

by John Geddes on Friday, March 19, 2010 5:37pm
Macleans.ca

News that Canada sided with Japan in opposing a United Nations ban on exports of bluefin tuna at first sounded like an embarrassing case of Ottawa being on the wrong side on a pressing conservation issue.

The bluefin is an iconic species: big, fast, wide-ranging, dangerously depleted—and incredibly valuable for sushi, which is why Japan took its stand. The Canadian government's refusal to side with U.S. in supporting ban on the bluefin trade under the UN's Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, known as CITES, seemed to put the Harper government squarely in the camp of environmental bad actors.

But the situation isn't quite that clear-cut. Although Canada might indeed be on the wrong side of the CITES debate, this isn't an extension of irresponsible fisheries policy when it comes to bluefin.

I called marine biologist Mike Stokesbury, senior project manager of Dalhousie University's Ocean Tracking Network, who co-authored a bluefin population study published in *Nature*, to try to sort it out. Here's an edited version of our conversation:

Q. What's the first thing we need to know about bluefin tuna?

A. These are highly migratory animals. They cross the ocean and go great distances. Only recently have we had an idea of the stock structure and how they mix. Basically there is an eastern stock in the Mediterranean, which has been fished for thousands of years—the Romans had a bluefin on a coin—and there's a smaller western stock on our side of the Atlantic Ocean. They mix throughout the Atlantic.

Q. So what's the state of the bluefins Canadians fish, the western stock?

A. The western population was fished down really heavily in the Seventies and early Eighties. The estimates are now 12 to 15 per cent of its pre-fisheries abundance.

Q. Who did most of that over-fishing?

A. The Americans mostly. The smaller bluefins keep in the south a bit because they can't stand the cold temperatures. So the ones that make it to Canadian waters are really the big ones. During the Seventies and Eighties the Americans had these purse seine fisheries, where they'd surround a whole school and take them. They fished the juveniles really hard. At the same time, the Japanese used to long-line in the Gulf of Mexico, which is the breeding ground. So you had the adults being hit by the Japanese, the small ones being hit by the Americans.

Q. But fishing of the western population has been less intensive since the mid-Eighties?

A. Yes. The population has been at a very low level, but a steady level. Recently, the American fishery has crashed, possibly because the fish are moving north because of warmer temperatures as the climate changes.

Q. What about the fishery over on the European side?

A. They had no quotas for a long time, then really high quotas. There's a lot of illegal fishing and a lot of over fishing. That population has crashed to 15 or 18 per cent of what it was in the 1970s.

Q. Who's doing most of the fishing there?

A. A lot of countries. France, Spain, Portugal. There's some Japanese quota. This whole CITES thing was aimed at the eastern population. The fishing is just so out of control there.

Q. Why not just ban fishing of the eastern stocks then?

A. The way CITES works, for bluefin you'd have to list both stocks because they mingle up in the North Atlantic. You're out in the middle of the ocean, just west of the Flemish Cap, and you catch one, you don't know if it's from the eastern or western stock.

Q. If the western population hasn't been grossly over-fished for about 25 years, has population rebounded?

A. My perception is they brought the fishing levels down in the west quite far so the projections were that the stocks would come back. But that hasn't happened, which is why some of the research projects I've been involved with were initiated.

Q. Why hasn't the western population hasn't recovered?

A. One reason is mixing on the feeding grounds. A lot of our fish cross the imaginary line in the middle of the Atlantic and get caught by other countries. Another thing is that this is imperfect science: these things are hard to figure out and manage.

Q. The Canadian government claims our bluefin practices are exemplary. Are they?

A. It really is true. In Canada the bluefin industry is really well regulated. The fishermen obey all the rules. It's really well done.

Q. So it's a sensible policy for Ottawa to present itself as a model?

A. Canada's quota has traditionally been less than one per cent of the Atlantic and Mediterranean quota. So we're a really small player. And these other countries either don't have the will or don't have the ability to manage their fisheries in the way that we do.

Q. Sounds like Canada's in a bind. Our fishery is fine, but we can't realistically expect others to follow suit. Does that leave the export ban as the only solution after all?

A. If you look at it from a Canadian perspective, you'd almost say, this is crazy. Why would we sign up for an export ban? The U.S. has a domestic market to sell bluefin into—they're net importers of bluefin. So a CITES ban would have no effect on their fishery. Canada, on the other hand, has no domestic market: our industry would just go

From The Times
March 19, 2010

World votes to continue trading in species on verge of extinction

Ben Webster, Environment Editor, and Frank Pope

Their sheer size and strength have made them among the most celebrated of endangered species, yet they have all been betrayed — by vested interests at a UN meeting on wildlife protection.

Proposals to ban trade in bluefin tuna and polar bears were overwhelmingly rejected yesterday at the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (Cites), meeting in Doha, Qatar.

A plan for a 20-year ban on ivory sales, to protect African elephants, is also likely to fail in the coming days — partly because Britain and other members of the EU are refusing to support it. Delegates are instead expected to approve a weak compromise, which would encourage poaching by allowing the sale of ivory being stored by several African nations.

Feelings were running high yesterday about the failure of measures to protect endangered tuna. Only 20 of the 120 countries at the meeting voted to ban trade in the bluefin. Intensive lobbying by Japan, which consumes 80 per cent of Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin, meant that a snap vote was held before any debate on scientific reports that show a catastrophic decline in the largest of the tuna family.

Campaigners reacted with dismay. Oliver Knowles, of Greenpeace, said: "It is an own goal by Japan. By pushing for a few more years of this luxury product it has put the future of bluefin, and the future of its own supply, at serious risk. The abject failure of governments here at Cites to protect Atlantic bluefin tuna spells disaster for its future, and sets the species on a pathway to extinction."

France, Italy and Spain catch most of the tuna consumed by the global market. In 2009 a quota

of 19,950 tonnes of tuna was set by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas, but many fish are caught live in nets, transferred to farms and fattened before slaughter.

Susan Lieberman, director of international policy for the Pew Environment Group, said: "The market for this fish is just too lucrative and the pressure from fishing interests too great for enough governments to support a truly sustainable future for the fish."

The Cites process, which requires a two-thirds majority for a proposal to be adopted, is vulnerable to well-funded lobbying by countries and industries that depend on trade in a species. The vested interests exploit uncertainties in the estimates of population numbers, and strike backroom deals to secure the votes of developing countries where endangered species are far down the list of political priorities.

A US proposal to protect polar bears fell victim to arguments put forward by Inuit groups that their livelihoods depended on hunting the animals. The vote on protecting elephants is due on Monday, and is viewed by wildlife groups as the last opportunity to protect many of Africa's most threatened herds.

The few remaining elephants in Sierra Leone were killed in October by poachers serving the thriving black market in ivory, which fetches up to \$1,500 (£980) a kilo in the Far East. In the Zakouma National Park in Chad, poaching has cut the population from 3,885 in 2006 to only 617 last year. The number of elephants lost to poaching in Kenya has quadrupled in the past two years. Kenya is one of seven African nations proposing a 20-year moratorium on sales of stockpiled ivory.

International trade in ivory was banned in 1989, but since then Cites has agreed several "one-off sales" of stockpiled ivory on condition that the proceeds were spent on elephant conservation. Britain supported a one-off sale of 105 tonnes in 2008, arguing that it would reduce poaching by satisfying demand. But Kenya says that the one-off sales have expanded the market in China and Japan for ivory ornaments, and that this in turn has encouraged poaching.

Asian-run crime syndicates are able to pass off illegal ivory as coming from stockpiles sold with Cites approval.

Tanzania and Zambia want to sell 112 tonnes of ivory, and have submitted proposals that would allow the sale to take place by reducing their elephants' level of protection under Cites trade rules.

Britain will join the rest of the EU in voting against Kenya's proposal. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs said it was still considering whether to support a lowering of the Cites protection for Tanzanian and Zambian elephants.

Robbie Marsland, UK Director of the International Fund for Animal Welfare, said: "We are disappointed that the UK Government, and European Union member countries as a whole, have not gone into this meeting with a much stronger message against the ivory trade and in favour of elephant protection."

"This leaves the door open to future trade, which would result in further illegal poaching."

Nick Herbert, the Shadow Environment Secretary, said the Government should be pressing for

the destruction of stockpiles of ivory. "No one proposes stockpiling seized drugs or weapons to sell for profit, and ivory should be treated in just the same way. Instead of flooding the market with more ivory and legitimising the trade these stockpiles should be destroyed. We should be choking demand for ivory, not stocking it."

A Defra spokesman said: "The UK will not consider other sales of ivory until the effects of last year's one-off sale of ivory, intended to reduce demand for illegal poached ivory, have been fully analysed. This will take at least a further six years."

A report last week by an international team of 27 scientists and conservationists concluded that previous one-off sales had contributed to a rise in poaching and failed to deliver the promised conservation benefits, resulting in "only short-term profitability to the few individuals who ran the scheme".

CITES ELEPHANT IVORY DECISION NEARING
By Francis · March 19, 2010 ·
goalover.com

The outcome of the most highly anticipated vote at this month's CITES may be becoming clearer, with the CITES Secretariat recommending that delegates support a proposal allowing Zambia to conduct a one-off sale of ivory while rejecting a similar request by Tanzania. While many of the proposals to be tabled at CITES have drawn attention from conservationists but limited mainstream press coverage, the proposed sale of ivory stocks by Tanzania and Zambia has drawn wide-ranging interest and debate since it was first proposed many months ago.

The recommendation could go a long way toward shaping the final vote, which was expected as early as Monday. Zambia wants to sell 48,000 pounds (21,700 kilograms) of ivory while Tanzania is asking to sell almost 200,000 pounds (90,000 kilograms) of ivory.

Tom De Meulenaer, the elephant expert for CITES, said the Secretariat endorsed a conclusion by a panel of experts that Zambia had conservation measures in place while Tanzania allows poaching in several parts of the country and remains a transit point for illegal raw ivory shipments.

The findings against Tanzania could bolster the arguments of Congo, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Rwanda and Sierra Leone, which have proposed a halt to the limited international trade in African elephant ivory currently permitted and a 20-year moratorium on any proposals to relax international trade controls on African elephants.

The Fishing Lobby Wins Again

Published: March 19, 2010

Thursday was a terrible day for bluefin tuna.

By a depressingly lopsided margin, countries meeting in Doha at the United Nations Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species rejected a proposal by Monaco and the United States to ban international trade in Atlantic bluefin tuna, which is spiraling toward extinction. The convention had earlier rejected, also by a wide margin, a softer motion by the Europeans that would have placed the tuna high on the international list of endangered species but delayed a trading ban for one year.

The vote split partly along developed/developing nation lines. But make no mistake: It was largely the result of relentless lobbying by Japan, whose citizens consume four-fifths of the world's bluefin tuna, thus providing a steady market for poorer countries with big fishing industries like Tunisia.

Under the proposed ban, Japan would have been allowed to consume only the fish caught in its own waters, which would have put a huge crimp in exports from Tunisia and other African nations that ply the Mediterranean and Eastern Atlantic.

The best case for conservation, of course, is that if things keep going the way they are, those nations are going to wake up one day to discover that tuna, as a viable commercial species, have disappeared.

They are in bad shape already. Stocks of Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin dropped by more than 70 percent between 1957 and 2007, and by more than 60 percent in the last decade alone. But numbers like these are never really persuasive when commercial interests stand to lose, whether talking about tuna or sharks or salmon.

The convention's member nations will not meet again for another 30 months, and, in the

meantime, the onus for restoring the bluefin to sustainable levels will fall on the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas, the regulatory body with primary responsibility for the species.

At its most recent meeting in Brazil, the commission — which for years did little to stop the slaughter — agreed to reduce the allowable catch significantly but nowhere near the moratorium recommended by the commission's scientists. The commission meets next in November. Japan says it will honor the new quota and possibly press for other measures to halt the species decline. We are not holding our breath.

Atlantic Bluefin Tuna Trade Ban Fails; WWF Calls for Boycott as Population Plummets

World Sentinel
International Desk
March 19, 2010

Washington, D.C. -- World Wildlife Fund is dismayed that discussion of a long-awaited proposal to ban international commercial trade in Atlantic bluefin tuna was cut short at the world's largest wildlife trade convention when an immediate vote was pushed through.

Member governments of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) chose to vote on the proposal. 72 out of 129 CITES members voted against the trade ban, 43 voted in favor, with 14 abstentions. The US delegation voted in favor of the ban.

Once the Principality of Monaco had tabled the proposal and a number of countries had given brief interventions, Libya called for an immediate vote on the proposal.

"It is scandalous that governments did not even get the chance to engage in meaningful debate on this proposal given the overwhelming scientific justification and growing political support in past months," said Mark Stevens, WWF senior program officer for Fisheries. "This proposal had backing from the majority of catch quota holders on both sides of the Atlantic."

Atlantic bluefin tuna is at serious risk of commercial extinction because of decades of unsustainable and illegal fishing in the Mediterranean Sea, driven by demand from the luxury seafood markets in Japan. Currently about 40,000 tons of Atlantic bluefin tuna are caught every year, well over four times the amount of fish that scientists say can be taken to avoid population collapse. The CITES proposal would have banned all international commercial trade in Atlantic bluefin tuna, giving this imperiled species a chance to recover to sustainable levels.

"The regional fisheries management organization in charge of this fishery -- the International

Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) -- has repeatedly failed to sustainably manage this fishery," said Dr Sergi Tudela, Head of Fisheries at WWF Mediterranean and observer at the CITES Conference of the Parties in Doha. "ICCAT has so far failed miserably in this duty so every pressure at the highest level must come to bear to ensure it does what it should."

WWF will proactively call on restaurants, retailers, chefs and consumers around the world to stop selling, serving, buying and eating this endangered species. Already a growing body of the global seafood market sector is choosing to avoid Atlantic bluefin tuna to give the exhausted fish a chance of recovery.

"It is now more important than ever for people to do what the politicians failed to do -- stop consuming bluefin tuna," Tudela said.

Last year, the Principality of Monaco -- the CITES member country that submitted the proposal for a CITES Appendix I listing of the species -- became the first country in the world to be entirely bluefin tuna free. WWF is urging other countries to follow suit.

Obama Administration Poised to Decide Fate of African Elephants

WASHINGTON, March 19 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- The Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) has appealed to President Obama and the US government to support Kenya, the birthplace of Obama's father, which is leading efforts by 20 African nations to maintain elephant protection and oppose ivory trade at the CITES meeting in Doha. On Monday delegates will vote on whether to "downlist" elephant populations from Zambia and Tanzania from the protected level of "Appendix I" to enable resumed ivory trade.

A new report by EIA (**Open Season: The Burgeoning Illegal Ivory Trade in Tanzania and Zambia**) has documented extensive illegal trade networks in Zambia and Tanzania that work with Asian ivory brokers and corrupt officials to circumvent weak enforcement efforts. Both nations, backed by the ivory consuming giants of China and Japan, are pressing to eliminate protections that prohibit international trade.

Japan, with China has led successful efforts at this year's meetings to prevent CITES from protecting other endangered species such as Bluefin tuna.

EIA President Allan Thornton stated, "Japan's 15,000 ivory wholesalers and retail outlets have an insatiable appetite for ivory, and China is the world's biggest importer of illegal ivory. Together they have used the charade of legal ivory sales to smuggle and launder ivory taken from thousands of elephants slaughtered across Africa."

Soaring prices for ivory in Japan and China have driven demand, and rapid growth in the Chinese presence across Africa has overwhelmed the ability of even the best enforcement teams in Africa to protect their elephants from a tidal wave of poaching. A single ivory tusk on sale in one of China's Government Friendship stores was offered for \$130,000.

The Zambian Government has been secretly relabeling poached ivory tusks as "natural mortality" to enable their sale, against CITES rules, in a future ivory sale. Tanzania lost 30,000 elephants between 2006 and 2009, mainly to poaching and is the world's largest source of illegal ivory - over 12,000 kgs of tusks were seized in Asia in 2009 alone.

"This is the last stand for Africa's elephant populations," said Thornton. "CITES' decision to allow a legal ivory sale in 2008 resurrected the Asian ivory trade and caused a massive and devastating increase in demand. Removing protection for more elephant populations will signal Japanese and Chinese ivory buyers and tens of thousands more of Africa's rapidly vanishing elephants will die in the killing fields of Africa."

For further information, contact:

Allan Thornton at 202 483 6621/202 361-6941 or, Samuel Labudde at 415 632-7174.

To view or download the report, *Open Season: The Burgeoning Illegal Ivory Trade in Tanzania and Zambia*, visit <http://www.eia-global.org/PDF/report--OpenSeason--Species--mar10.pdf>

EIA Undercover video available on request

SOURCE Environmental Investigation Agency

Japan celebrates defeat of bluefin tuna trade ban

2010-03-19 12:22

TOKYO, March 19 (AFP) - The Japanese government, sushi lovers and seafood traders at Tokyo's massive Tsukiji fish market on Friday cheered the defeat of a proposed cross-border ban on trade in Atlantic bluefin tuna.

"It was good," Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama told reporters after a UN wildlife meeting in Qatar voted down a proposal to ban the international trade of bluefin caught in the Mediterranean and eastern Atlantic.

"It means the import of bluefin tuna will continue for the time being, and I think it's good that the price of bluefin tuna will not rise further," Hatoyama said.

But he added that Japan "should be on alert as we still don't know what will happen" until the end next week of the meeting in Doha of the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).

A smiling Finance Minister Naoto Kan said he often enjoys "negi-toro", minced fatty tuna mixed with leek usually served on rice.

"It's good that I will be able to keep eating it," he said.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirofumi Hirano, the top government spokesman, said: "I am relieved that it was voted down last night. I am delighted about that.

"It is important to control natural resources as Japan has argued," he added in a regular news conference.

The proposal for the ban, put forward by Monaco and supported by the United States and the European Union, was crushed by 68 votes against with 20 in favour and 30 abstentions at the

There are about 300 bluefin tuna fishermen on P.E.I.

"We're ecstatic here. We never thought there should have been a ban and the way we fish our tuna here and our conservation measures and the way the fishermen themselves look after the stock, there really was no indication that there should be a ban whatsoever," said Neil LeClair, P.E.I.'s fisheries minister on Thursday. "We were pretty confident the ban would be turned down, but, at the same time, it was an issue."

Ed Frenette, executive director of the P.E.I. Fisherman's Association said, "Certainly that's a positive step for P.E.I. tuna fishermen and the future of our tuna industry here. It looks like we'll be able to go fishing again this coming year and years after."

While Frenette is pleased with the decision, he cautions there could be lobbying in the next week at the international meeting that might lead to a second vote on March 25.

Read more: <http://www.cbc.ca/politics/story/2010/03/19/pei-shea-tuna-vote-584.html#ixzz0ieM4Auil>

Bluefin tuna ban rejection pleases Shea

P.E.I. tuna fishermen relieved by decision

Last Updated: Friday, March 19, 2010 | 9:14 AM ET Comments 24

Recommend 15

CBC News

Federal Fisheries Minister Gail Shea is applauding Thursday's United Nations wildlife meeting vote rejecting a U.S.-backed proposal to ban bluefin tuna exports.

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species made the right decision, said Shea. She added that responsible management practices of Canada's bluefin fishery helped swing the vote.

Japan and scores of developing nations opposed the ban, which was proposed Feb. 5 by the panel that oversees the convention. It believed the export of Atlantic bluefin tuna — popular in sushi restaurants — has resulted in a drop of more than 80 per cent in stocks since the 19th century.

"We're very encouraged by the preliminary results because Canada's position all along has been that that this species should be managed through a regional fish management program, which we have in ICCAT [International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas]," said Shea. "The challenge will be to strengthen ICCAT to ensure that conservation measures are adhered to."

Canada's management plan is one of the best in the world, said Shea.

Relief in P.E.I.

poses a greater long-term threat to the species as an excuse to do nothing about immediate threats hastening its decline." He concluded, "In years to come, people will look back on this moment with great shame."

The US had proposed moving the polar bear to Appendix I, which would have brought an automatic ban on all trade in their products, on the grounds that sea ice changes would negatively impact polar bears by increasing energetic demands of seeking prey. Changes in habitat would become more severe and seasonal rates of change more rapid, bringing about catastrophic mortality. But in its official response to the US proposal, the CITES secretariat recommended that it be rejected. "The global population of polar bears does not appear to be small. The area of distribution of this species extends over several million square kilometers and is clearly not restricted at present," a CITES representative said. "There is insufficient evidence that the species has undergone a marked decline in population size in the wild large enough to justify its transfer to Appendix I."

Qatar votes to save polar bear population

By Fran Gillespie /Doha

Gulf Times

A majority of CITES Parties voted against the proposal by the US to transfer polar bears from Appendix II listing to Appendix I, which would have banned international commercial trade in the animals' parts and products.

Voting was 48 in favour of the transfer and 62 against, with 11 countries abstaining. The CITES delegate for Qatar, Ghanem Abdullah from the Ministry of the Environment, said that Qatar had voted in favour of moving the polar bear to Appendix I, in view of the increasing threat posed to the animals by climate change. Addressing a press conference yesterday attended by Willen Wijinstekers, the outgoing Secretary General of CITES, Canadian Stephen Nash, chief of the Capacity Building Unit of CITES, said that the polar bear had been on Appendix II for many years, and its status is closely supervised.

The Parties have shown that they are happy with that supervision, he said. He observed that the Canadian far north has an extremely harsh climate and very few natural resources were available to its indigenous peoples.

Allowing monitored hunting of polar bears, whether for sport or for commercial purposes, was an important element of their subsistence. The welfare of polar bears would continue to be managed under Appendix II regulations.

Jeff Flocken, a director of the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) commented, "CITES parties have turned their backs on this iconic species. With only 20,000 to 25,000 polar bears remaining, the Parties have chosen to ignore the latest science which predicts the population will decline by two-thirds by 2050."

He added, "Polar bears clearly meet the criteria for an uplisting to



Stephen Nash, Chief, Capacity Building Unit, CITES Secretariat and Ghanim Abdulla Mohammed, Director of Conservation of Wildlife at the Ministry of Environment, Qatar during a press conference at Sheraton hotel yesterday. SHAIVAL DALAL

No trade reprieve for polar bears at CITES

Mairana mallard is removed from Appendix I listing

BY HUDA NV

DOHA: Qatar-supported US proposal aiming to curb international trade of polar bear and parts received a major setback at the 15th conference of parties (CoP15) of Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of the Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), yesterday.

Falling short of the required two-third majority, the polar bears have failed to be transferred to CITES Appendix I from Appendix II. With only 20,000 to 25,000 polar bears remaining, experts predict the population to decline by two-thirds by 2050, largely due to climatic changes followed by commercial trade.

The US position emphasised that any additional threats including a relatively small commercial trade in polar bears adds additional pressure to an already stressed population. Therefore, a precautionary approach, to eliminate the commercial trade in polar bears by listing them in CITES Appendix I was appropriate.

However, majority of the parties at CITES meets rejected the proposal over concerns it would hurt indigenous economies and arguments the practice didn't pose a significant threat to the animals. Also, though a number of nations recognised the threat that the polar bear faces from loss of sea ice due to climate change, they disagreed over whether the requirements of Appendix I listing criteria were met.

Canada, along with Norway and Greenland, led the opposition to the U.S. proposal. "Trade is minimal and the hunting done by indigenous communities is critical to their economies. Only two-percent of Canadian polar

bears are internationally traded and the country strictly manages the commerce. There is no doubt that action must continue to ensure the conservation of polar bears. Canada's goal is long term survival of polar bears. But Canada does not think the proposal is supported by facts," Canada delegation said.

"Climate change is the biggest challenge for Polar bear and a listing in Appendix I cannot help it," said an Inuit leader from Canada. "Polar bear hunting is the only source of livelihood for us as we do not have timber or fish. They are the source of our food, clothing and shelter. We have been hunting for generations; we hunt them in a sustainable way and will continue doing so with or without an international ban. We have lot to lose if polar trade does not exist any more."

Norway cited the polar bear lacking any biological criteria to be listed in Appendix I and described the proposal as being "premature." They also asked the issue to be looked into by Polar bear conservation groups rather than CITES. Greenland delegation said there was no on going decline in Polar Bear population which was many folds higher than 5,000. They argued that well established measures already existed.

After more than one hour of discussion of the proposal, CITES Committee put the matter to vote. The final results were 48 in support, 62 opposed, and 11 abstentions.

"The US knows about the implication the ban would have on the communities, however we make a choice," Jane Lyder, Head of US CITES delegation had said earlier. THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The CITES committee I, which deals with species listing decisions removed mairana mallard from its Appendix I listing, based on unanimous consensus. Apart from bluefin tuna and polar bear, CITES meeting discussed four other species.

Deletion of mairana mallard (*Anas oustaleti*), a bird known only from the islands in mariana Archipelago in the western Pacific, was put forward by Switzerland as a depositary government, at the request of CITES Animal Committee. No sightings of the species were noted since 1979 and experts believe that the species is extinct. Since it was not recognised as a species in the current CITES standard reference for birds, it was removed from Appendix I.

The proposal to transfer Morelet's Crocodile (*Crocodyllus moreletti*) from Appendix I to Appendix II witnessed a debate between Mexico and Guatemala. Mexico, supported by Spain, China and US argued that the species does not meet the criteria for being in Appendix I as it was no longer a threatened species. Guatemala and Nicaragua showed lack of scientific surveys in the range countries apart for Mexico to support the proposal and hence asked for amendment. The proposal was passed for transferring the crocodiles in Mexico alone to Appendix II.

From the MENA region, Egypt had asked the transfer of Nile Crocodile (*Crocodyllus niloticus*) from Appendix I to Appendix II citing increased populations which was becoming more of a danger to the people living in the habitat vicinity of the crocodile. The stance was supported by Yeman, Qatar, Uganda, China, Spain, Saudi Arabia. THE PENINSULA

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Newsline

Hillary in Russia to hasten disarmament deal



US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton will talk on Thursday in Moscow to accelerate progress towards a new accord between Russia and the US to slash their nuclear arsenals. Clinton met her Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov for talks set to focus on the increasingly protracted process of agreeing a successor to the START treaty.

China drains \$31.2 billion from financial system

China said on Thursday it had drained a massive 213 billion yuan (\$31.2 billion) from the financial system this week as authorities continue efforts to curb lending and contain inflation. The move, carried out through the sale of short-term bills and repurchase agreements, marked the largest weekly amount of money taken out of the system in two years, an analyst said. Figures on the People's Bank of China's website indicated it sold that amount in bills to commercial banks this week — more than double the amount sold last week. (PAGE 25)

British boy leaves Pakistan



Smiling and in high spirits, a five-year-old British boy boarded a flight home from Pakistan on Thursday after being reunited with his overjoyed father following a 22-day kidnapping ordeal. Sporting a new hair cut, Saad Saad kicked around a football on the tarmac of the British high commission's residence in Islamabad, joined by a little girl playmate, and was smothered in hugs and kisses from relatives. (PAGE 10)

Today in Qatar

- 14:00 CITES biodiversity camp at Doha
- 16:00 Indian community meeting at embassy
- 20:30 OSI match at Doha

DEPUTY EMIR GRACES SIGNING CEREMONY



The Deputy Emir and His Apostent His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani and Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs HE Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabor al Thani at the signing of a framework peace deal between Sudan government and a Darfur rebel group, the Liberation and Justice Movement, in Doha, on Thursday. (See page 17)

Bluefin tuna, polar bear lose survival vote

RAJESH MISHRA
DOHA

US-BACKED proposals for conserving the Atlantic bluefin tuna and polar bear were defeated at a conservation meet on Thursday.

The 13th Conference of the Parties (COP 13) of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) voted 20 to 68 against Monaco's proposal to prohibit international trade of Atlantic bluefin tuna. There were 30 abstentions.

The other proposal that sought to place polar bear in Appendix 1 of CITES was defeated by 14 votes with 62 parties voting against the motion, 48 for it and 11 abstaining.

The move would have banned international trade in polar bear products.

Japan, which imports 80 percent of Atlantic bluefin tuna caught globally, led the opposition to the ban. CITES should not have any role in regulating the trade in tuna or other marine species, it argued. Monaco advocated extreme measures to conserve the fish species. Bluefin tuna has been subject to so much over fishing that its stocks had fallen by 75 percent over the years, it said.

"Today's CITES committee vote not to protect Atlantic bluefin tuna is an unfortunate step backwards. This deeply disappointing and irresponsible vote sig-

nals a bleak future for this iconic fish," Director of International Policy for the Pew Environment Group Susan Lieberman, said in a statement issued soon after the voting.

"The proposal to ban the international trade in polar bear skins, teeth and claws was defeated over concerns that it would hurt indigenous economies and arguments that the practice did not pose significant threat to the animals, observers said.

Soon after the voting, the

Washington DC Office Director of the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) for Polar Bears and Latin America issues Jeff Flocken said, "Having turned their backs on this iconic species by failing to support its inclusion in Appendix 1, the CITES parties have hastened the polar bear's demise."

An IFAW release quoted Flocken as saying, "With only 20,000 to 25,000

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15



(From left) Abdullah Ghannem Mohamed of Ministry of Environment, Mohamed Sayyid al Mohannadi, Director of Fisheries Department, Patrie Van Klaveren, head of Monaco delegation, John Donaldson, Chair Committee 1 (South Africa), and CITES official Juan Carlos Vasquez, in Doha, on Thursday. (PAGE 16)

QFIB to spend \$250mn

ZAWYA DOW JONES
DOHA

QATAR First Investment Bank, which has paid up capital of \$430 million, will deploy \$250 million across the Middle East and North Africa, or MENA, this year but warned that 2010 could be no better than 2009 for region's private equity industry, a company executive said on Wednesday.

"I think it (the private equity industry) will be the same as 2009, probably slightly tougher in the sense that sellers are becoming tougher to negotiate with," Yasir Mansour, chief investment officer at QFIB, said on the sidelines of a private equity conference in Dubai.

Economic malaise and lack of bank financing forced companies to sell stakes to investors to raise cash in 2009. Mansour said, but with the region emerging from the downturn acquisitions are becoming harder.

"The banks had closed their doors and companies were willing to sell stakes to get access to cash," Mansour said. Buyout companies suffered at the hands of worldwide recession last year, with funds focused on the MENA region raising \$1 billion last year, compared with \$3.4 billion in 2008 and \$3.5 billion in 2007, according to statistics by the Emerging Markets Private Equity Association, or EMPEA.

QFIB, which was launched in early 2009, has a portfolio worth more than \$700 million

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15

Tiger still a terrific golfer: Obama

AFP
BEIJING

US President Barack Obama on Wednesday implicitly welcomed Tiger Woods' announced return to the links next month, by calling him "a terrific golfer" during a television interview.

After fielding weighty questions on domestic and international politics, Obama was told Fox News viewers were emailing to ask his view about Woods' return to the golf circuit, five months after a sex scandal put his career on hold.

"You know, I think Tiger has acknowledged that he betrayed his family and that's a personal issue that he has got to work out," a diplomatic Obama said.

"I hope they have worked it out, I'm sure he is going to still be a terrific golfer," he added without mentioning next month's golf Masters at Augusta National Golf Club, where Woods will make his first post-scandal professional appearance.



Tiger Woods.

French artist's expo on Asia from March 22

ALYNN AGONIA
DOHA

THE many tales of Asia seen through the eyes of its people is the theme behind the 17 artworks by French artist Isabel Roelands Fischer, which will be exhibited at the Grand Hyatt Doha from March 22 to April 3.

Titled "Windows to the Soul", Isabel's first exhibition in Qatar promises to take the residents on to a unique journey across the regions which she calls as the land of "myriad of expressions".



Isabel Roelands Fischer.

Talking about her inspiration behind the masterpieces, Fischer said that she wanted to portray the stories as if looking through the faces of Asian people. "You can tell what they are thinking," she said.

Isabel was born in Zaire in 1961 and spent her childhood in Africa. When she was 10, she moved to France for further studies. The subjects of her works reflect her encounters with different people, from the busy streets of Hanoi to the villages of Northern Nepal.

The collection will be unveiled by the

Minister of Culture, Arts and Heritage HE Dr Hamad bin Abdullah al Kowari and French Ambassador to Qatar HE Gilles Bonnard.

Aside from the many faces of Asian people, the 17 paintings also celebrate the colourful heritage of the region. "I love Asia and its mixed culture. I associate it with the Chinese red and bright orange," the French artist said.

Isabel's collection in Doha will include the painting titled 'May' which shows a

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15

Nearly 100 kgs ivory seized in Vietnam: report

Bangkok Post

Vietnamese police have seized about 100 kilograms (220 pounds) of ivory near the border with China, a newspaper reported on Sunday.

Traffic police made the discovery after stopping a car early Friday morning, said Tuoi Tre newspaper, which did not say if any arrests were made.

The police declined to comment when contacted by AFP.

State-linked media reported last year that Vietnamese police had seized hundreds of kilograms of ivory. Much of it was tusks illegally imported from Kenya.

There is a booming black market in African ivory linked to Asian crime syndicates, experts and delegates said last week at a meeting in Doha of the UN-backed Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).

Communist Vietnam banned the ivory trade in 1992 but shops can still sell stocks dating from before the ban. This allows some to restock illegally with recently-produced items, wildlife activists have said.

Separately, security staff at southern Ho Chi Minh City's Tan Son Nhat airport on Saturday confiscated 33 live pangolins, Tuoi Tre reported.

The pangolins, also known as scaly anteaters, had been sold to customers in the country's north at a price of one million dong (53 dollars) per kilogram, Tuoi Tre reported.

Demand for pangolin meat, with its supposedly medicinal and aphrodisiac qualities, is widespread in China and Vietnam.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) list pangolins as endangered.

Farming the tiger to extinction?

GEOFF POWER

With captive tigers in China's breeding units now outnumbering those in the wild throughout Asia, the Chinese government's attitude to the trade in tiger parts could be crucial to the survival of the species

THE DISCLOSURE that, so far this year, 11 Siberian tigers have died of starvation or been shot at a zoo in China has placed under further scrutiny the controversial breeding facilities, or tiger farms, first established in China back in the 1980s. There are approximately 6,000 captive tigers held in 200 breeding units around China, almost double the number of wild tigers that now remain across the whole of Asia.

The deaths of captive animals at the mainly privately owned Shenyang Zoo raised suspicion that the tigers had been slaughtered for their body parts and bones, an accusation denied by management. Nevertheless, the controversy about how these tigers died brings their fate into timely focus in a week when members of the Convention of the International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) are attending a special conference in Doha, Qatar.

One of the issues up for discussion there is the illegal trade in tiger parts and the controversial existence of tiger-breeding facilities. "The general public do not appreciate just how close we are to losing the tiger," says John Sellar, chief of enforcement at CITES. "It's got to the point where it's very questionable whether it's now a genetically viable species."

Tiger farms started appearing when China's native tiger vanished in the wild. The extermination of the south China sub-species had provided an endless supply of tiger parts for use in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). When the reserve of tiger carcasses finally dried up in the late 1980s, TCM practitioners were forced to look elsewhere for their supplies, which led to an increase in the poaching of tiger populations in India and Sumatra.

Counsellor Lan Heping, at the Chinese embassy in Dublin, explains: "In the development of TCM, people found the medicine values of the tiger bone could invigorate the circulation of blood drive away stroke and strengthen bones. Tiger-bone plaster and tiger-bone wine used to be an important part of TCM and were used for almost 1,000 years. Since 1993, China has never approved any use of tiger bone for medical purpose and has no plan to introduce the bred tiger bone in clinical medicines at the present stage."

China imposed the 1993 ban to help implement the international trade ban in tiger parts already in place under CITES. Since then, TCM practitioners have resorted to using alternative ingredients. Sarah Christie, tiger expert with the Zoological Society of London, says TCM practitioners "didn't want to be the group that drives tigers to extinction, so it's all just back-street stuff now".

The tiger population was vastly reduced in Asia during the 20th century, mostly thanks to deforestation and the enormous growth in the human population. The predator had also been a prestige target for hunters in India during colonial times, and for bored Soviet Union soldiers stationed in Siberia. It had the misfortune of being declared an "enemy of the people" by China's leader, Mao Zedong, in the latter half of the century.

Demand for tiger pelts has always been high.

The fear, mystique and majesty of the tiger for people in Asia has led us to this point. A common belief still exists that the essence of a tiger's strength, agility and wisdom can be derived from its bone and sinew. Ultimately, the tiger may have the misfortune of being destroyed by its own mythology.

According to Lan Heping, the Chinese authorities have invested €50 billion in forestry protection projects to create more suitable tiger habitats and have cracked down on smuggling and the illegal use of parts, which carries the sentence in China of life imprisonment or death, along with confiscation of personal property.

"Maybe in some remote areas there are individual cases of some illegal actions, but that does not represent the mainstream - it's not the government's attitude," Lan says.

Nevertheless, farm owners appear ready to flood the market with their stockpiles if China loosens the ban this week and allows for domestic trade. A letter, written and signed by tiger experts from several NGOs, states: "Tiger farmers have no vested economic interest in securing a future for wild tigers. One could argue that if wild sources go extinct, these investors would be in an economically advantageous position, having exclusive control of supply of the global tiger-parts market."

ONE OF THE CHINESE signatories of the letter is Grace Ge Gabriel, Asia regional director with the International Fund for Animal Welfare. "While tiger farmers have been actively lobbying for the ban to be lifted, they've started to market and promote tiger products," she says. "Since they cannot sell them as TCM . . . they are selling them as a wine or health product. It's a recent phenomenon. What this trade is doing is stimulating a demand that was already waning."

Sarah Christie would like to see breeding licences withdrawn. "There's a chance to finish this by declaring a final ban. There's already a legal ban in place, but we need to get the tiger farms closed down. There'd be a problem with the captive tiger population then, but it's the best solution."

John Sellar remembers a visit to a farm a few years ago, when "the owner of the farm was clearly disappointed the ban was still in place – he felt he should be compensated. Back in '93 he would have had a strong case, if he could have proved he was engaged in a bona-fide commercial activity at the time. But instead he continued taking a commercial gamble that it would be lifted . . . That is like taking a gamble at Ladbrokes and feeling aggrieved if your banker doesn't win." Following that visit, Sellar was offered tiger-bone wine near his hotel.

The EU has put forward a document for discussion in Doha, proposing further restrictions and calling on member states, and tiger-range countries in particular, to improve law enforcement and provide more information on smuggling and trade.

Kevin Cahillane, of Ireland's National Parks and Wildlife Service, is a member of the EU CITES Management Authority. "We are clear in what we want and the EU is fully behind it," he says. "My own view is that China will probably vote against because they'll say is a domestic trading issue. What we are asking, though, is: why have at all if it has nothing to do with the conservation of the species?"

Lan Heping insists that captive tigers will eventually be rehabilitated. "The fundamental aim is to ease the pressure of poaching on the wild tiger and finally save the wild tigers, especially the Siberian tiger and south China tiger, and resume or reconstruct the wild tiger species," she says.

She compares the farming of tigers in China to that of less endangered animals such as crocodiles, deer and falcons. She states: "Neither is there any scientific justification to prohibit the controlled and limited use of bred tigers and its parts and derivatives. If the resolution or decision of the conference of CITES violated the CITES regulations and interfered with the internal affairs of the sovereign state and lost its . . . objective fairness, member states could not support it and could only manage its domestic trade according to its national law."

This is a stand that worries Grace Ge Gabriel. "This is part of the strategy," she says. "On the one hand they say, 'we are going to increase law enforcement and crack down on trade and publicly say no to it', and at the same time they issue permits for people to trade in wine products. A lot of smoke. And in the smoky environment, it gives the illegal operators the opportunity to engage in trade, and it confuses . . . it confuses the public and it confuses us, the NGOs. We don't know what is legal and what is illegal."

Despite this, Ge Gabriel is optimistic that the majestic predator will still be around when the Year of the Tiger is again celebrated in 2022. "I've a feeling the trade ban will hold," she says. "I'm an optimist; otherwise I wouldn't do the work I do."

Zambia Explains Policy Over Sale Of Ivory

THE ZAMBIAN GOVERNMENT REQUIRES ABOUT 10 MILLION U.S. DOLLARS ANNUALLY FOR CONSERVATION OF ELEPHANTS

LUSAKA (Xinhua) -- Zambia has made last minute appeals to other countries to understand the country's bid to start trading in ivory as member countries of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) prepare to make a ruling on whether to allow the country embark on sale of ivory.

The southern African country has since appealed to the countries opposed to the idea of its bid to start trade in elephants, saying the country needs to control its elephant population.

Zambia and Tanzania have applied to down-list the African elephant population from appendix I to II at the on-going Qatar CITES conference but some countries and organization are opposed to the idea.

But Tourism and Natural Resources Minister Catherine Namugala told Xinhua on Wednesday morning that some countries opposed to the two countries' proposal do not even have elephants.

"It is not true for our friends who get money from NGOs (non-governmental organization) from outside to believe that just because they can be funded by outsiders and they plough that money into conservation and that we are also going to give up our sovereignty and fail to make decisions that are good for our people," Namugala said.

Namugala appealed for support as the country makes its last minute effort to persuade CITES to down-list elephant trade, saying the international community should understand the country's need to embark on elephant trade.

Kenya and other 23 African countries, with the support of the U.S. government and some

European countries are reportedly opposed to Zambia and Tanzania's proposal to sell the ivory, contending the one-off sale of ivory would heighten poaching that will lead to extinction of elephants.

But Namugala said the proposal to embark on elephant trading has been necessitated by the increase in elephant population which has resulted in human-animal conflicts and dismissed assertions the sale would increase poaching.

The Zambian government requires about 10 million U.S. dollars annually for conservation of elephants.

Appendix I listing means that the species is threatened with extinction and no commercial activities or exploitation are allowed while appendix II allows for commercial utilization of elephants.

The elephant population was estimated at over 100,000 from 27,000 in the early 1980s.

Zambia has currently stockpile of 21.6 tons of ivory which could bring about 4 million dollars if the sale is allowed.

CITES members have been meeting since last Saturday and will on March 25 conclude their meeting when they would make a decision on whether or not to approve the proposal by Zambia and Tanzania to sell their ivory.

Japanese delegation's lobbying, developing nations' concerns behind rejection of tuna ban

A proposal to ban the international trade of Atlantic (including Mediterranean) bluefin tuna was rejected at a CITES meeting in Doha, Qatar, by a landslide.

Many had predicted that the Japanese delegation, which was pushing for the rejection of the proposal, had very little chance of success. The proposal, however, ultimately fell far short of gathering two-thirds of the votes necessary to pass, leading Western media outlets to report the results as a "clear victory for Japan." The dramatic outcome was due in part to the Japanese delegation's behind-the-scenes lobbying, but also in part to the concern of developing nations over the potential impact that such a trade ban would have on their respective industries and the string-pulling leverage of China.

It was Thursday afternoon in Doha, and the various countries in attendance had made their positions known, when a delegate from Libya -- which has an active tuna farming program -- suddenly motioned that an immediate vote be taken on the ban proposal. Sudan seconded the motion, and the motion gathered 72 votes for and 53 votes against an immediate vote on the bill.

At a press conference on March 5, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Minister Hiroataka Akamatsu had emphasized the grimness of the Japanese delegation's position, predicting that "the vote will come down to within a five-vote difference." At the time, it had seemed likely that 27 EU countries would all vote for the ban. And because Kenya and the 22 other African countries at the meeting were engaged in backroom negotiations, approaching the EU with offers to vote for the bluefin tuna ban if it supported an extension on the ivory trade ban, it was predicted that fewer than 50 countries -- the number of votes necessary to vote down the bill -- would be voting against it.

However, after a bill to regulate the shark trade was rejected on March 16 by a wide margin by such countries as Japan, Russia and Middle Eastern member states, the Japanese delegation

decided that there was a chance the same thing could be achieved with the tuna bill. After receiving information that the U.S. was preparing to send a massive delegation team after Saturday to draw countries to vote for the ban, Akamatsu instructed the Japanese delegates to do everything they could do to win, and that he "would take all responsibility."

Libya's motion was accepted and proposals by the EU and Monaco were placed to a vote and defeated. Of the 118 member states that voted for the Monaco bill, 68 voted against, of which many were African countries. Meanwhile, the number of countries that voted in support of the bill was fewer than the number of EU member states, suggesting that a large number of the 30 countries that abstained from the vote were from the EU. Regardless, it was a close victory; if the U.S. strategy of sending hordes of delegates had succeeded and brought African nations around to vote in support of the proposal, the vote could have yielded very different results.

In addition to Libya, who made the motion for an immediate vote, it was significant that Japan had China and South Korea -- both tuna-fishing nations -- on its side. China, in particular, offered extensive support for African nations in order to secure oil and mineral resources. Akamatsu said in a press conference on Tuesday: "China, too, is appealing to various countries (to vote against the ban.)"

(Mainichi Japan) March 20, 2010

EU gives up on proposing bluefin tuna trade ban again at int'l talks

DOHA (Kyodo) -- The European Union has decided not to make a fresh proposal to ban international trade in bluefin tuna from the Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean Sea, EU sources said Friday.

The move came after a proposal by Monaco calling for an immediate ban on the bluefin tuna trade was voted down at a panel meeting Thursday of signatory states of the Washington Convention on endangered species.

A similar proposal by the European Union, which sought to delay implementation of the ban until May 2011 to give authorities time to respond to concerns regarding overfishing, was rejected earlier.

Since a representative of Monaco has said it is not considering proposing a revote, the panel's votes on the Monaco and EU proposals are expected to be endorsed at a plenary session Wednesday and Thursday.

The European Commission, the European Union's executive body, said of the panel's vote on Monaco's proposal that it was "disappointed with the outcome."

Japan, which consumes around 80 percent of the bluefin tuna caught in the waters, opposed the proposal on the grounds that bluefin tuna should not be subject to the Washington Convention but should rather be handled by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas.

With the United States and the European Union backing Monaco's proposal, the odds were good that Japan would lose. But Japan managed to carry its point with support from Middle Eastern, Asian and African countries.

Welcoming the outcome, Japanese Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama expressed hope that prices for the fish would not rise further.

(Mainichi Japan) March 20, 2010

Tories criticise UK for failing to support 20-year ban on African ivory sales

The Guardian (UK)

UK government 'shamefully' refuses to support Kenyan proposal for a ban aimed at reducing elephant and rhino poaching

The Conservatives today criticised the government for failing to support proposals from a number of African countries to impose a 20-year ban on any legal sales of ivory.

The plan, led by Kenya, is being discussed at the meeting of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (Cites) in a bid to tackle the poaching of elephants and rhino.

It counters a bid by Tanzania and Zambia to hold one-off sales of their legally held ivory and "downlist" their elephants from the highest level of protection.

The UK government said it was initially "sympathetic" to the Kenyan proposals, subject to a review after 10 years of the scheme, but the EU, which votes as a bloc at Cites, decided not to

back it. But on a Cites vote this week on whether to ban the international trade in bluefin tuna, the UK acted alone rather than as a bloc with Europe and chose to support the Monaco proposal of opposing the ban.

There are concerns that, if the one-off sales of ivory from four African countries in 2008 results in a lower demand for illegal ivory, a 20-year moratorium would not be a positive step.

But conservationists have raised fears over a rise in illegal trade and poaching following the sales, which they believe stimulate the market and provide a cover for traders to offload illegal stocks.

Shadow environment secretary Nick Herbert said the government had "shamefully" refused to support the Kenyan proposal for a ban on sales and continued to back stockpiling of legal ivory - for example from animals which had died naturally.

"Instead of flooding the market with more ivory and legitimising the trade, these stockpiles should be destroyed. We should be choking demand for ivory, not stoking it," he said.

The UK opposes the bids by Tanzania and Zambia to have one-off sales of their ivory, but EU countries are still considering their requests to "downlist" their elephants from Appendix I to Appendix II of the convention.

Such a move would not allow a trade in ivory, but could let other elephant body parts be traded internationally and the sale of live elephants, for example to safari parks elsewhere, could go ahead.

It could pave the way for a potential ivory sale in the future.

A Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) spokeswoman said: "The EU has agreed with the UK's position to vote against the proposals from Tanzania and Zambia to sell ivory stocks in a one-off sale.

"The EU has decided not to support Kenya's proposal for a moratorium of ivory sales for 20 years."

She said that, regardless, the UK would not consider other sales of ivory until the effects of the 2008 one-off sale of ivory, which was intended to reduce demand for illegal poached ivory, had been fully analysed.

That would take at least another six years, she said.

The 20-year ban would extend an existing nine-year moratorium agreed at the time the four

Sea Shepherd crew embark on bluefin tuna mission

3 News New Zealand
Sat, 20 Mar 2010 5:33p.m.
By Jono Hutchison

The environmentalists who have been a harpoon in the side of Japanese whalers are off on their next mission.

The Sea Shepherd crew leaves Wellington tomorrow, headed for the Mediterranean, aiming to protect the endangered bluefin tuna.

The big fish are rare, and highly prized by consumers and environmentalists alike.

"The bluefin tuna right now has reached a point where there is less than 15 percent of its original numbers and we're gonna lose this species unless we intervene," says Sea Shepherd captain Paul Watson.

He and his crew sailed into Wellington yesterday fresh from Antarctic clashes with Japanese whalers.

Mr Watson says they're not expected friendlier waters in the Mediterranean.

"The bluefin tuna fishery is controlled by the Italian Corsican mafia – so we're up against some pretty big bad boys when we go in there," he says.

In Qatar yesterday nations voted down a proposed ban on exporting Atlantic bluefin tuna. Greenpeace says the New Zealand Government voted against the ban – spelling disaster for the future of the species.

Foreign Affairs Minister Murray McCully wasn't available today to confirm how New Zealand voted.

But Mr Watson is unfazed by the outcome in Qatar.

"The fact is, they're exceeding their quota limits in the Mediterranean and they're doing that every year. Sea Shepherd doesn't protest, Sea Shepherd intervenes against illegal activity. So it doesn't affect our campaign," he says.

The focus of the campaign, the Atlantic bluefin tuna, isn't found near New Zealand. New Zealanders fish the Southern bluefin tuna – which is also critically endangered.

The Ministry of Fisheries supports reducing global bluefin quotas, but at the same time it wants to increase our catch by 27 percent.

"The reality is the oceans are dying," says Mr Watson.

But the demands remains – large bluefin tuna can sell for well over \$100,000 each.

Bluefin trade ban rejected – but we're not giving up

20 March 2010

WWF

The long-awaited proposal to ban international trade in Atlantic bluefin tuna has been shockingly rejected at the world's biggest wildlife trade convention. We were particularly disappointed that there wasn't even much debate on the issue before a vote was hastily pushed through.

With a vote of 72 to 43, and 14 abstentions, the 129 member governments of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) rejected a proposed bluefin tuna trade ban at their meeting in Qatar this week.

This is despite overwhelming scientific justification and growing political support for a ban – with backing from the most significant bluefin fisheries on both sides of the Atlantic.

Discussions on the ban were cut drastically short at the CITES conference. The Principality of Monaco (the first country ever to go bluefin-free) tabled the proposal on Thursday afternoon, and a few countries gave brief interventions, then Libya suddenly called for an immediate vote.

Dr Sergi Tudela, head of fisheries at WWF Mediterranean, and an observer at the Qatar conference, says: "It's scandalous that governments didn't even get the chance to engage in meaningful debate."

But this is not the end of the matter for us. A growing proportion of the global seafood market is already choosing to avoid Atlantic bluefin tuna, to give the exhausted fish stocks a chance of recovery.

It's now more important than ever for people to act where politicians have failed. And we'll keep calling on restaurants, retailers, chefs and consumers around the world to stop selling, serving, buying and eating this gravely endangered species.

Sharks on the menu at Cites

2010-03-20 20:29

Doha - Four rapidly dwindling shark species prized in Asia for fins and in Europe for meat will be swimming against the current at a UN wildlife trade meet days after an attempt to protect tuna was crushed.

Starting on Sunday, the 175-nation Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species (Cites), will consider separate proposals that would require cross-border trade in these open-water predators be tracked and reported.

The small island nation of Palau, dependent on scuba tourism, along with Sweden and the US, have sponsored the measures, with backing from Egypt and Rwanda.

Japan, which led the successful drive to keep Atlantic bluefin in its sushi bars, has said they should be voted down.

Tokyo points to a lack of data, and argues that Cites, meeting in Doha through Thursday, is not the right tool to oversee high-value commercial fauna. Scientists acknowledge a lack of data.

Fearsome predators

At the top of the marine food chain, most of these fearsome predators roam the open seas, and there is no global system in place to monitor population levels.

Of the 139 nations that have reported shark catches to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) since 2000, less than half list species, "making it difficult to assess the impacts of fisheries", said Laurence Fauconnet, a shark expert at Scripps Institution of Oceanography in La Jolla, California.

But the studies that have been done paint a grim picture, indicating that each year some 70 million sharks of all types are harvested.

Sharks are especially vulnerable to overfishing because most species take many years to mature and have relatively few young.

The scalloped hammerhead, once common in coastal tropical waters, has declined by 75% to 90% in the Indian and Pacific Oceans over two decades, said Demian Chapman at the Institute for Ocean Conservation at Stony Brook University in New York.

Listed as "endangered" by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the fish is the top choice of gourmets for shark fin soup, a prestige food consumed by Chinese communities around the globe.

Four other "look-alike" species are covered in the proposal to prevent the scalloped hammerhead from being harvested by mistake.

Most expensive

Also sought for its fins is the oceanic white tip, listed by the IUCN as "critically endangered" in most of the Atlantic and "vulnerable" globally.

Its meat can sell for \$100 a kilogramme, making it one of the most expensive sea-foods by weight.

The other two proposals would regulate international trade of the porbeagle, also fished for fins and meat, and the spiny dogfish, a staple of generic "fish fingers" and other prepared foods.

At the last Cites meeting in 2007, spiny dog and porbeagle failed to gain protection.

But delegates and conservationists in Doha point to two factors that could help one or more of the measures pass the Cites threshold of a two-thirds majority this time around.

Unlike the Atlantic bluefin bid for a so-called Appendix I ban on all international commerce, the shark proposals are seeking Appendix II status, which only requires tracking of exports and scientific assessments.

"The problem today is not there is serious mismanagement of trade in sharks, but that there is not management at all," said Sue Lieberman, policy director for the Pew Environment Group in Washington.

Business

Also, the debate over bluefin pitted commercial interests against conservationists, and the result suggests it was a mismatched fight.

In the case of sharks, there is business on both sides of the issue: dozens small island nations, and some bigger ones, reap serious revenue from scuba-related tourism.

"It has been calculated that a live shark is worth 100 times more than dead one," said Ibrahim Didi, environment minister from the Maldives, in Doha as an observer.

"If hammerheads are gone, people are not going to come to swim with the jellyfish," Lieberman said.

All told, a third of the world's 64 species of pelagic, or open water, sharks face extinction, according to report issued last June by the IUCN's Shark Specialist Group.

I diots. Morons. Blockheads. Numskulls. Nothing quite captures the mind-withering stupidity of what has just happened in Doha. Swayed by Japan and a number of other countries, some of them doubtless bought off in traditional fashion, the members of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (Cites) have decided not to protect the Atlantic bluefin tuna.

Those who opposed suspending trade in the species argued that the temporary ban proposed by Monaco would devastate their fishing industries. There is some truth in this: for the years in which bluefin stocks would have been allowed to recover, the export ban would have put people out of work and reduced the output of their industry. But the absence of a ban ensures that, after one or two more seasons of fishing at current levels, all the jobs and the entire industry are finished forever, along with the magnificent species that supported them. The insistence that the fishing can continue without consequences betrays Olympic-class denial, a flat refusal to look reality in the face.

One of the commenters on a Guardian thread this week, who lives in Japan and uses the tag Kimpatsu, related his experiences of trying to discuss these issues.

"the Japanese policy towards both bluefin tuna and whales has two engines of motivation. The first is the fact that the average Japanese is in denial about the imminent extinction of these creatures; the thought runs that as they have always eaten these animals (and many Japanese mistakenly think that the whale is a fish) since time immemorial, they will be able to continue doing so indefinitely into the future. When pressed on the subject of hunting to extinction, they grow aggressive. (I know from personal experience.) The second reason is the low-grade paranoia that informs all Japanese interaction with the outside world; the notion of Nihon tatakai (Japan-bashing) is omnipresent. If you protest against whaling or tuna fishing, you're a cultural imperialist. If you point out that some Japanese are members of Greenpeace or oppose whaling (my GP is one), then "you don't understand Japanese mind so much". Remember: all your actions against whaling and overfishing are driven by a deep-seated, irrational hatred of Japan. Consequently, when you push, they push back."

I have no idea how representative this is, but the attitudes Kimpatsu describes were powerfully represented in *The Cove*, the film about the secret dolphin slaughter in Japan which won the 2010 Oscar for best documentary. The massacre it exposed is pointless, counter-productive and profoundly damaging to Japan's international image, but it was fiercely defended by what seemed to be the entire political establishment. Denial is evident everywhere on earth, but in the Japanese fishing and whaling industries it seems to have been raised to an art-form. But it would be wrong to blame only Japan for this. In fact the only nations which unequivocally stood up for a ban were Monaco, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, the United States, Norway and Kenya. It's good to have the UK and US on board, especially after eight years of sabotaging international treaties by the Bush administration, but the feeble or hostile response of many other countries was deeply depressing. The EU, some of whose members are major tuna exporters to Japan, supported a ban, but only if it was delayed until May 2011, by which time tuna stocks might pass the point of no return. Several nations simply rebuffed what the fisheries scientists say and insisted that they could carry on as usual without ill-effect. It's Easter Island all over again.

This proposal was brought before the meeting in Doha for just one reason: the nations charged with managing the tuna fishery have flunked it. The International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (Iccat), which is supposed to discharge this task, is in urgent need of a new name: it should be called the International Commission for the Cleansing of Atlantic Tunas. It has repeatedly set catch limits way above what its own scientists have proposed, and turned a blind eye to illegal bluefin catches which probably outweigh the legal take. Now Japan, as if to show that it really doesn't care what happens to the industry it claims to support, has said that it should be Iccat, not Cites, which continues to decide how many tuna are caught. It's like putting Cruella de Ville in charge of the Battersea Dog's Home.

Behind all this lurks a simple calculation. The businessmen currently fishing the Atlantic bluefin to extinction know that while any members of the species survive there is no cut-off point for the profits they make. The scarcer tuna become, the higher the price each carcass fetches. Once the fish have been exterminated, the investors can just shift their vast profits into another industry. It makes perfect economic sense. The shocker is that the nations which are supposed to regulate these crooks have let them get away with it. In doing so, they are reducing the king of fish to an expendable asset in a bent accountant's ledger.

Extinction? I'm afraid we haven't got time for it

Species are going extinct because humans can't see it happening, and therefore can't believe it is happening

Simon Barnes
The Times (UK)

We are city slickers with hunter-gatherer souls. We live in the modern world, but our minds work the way they were evolved to on the savannah.

Science has revealed to us a million truths, but the core of our being rejects them. Take the Earth, for example: you don't seriously believe that nonsense about it being round, do you? Everything in our being tells us that Earth is the centre of the Universe. The vast distances of interstellar space make our heads hurt: we are certain of matters far deeper than truth. As for shattering blows to the way we understand the Universe and our place within it. Galileo demonstrated that the Earth went round the Sun in a humble and subordinate fashion; Darwin showed us that humans are animals and descended from animals. But perhaps the hardest thing to come to terms with is deep time.

The processes that drive the life, the planet and the Universe take place over a timescale that is beyond our grasp. We cannot intuit 4.6 billion years, the age of the Earth. Our gramophone simply won't play that record. We can grapple these concepts by an effort of mind, but it doesn't reach the gut. Or perhaps I mean our DNA. Deep down, we know that the world is 10,000 years old, that humans were always on it, that it is the centre of absolutely everything.

A poll in the United States showed that 44 per cent of its people reject the theory of evolution. In this country it is still 22 per cent.

This is not because people are stupid, but because these notions based on deep time go against the grain of our being. We can just about cope with 10,000 years: the largest number that won't overload our onboard computers. And this is a pity because deep time is at the heart of the extinction crisis.

Slow death

Species are going extinct because humans can't see it happening, and therefore we can't believe it is happening. It is as simple as that.

Believing that the elephant will no longer be around is like believing that one day the sun will rise in the west and the stars will fall as rain.

We can only really get a handle on the short-term. A generation at most. Long-term planning means the next year or two. Our minds can't cope with anything longer. That's why we choose to govern ourselves by means of a comfortable timescale. Four years, five years: that's Politician's Time.

Which brings us to the disaster of Cites. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species is currently meeting in Doha, Qatar. So far, it has decided, and by an overwhelming majority, including the block-voting nations of the EU — that's us, by the way — to continue fishing for bluefin tuna. Apparently, it is politically expedient to do so. The hunting of polar bears is also to continue. It is predicted that a proposed 20-year-ban on the ivory trade will also be rejected.

Extinction is a happening thing, as I have pointed out more than once before. But it is happening in slow motion: you don't see a monkey turn into a man, and you don't see an animal go extinct. It's just that one day you notice that they haven't been about for a few years. The current rate of extinction is one species an hour, but we are not doing much about it because we aren't built to think about events that unfold across the centuries.

Reality bites

This is the United Nations Year of Biodiversity. Biodiversity is another concept we can't deal with; perhaps that's why Cites is trying to get the number of species down to a manageable level. But biodiversity is something that explodes into the mind like a shell — when you see it from the right angle. You just need a change of focus. So let me tell you about my new binoculars.

Spring. As you may have noticed. At bloody last: a few warm days, and a skylark climbs to pour and peit music, while blackbirds express their sexual urgency in laldback fluting. And there, dancing in the light, little swarms of living things. These new bins focus 18 inches from my nose. I managed to catch one: suddenly huge, frame-filling, its two wings in the sun like a single shard of gold. Midges — ah, but there is more than one midge, you see.

There is more than one *family* of midges. "Midge" is just a catch-all term. This lot have nothing to do with the notorious Scottish tormentors.

These sunlit dancers are generally known as non-biting midges, the family of chironomids. There are about 5,000 different species of them across the world. Don't ask me which these were. How can anybody be expected to deal with such a notion? How can humans be expected to come to terms with life as it really is?

Bluefin tuna ban plan sinks in East-West rift

BY SATISH KANADY

DOHA: A proposal to ban trade in bluefin tuna from the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea was voted down at the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) yesterday.

The original proposal of Monaco, strongly supported by the US, was crushed with 68 votes to 20. Thirty nations abstained from voting. The Chair was forced to cut short the debate on the inclusion of the critically endangered species in Appendix I of the CITES as Libya strongly opposed the move and called for immediate voting.

Contrary to speculation in the international media about a possible ban on tuna at the Doha meet, the proposal strongly backed by the conservation lobby, was defeated by a overwhelming majority. This is the second time the move to impose ban on the international trade in bluefin tuna has failed, after it met with the same fate in 1992.

"We are happy with the mandate of the Convention. This decision makes us more responsible in recovering the species," the jubilant Japanese delegation head Miyahara Massamori, told the waiting media outside the conference Hall. Japan, which is a major consumer of bluefin tuna, was leading the team to oppose the 'unrealistic' move by the international conservation agency.

The almost three hour discussion on the question of banning the cross-border trade in bluefin Tuna was cut short by the strong intervention of Libya. "We

condemn the proposal. The proposal rejects all the ramifications of the Convention. The proposal is full of lies. The Chair must immediately stop the debate and go for a voting", Libya said. Libya's motion was supported by Sudan.

The prospects of the controversial proposal getting ratified in its original spirit at yesterday's meeting got dimmer when the EU bloc offered its 'conditional' support to the proposal. Later, it was the Asian-Arab-Latin American bloc that turned the tables on the Western Bloc and dashed the hopes of the international conservation lobby.

Speaking on behalf of the EU, Spain said the EU stands behind the proposal and does feel that it is time for including bluefin tuna in Appendix I. But the EU would like to propose an amendment to the original proposal initiated by Monaco, the Spanish delegation head said. Indonesia, Tunisia, Venezuela, Chile, Republic of South Korea, Senegal and United Arab Emirates (UAE) said a firm 'no' to the Monaco proposal and put the onus of protecting the species on International Commission for Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) saying CITES has nothing to do with bluefin tuna.

"Its very disappointing. Today's decision is the outcome of intensive lobbying. This is the first time the US is supporting a CITES proposal. The proposal has world support" said US delegation head Jane Lyder. She said Monaco's proposal to ban the international trade of bluefin tuna was supported by scientific evidence provided by ICCAT.

THE PENINSULA



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PRESS RELEASE

More terrestrial fauna placed under CITES

Proposal to regulate trade in red and pink corals widely used in jewellery defeated again

Doha, 21 March 2010 – A two-week meeting of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) decided by consensus today to include several reptiles and amphibians from Central America and the Islamic Republic of Iran in its lists.

Governments did not have any objection to regulating trade in a Guatemalan Spiny-tailed iguana (*Ctenosaura palearis*) and other three species of iguanas native to central and south-eastern Mexico, the Yucatan Peninsula and Central America. These iguanas are mainly vegetarian, but occasionally feed on insects (ants, wasps and beetles), and are known to be in demand for the international exotic pet trade, mainly in Europe and the United States.

The CITES summit also adopted measures to protect a whole genus of tree frogs from Central and South America that is under pressure owing to habitat degradation and loss, and to the fungal disease *chytridiomycosis*. Some of these frogs are subject to international trade.

Continuing in the same trend for terrestrial species, a salamander endemic to the Islamic Republic of Iran was also listed by consensus in Appendix I, which means that international commercial trade is prohibited. The Kaiser's newt (*Neurergus kaiseri*) is protected in its range State and the main concern is the demand for this species on the international market. Individuals caught in the wild are being illegally exported and find their way into the pet trade for use in aquaria.

Towards the end of the afternoon, the agenda turned again to marine species to consider a proposal submitted by the United States to control trade in 31 species of red and pink precious corals (Appendix II). Three years after a similar proposal was rejected at the Hague meeting, delegates have defeated for the second time (with 64 votes in favour, 59 against and 10 abstentions) the attempt to list some additional precious corals in CITES (black corals are already protected by CITES).

The family *Coralliidae* includes over 30 pink and red coral species, the most commercially valuable precious corals. These species have been fished for millennia, and millions of items are traded internationally each year. According to the proposal of the United States, the greatest risk to populations of *Coralliidae* is fishing to supply international trade, with landings that have declining by 60-80 % since the 1980s, and reductions in the size structure of populations in fished areas equivalent to a loss of 80-90 % of the reproductive modules (polyps). International demand has contributed to serial depletions of most known populations of pink and red corals, and newly-discovered stocks have been rapidly exhausted.

In early December 2009, an FAO Expert Panel concluded that the available evidence did not support the proposal to include all species in the family Coralliidae (*Corallium* spp. and *Paracorallium* spp.) in CITES Appendix II.

The Panel considered that populations representing a large proportion of the abundance of the seven species [*Corallium rubrum*, *C. japonicum*, *C. secundum*, *C. elatius*, *C. konojoi*, *Corallium* sp. nov., *C. lauense* (*C. regale*)] globally did not meet the biological criteria for listing in Appendix II.

Lack of sufficient scientific evidence and the impact on the livelihoods of coastal local populations depending on corals were the main arguments advanced by the opponents to this proposal. Coming tomorrow, elephant conservation and ivory sales.

Note to journalists: For more information, contact Juan Carlos Vasquez at +974-4175621 or +974-5692804 (cell), or juan.vasquez@cites.org



Red and pink corals or *Corallium rubrum* on the bed of the Mediterranean sea. (AP)

No CITES protection for red, pink coral

MAYA MANSOUR
DOHA

THE Conference on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) on Sunday rejected by secret ballot a proposal to require trade and scientific monitoring for precious red and pink corals harvested in the Mediterranean and the western Pacific.

The members were almost evenly split, with 64 countries voting in favour and 59

opposed. The proposal needed a two-thirds majority to pass. Japan led the opposition, co-sponsored by the United States and the European Union. Many north African countries with extensive cottage industries built up around the precious coral voted against the proposal.

Reacting on the decision to not include 31 species of red and pink coral in Appendix II of the CITES, Senior Campaigner of an environmental group Oceana, David Allison, said:

"Vanity has once again triumphed over conservation. Today is yet another example of CITES failing to protect endangered marine species."

According to NGOs attending the meet, the voting on coral is clearly a failure of CITES to protect one of the smallest marine organisms. The decision sets a terrible precedent for future CITES proposals on ocean species, they felt.

He said, "These precious corals are harvested to support the growing demand for jewellery and souvenirs. The unreg-

ulated and virtually unmanaged trade of these 31 species is driving them to extinction. The quantity of red and pink coral has dropped by more than 80 percent in the last 50 years."

According to several NGOs attending the meet, the voting on coral is clearly a failure of CITES to protect one of the smallest marine organisms. The decision sets a terrible precedent for future CITES proposals on ocean species, they felt.

Coral species are found in tropical, subtropical and temperate waters in all oceans and at the depths of 10 to 5,000 meters. Many species have long life, sometimes more than 100 years, and grow slowly, usually less than one millimetre in thickness per year.

These colonies are fragile and extremely vulnerable to exploitation and destruction, and their biological characteristics also severely limit their subsequent recovery.

Timing of essence in tuna vote / Unlikely ally Libya's call for quick vote fueled anger at 'conspiracy'

Satoshi Koreeda, Izuru Jitsumori and Toshiyuki Fukushima / Yomiuri Shimbun
Correspondents

DOHA--An unlikely ally and impeccable timing helped Japan snatch an unlikely victory from the jaws of defeat in Doha.

While early projections pointed to the easy passage of a proposal to ban the export of Atlantic bluefin tuna--a result that would have stung Japan as the main importer of the prized fish--some shrewd behind-the-scenes maneuvering set the stage for the proposal's demise.

The beginning of the end for the proposal led by Monaco and the European Union was triggered by an outburst from the Libyan delegate at the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, or CITES.

At a committee meeting Thursday in the Qatari capital, the Libyan delegate shouted his objection to the U.S.-backed proposal, saying it was "part of a conspiracy of developed countries." His comment was a direct appeal to anti-West sentiment among developing countries.

The Libyan representative then called for the discussion to be wound up and an immediate vote held. The proposal to ban bluefin trade was then rejected.

However, Japan can take some credit for nudging Libya along on this matter.

"If [a vote is taken] now, we're likely to win," Fisheries Agency head Katsuhiko Machida was quoted by a source as telling Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Minister Hirotaka Akamatsu over the phone Wednesday.

The source said Akamatsu made up his mind to go along with Arab states that were scrambling to take an immediate vote to reject the proposal. "If we're going to win, let's do it as soon as possible," he said.

Late Thursday, the day when discussions on the bluefin tuna export ban started at the conference, the ministry's office dealing with the issue received a phone call from Doha. It was the news they had been waiting for.

"Monaco's proposal was resoundingly defeated," came the message down the line.

(Mar. 21, 2010)

www.yomiuri.co.jp

China, S. Korea get on board

The CITES meeting was also the arena for debate on a proposal to regulate the commercial shark trade.

This proposal had perturbed China, which uses shark as an ingredient in many dishes, including shark fin soup. The Chinese delegation was worried that moves to regulate bluefin tuna trade would galvanize attempts to do the same for sharks.

This prompted China to back Japan on the bluefin issue.

Japan's cause also was helped by Iceland's successful push to have the bluefin proposal put to a secret ballot. Fishing has long been the economic backbone of Iceland, which was against the bluefin tuna export ban and has applied for EU membership.

With European nations not presenting a unified front and China and other emerging nations and South Korea siding with Japan, the initially slim prospects of success swiftly gave way to a growing confidence that the proposal would be shot down.

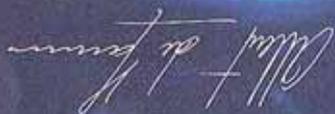
Masanori Miyahara, chief counselor of the Fisheries Agency, secretly visited Libya to solicit the North African country's support in opposing the bluefin tuna export ban at the CITES conference.

Though Libya initially had little more than a passing interest in the issue, Japan managed to persuade it to support Japan's stance.

International meetings often expose confrontations between industrialized and developing countries. Japan's interests usually run counter to those of developing countries. But this time, the government made meticulous preparations for the meeting and capitalized on developing countries' frustrations against decision-making led by the United States and European countries.

This tactic worked brilliantly and led to the decision that Japan had been hoping for at the meeting.

www.yomiuri.co.jp



More than symbolic, protecting the bluefin tuna is a test of our ability to adopt a collectively responsible attitude at last. If we let short-sighted appetites prevent us from saving this species, we can be certain that even greater disasters will hit us tomorrow.

Mediterranean bluefin tuna. This balance must be preserved. Since fishery regulation mechanisms have proved to be inefficient in managing this resource, acting on international trade through CITES is our last hope. Thanks to its decisive action, many species have already been saved. Due to its tools and authority, it alone is capable of acting effectively today. If we are able to show our determination, CITES can save the Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin tuna.

With the bluefin tuna, the entire precarious balance is in jeopardy. The balance between species, since this predator plays a key role in the food chain in the marine area it occupies. The balance between man and nature too, since our own survival depends on our being able to foresee and anticipate the food, ecological and economic resources which will remain for our children.

The lives of future generations depend on this. Mankind beyond our preferences and immediate interests.

future of the planet. We need to learn to think and act in harmony with nature and species, without which our life would not be possible, just as we need to learn to contemplate the future of

idea that our interests of the moment alone can decide the way that is not merely egoistic. It means abandoning the us to look away from ourselves and to view our world in a Biodiversity protection is a goal that unites us all, reaching beyond any cultural differences, geographical contingencies or economic considerations. Biodiversity protection requires

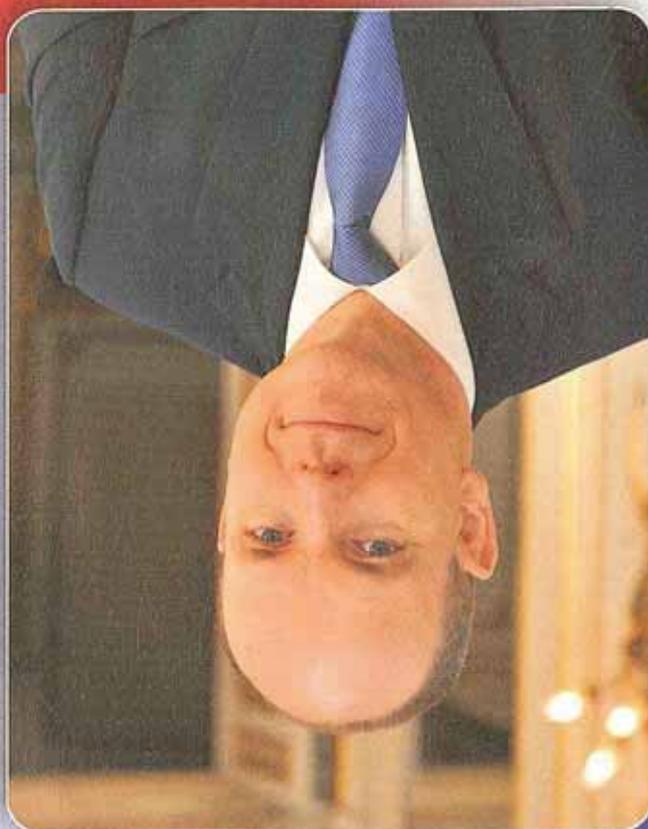
For thousands of years, the bluefin tuna has been more than just an ordinary fish for those living along the Mediterranean coast. This majestic giant, fast swimmer and formidable hunter is a legendary inhabitant of our sea. Once a species found in abundance, it was also an invaluable source of food and work, an essential resource for human life. Irresponsible practices have dramatically reduced tuna populations over the past fifteen years and the threat of seeing this ancestral species become extinct in the near future is becoming increasingly real. In this year of biodiversity, we must realise that we need to react urgently.

SAVE THE BLUEFIN TUNA

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PRINCE ALBERT II OF MONACO
FOUNDATION



Message from H.S.H. Prince Albert II of Monaco



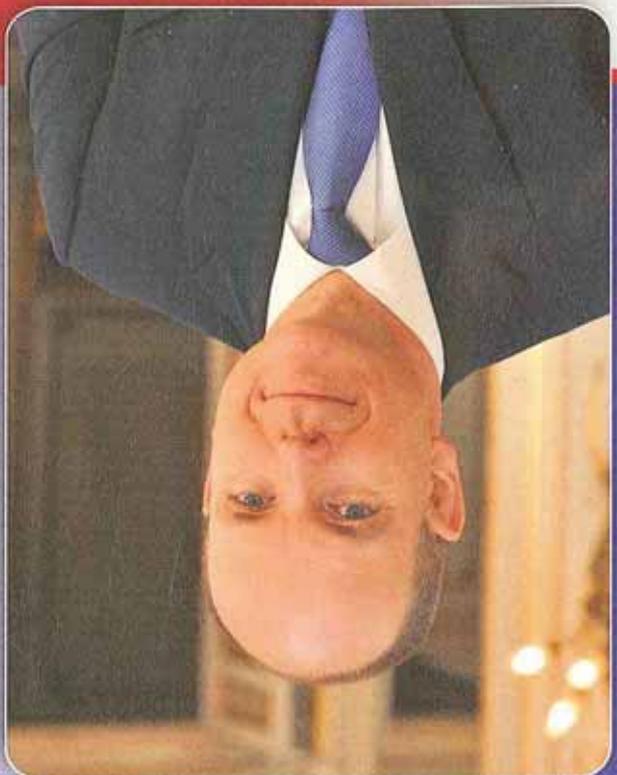
Message de S.A.S. le Prince Albert II de Monaco



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SAUVONS LE THON ROUGE



© Palais Princier de Monaco

Depuis des millénaires, le thon rouge est plus qu'un simple poisson pour ceux qui vivent au bord de la Méditerranée. C'est un habitant mystique de notre mer. Espèce redoutable, c'est un habitant mystique de notre mer. Espèce autrefois abondante, c'était aussi une source précieuse de nourriture et d'activité, une ressource essentielle à la vie des hommes.

Alors que des pratiques irresponsables ont depuis une dizaine d'années réduit dramatiquement les populations de thon, la menace de voir bientôt s'éteindre cette espèce ancestrale devient de plus en plus réelle. En cette année de la biodiversité, nous devons comprendre qu'il y a urgence à réagir.

La préservation de la biodiversité est un objectif qui nous rassemble tous, par-delà les différences culturelles, les contingences géographiques et les considérations économiques. La préservation de la biodiversité, c'est l'exigence de voir au-delà de nous-mêmes et d'envisager notre monde sur un mode qui ne soit pas purement égoïste. C'est renoncer à considérer que notre intérêt du jour peut décider seul de l'avenir de la planète.

Nous devons apprendre à penser avec les paysages et les espèces sans lesquelles notre vie ne serait pas possible, de même que nous devons apprendre à penser l'avenir des hommes au-delà de nos penchants et de nos intérêts immédiats. La vie des générations futures en dépend.

Avec le thon rouge, c'est tout un équilibre précieux qui est menacé. Un équilibre entre les espèces, ce prédateur jouant un rôle majeur dans la chaîne alimentaire des espèces marines, qu'il occupe. Un équilibre entre l'homme et la nature aussi, car notre propre survie exige que nous soyons capables de prévoir et d'anticiper ce que seront les ressources alimentaires, écologiques et économiques de nos enfants.

Cet équilibre doit être préservé. Or, dès lors que les mécanismes de régulation de la pêche se sont avérés inefficaces pour la gestion de la ressource, agir sur le commerce international par la CITES est notre dernier espoir. Grâce à son action déterminante, de nombreuses espèces ont d'ores et déjà pu être sauvées. Par les moyens et l'autorité dont elle dispose, elle seule est aujourd'hui capable d'agir efficacement. Si nous savons faire preuve de détermination, la CITES peut sauver le thon rouge de l'Atlantique et de la Méditerranée.

Plus qu'un symbole, la préservation du thon rouge est un test de notre capacité à adopter enfin une attitude collectivement responsable. Car si nous laissons des appétits courts que nous empêcher de sauver cette espèce, nous pourrions être sûrs que des catastrophes plus grandes encore ne manqueraient pas de nous frapper demain.

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From The Sunday Times

March 21, 2010

Japan lands a death sentence for the bluefin

Charles Clover

It was a desperate defeat. The European Union and the United States had come to Doha to save the bluefin tuna, a fish so delicious as sushi and sashimi that large specimens fetch \$100,000 on the Japanese market. As a consequence the species is as endangered as the white rhino. But, just like the tunas that return each year to the Mediterranean to spawn and find themselves in a labyrinth of nets, the conservationist nations have swum into a trap.

What followed was not pretty. Japan and the fishing nations inflicted a stunning defeat on the conservationist countries, which had wanted to ban international trade in bluefin tuna. Japan's victory, against the weight of scientific opinion, not only raises the question of whether the bluefin can survive but also whether rationality can ever prevail in preventing endangered species from being obliterated.

Recriminations have already started among the losers in Doha, where the 175 parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (Cites) go on meeting until the end of the week. There is anger about the part played by the dithering Spanish presidency of the EU, about French compromises, mutterings about unimaginative British officials and amazement at the failures of EU and US diplomacy.

In theory, these two power blocs had a strong hand. No one could remember a better scientific case to support a temporary ban on trade in any species. Two scientific bodies, the scientific committee of the Atlantic tuna commission, the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) and a special panel of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation agreed that the bluefin stock qualified for a ban because it had declined to less than 15% of its historical levels.

Old Cites hands say the mistake that the European Union and United States made is that they thought a robust scientific assessment alone could get a species listed on one of the appendices of Cites (appendix II means regulated trade under quotas; appendix I, a trade ban). That was once true. But Cites has got political. Over the past decade or so, winning has become a matter of building alliances and buying votes. It's a dirty business and, as far as one can see, the conservation nations failed to get their hands dirty.

While Japan and its allies perceived a threat to their fishing interests from a listing under the Cites treaty six months ago, the EU and the US were preoccupied until a month ago with sorting out their internal divisions. They did not grasp the strength of the alliance ranged against them in Qatar.

Japan appointed as its head of delegation the charming and ruthless Masanori Miyahara, chief of the Fisheries Agency of Japan, a veteran of a successful campaign in 1992 to stop a ban on bluefin fishing.

Everyone knew that the 13 proposals to list marine species, led by sharks and bluefin tuna, were the most controversial this year. There was an early sign of trouble when we heard the Arab League was against all the marine proposals because of the economic impact on north African fishermen. On the morning of the bluefin debate, we learnt that Japan had entertained its allies to a banquet featuring bluefin tuna the night before. When she heard that, Sylvia Earle, one of the most distinguished ocean campaigners in the United States, muttered: "Neanderthals."

The debate itself was an ambush. Monaco put forward the proposal for a ban, then the EU gave it qualified support. But the Spanish presidency droned on unconvincingly and too long. The EU's conservation-minded countries — Britain, Germany and Sweden — had to remain silent under daft EU protocol.

Compromise reached on tiger trade proposal

Posted on 21 March 2010

WWF

Doha, Qatar: WWF welcomed improvements over trade in tigers and other Asian big cat species at a United Nations meeting on wildlife trade.

An amended CITES resolution on Asian big cats calls for increased regional cooperation among tiger range states, improved reporting, establishment of a tiger trade database and improved law enforcement. Representatives from the more than 100 governments attending the meeting, including the majority of the tiger range countries, agreed unanimously to a European Union proposal at Convention on the International Trade In Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

"This proposal was a test for the effectiveness of CITES as an international conservation agreement and despite the compromise, progress was made," said Carlos Drews, Director, Species Programme, WWF International. "But words alone will not save wild tigers as a global poaching epidemic empties Asia's forests and CITES governments will need to live up to the commitments made today."

Unfortunately, no improvements were agreed to strengthen the control of domestic trade in tiger parts and products from tiger farms. Tiger range countries led by China claimed that CITES oversight would infringe on the sovereignty of countries and was beyond the mandate of CITES as an international treaty, even though similar measures have already been taken by CITES for Tibetan antelope, elephants, rhinos and sturgeon. However, the decision relating to tiger farming agreed at the last meeting of the CITES Conference of the Parties in 2007 was retained, so the control measures have not weakened.

"We are pleased that no ground was lost and that China joined the consensus," added Drews. "It is now up to the tiger range countries to work with the wider international community to crack down on illegal poaching and trade, and further reduce demand for tiger products."

Investigations have found products like tiger bone wine are still openly available in Asian markets and online. Sustained efforts through demand reduction campaigns are desperately needed or the gains made since China's 1993 domestic tiger trade ban will be severely compromised.

With tiger numbers still decreasing and an estimated 3,200 wild tigers remaining, poaching and illegal tiger trade as the most urgent threat to their survival must be addressed aggressively.

Norway, Kenya and the United States spoke for a ban. Then it became open season on the conservationists by the fishing nations. Country after country — Canada, Indonesia, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, Venezuela, Chile and Senegal — said they wanted the Atlantic tuna commission, which has allowed the bluefin to get into its present plight, to carry on managing the fish. The conservationists had no riposte to the fears Japan had stirred up in poor countries that their economies would suffer from a trade ban.

It was clear where things were going long before a ranting Libyan delegate denounced the scientific assessments as "lies" and forced a vote. Monaco's proposal was voted down by 68 to 20, with 30 abstentions, a defeat so dire that it is unlikely to be reopened this week. Monaco's ambassador warned that ICCAT had "a very serious responsibility" to tackle the problem of illegal fishing and set scientific quotas.

This is a disaster for the credibility of Cites. On the plus side America and Europe now back a trade ban and the pressure is on ICCAT, a fishery management body with a lamentable record, to do a better job. But that organisation's record has led to it being called the International Conspiracy to Catch All Tuna.

The question now is whether Japan can live up to its promise last week to crack down on illegal fishing and whether the bluefin can survive three more years until the conservation countries can organise a rematch.

CITES rejects trade controls for overharvested corals

Posted on 21 March 2010

WWF

Doha, Qatar – Governments participating in the United Nations' species trade convention voted today against implementing better protections for red and pink coral, which are being overharvested to supply the international jewelry trade.

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) governments voted against a joint United States and European Union proposal to list all species in the family Corallidae in Appendix II of the Convention.

An Appendix II listing would have required countries to introduce measures to ensure international trade in these corals is sustainable and regulated.

"TRAFFIC and WWF are deeply disappointed with the decision not to list red and pink corals," said Ernie Cooper of TRAFFIC Canada.

"Without the trade control measures this would have introduced, the current overharvesting of these precious corals will continue unabated."

There are more than 30 species of Corallidae found worldwide, which are harvested in the Mediterranean and the Western Pacific, primarily for the manufacture of jewelry and other objets d'art.

Major harvesting and processing territories include Italy, Japan and Taiwan. The USA is the largest market for red and pink corals.

Many species are known to be threatened through overharvesting. According to TRAFFIC and WWF there is a clear case that regulation of trade in Corallidae under CITES would provide important safeguards in support of better management of these valuable coral species.

"This is a shame for CITES governments because it was an opportunity to show that the Convention has not entirely lost the capacity to face down vested interests that oppose CITES protection for marine species," said Dr Colman O'Criodain, Wildlife Trade Policy Analyst at WWF International.

China has already listed four of the threatened coral species found in its waters in Appendix III of the Convention. Such a listing requires that trade must be conducted only with the appropriate paperwork, allows countries to track and assess levels of international trade.

However, several countries considered the identification of corals a serious stumbling block for implementing trade regulations.

"Bringing up coral identification was just a smokescreen to confuse the issue," said Cooper, who is soon to complete a guide to allow identification of corals, and has recently published a method for using DNA to identify manufactured coral products.

"Today's decision was a question of expediency rather than a full examination of the facts. Commercial lobbying won through," said Cooper, adding: "The conservation of corals is all at sea."

Between 30 and 50 metric tonnes of red and pink corals are harvested annually to meet consumer demand for jewelry and decorative items. The United States alone imported 28 million pieces of red and pink coral between 2001 and 2008.

Corallium populations off parts of the Italian, French and Spanish coasts are no longer commercially viable, while in the Western Pacific they have been depleted within five years of their discovery and harvest is shifting to newly discovered populations.

Newsfront: Wildlife in the Net

2010/03/21

Trading in protected wildlife is booming on the Web with international laws falling behind, ANNE CHAON reports

FROM Ivory trinkets to live parrots, the Internet has become a virtual supermarket in imperilled species that is hard to track and even harder to crack, say experts. With a quarter of humanity coming online over the last 15 years, the scale of the problem has caught global wildlife police off-guard, according to the 175-nation Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), meeting until Thursday in Doha. "Contemporary international law has fallen behind in its consideration of wildlife trade conducted via the Internet," CITES admits. With few resources of its own, CITES has delegated the task of assessing the scope of illicit e-commerce to non-governmental organisations. An ambitious, 11-nation investigation carried out by the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), released in Doha, has uncovered a flourishing traffic in live animals, including primates, rare reptiles and exotic birds. It also found thousands of products — supposed culinary delicacies and health potions to jewellery — extracted from big cats, rhinos, elephants and bears. All the contraband came from flora and fauna listed on CITES Appendix I, which bans international commerce. Specimens and items spotted during a six-week survey in mid-2008 had an advertised value of nearly US\$4million (RM13.2million). "Overall, the results show a high volume of wildlife trade conducted via the Internet, with thousands of CITES-listed specimens offered for sale on the Internet every week," according to a report of the probe. Seventy per cent of the trade was based in the United States, with China and Britain each accounting for about eight per cent. Among live species, exotic birds dominated, while ivory was by far the top category among derived products. "It is rarely whole tusks.

Usually is it small items," said Celine Sissler-Bienvenue, IFAW's senior elephant expert. Grace Ge Gabriel, who heads the organisation's China operations, has seen a boom in online sales of tiger wine, a combination of rice wine and tiger bones that has been typically aged three, six or nine years. "Online, these ads are mainly targeting the Chinese diaspora," she said. Likewise potions containing bear bile, used in traditional Chinese medicines to treat ailments ranging from liver disorders to haemorrhoids to hepatitis. The fluid is extracted over months or years from live bears through a drip tube surgically inserted through the animal's abdomen. "The Chinese market is saturated, but Canadian and American customs are constantly seizing shipments," Ge Gabriel said. In some cases, Internet sales may be driving species not yet listed under the Convention toward extinction.

In Doha, CITES officials highlighted the plight of a small cousin of the salamander called Kaiser's spotted newt (*Neurergus kaiser*), native to Iran, which has submitted a proposal for Appendix I status to be voted next week.

Only 1,000 specimens remain in the wild, experts estimate, but a 2006 Internet survey found several sites advertising the colourful creatures for 220 euros (RM996) a piece.

"One Ukrainian company said they had sold more than 200 — all caught in the wild — in one year," said Ernie Cooper, an investigator in Canada for an environmental NGO called TRAFFIC.

Most wildlife sales on the Internet are small-scale, the surveys showed.

"The large crime syndicates have much better ways to sell their merchandise, even in shops," said Ge Gabriel.

Since 2007, major online auction sites — including eBay and Chinese giant taobao.com — have prohibited trade in ivory and live species.

But even as law enforcement has begun to crack down, online vendors have become more wily, obfuscating their wares with descriptions such as "made from the teeth of the world's largest land mammal". And even if police can trace an offer to a fixed address, products have often been sold within a matter of hours, officials say.

Rhino poaching surge in S.Africa linked to organised crime

AFP - The rhinoceros walking down the road at South Africa's largest game reserve had no horns, one of the few to survive a surge in poaching that has sent killings to a 15-year high.

A startled tourist alerted game rangers to the animal, the first time a poached rhino had been found still alive at Kruger National Park.

"That was really the first case that I know of where we found a rhino which the horn was removed and it was struggling on the road," said Kruger spokesman William Mabasa.

His theory is that poachers used a tranquilliser to let them remove the rhino's horns silently.

Although the animal survived the amputation, veterinarians were unable to save its life.

"They eventually had to destroy it because the wound was rather too big," Mabasa said.

Two rhinos at a nature reserve near Pretoria suffered a similar fate earlier this month after poachers overdosed them with tranquilisers.

Their fate is emblematic of an insidious turn in the poaching trade, a top agenda item at the general assembly of the 175-nation wildlife treaty CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species) underway in Doha.

Black-market demand for rhino horn has soared in the past several years, largely due to the economic boom in east and southeast Asia, where the horn is used for medicinal purposes.

That surge in demand has combined with endemic poverty in many rhino habitats to push rhino poaching worldwide to the highest levels seen in 15 years, according to the wildlife monitoring group Traffic.

South Africa and neighbouring Zimbabwe are responsible for 95 percent of the poaching, Traffic said.

Now conservation experts and South African parks officials say international crime syndicates have entered the trade.

The syndicates sponsor organised hunts and, increasingly, use helicopters, military-grade guns and prescription tranquilisers to pursue their prey.

"Current rhino poaching trends indicate a high level of organisation and crime syndication at the local, national, regional and international levels," Reynold Thakhuli, spokesman for South Africa National Parks, told AFP.

"Rhino poaching activity has escalated dramatically throughout South Africa," he said.

South Africa's national parks say they lost 36 rhinos to poaching in 2008 and 50 in 2009.

The country has already lost 31 rhinos to poaching so far this year, according to the International Rhino Foundation.

Mabasa said the escalation has hit Kruger Park particularly hard.

"We'd never had an amount of poaching that I would refer to as a problem -- not until last year," he said.

"I think the highest we'd ever had before was seven in one year" in 2008, he said. "Then in 2009 we lost 41."

International police agency Interpol is moving to crack down on the trade.

In February the organisation carried out a month-long sting operation that led to the seizure of 10 million euros (13.6 million dollars) in illegal wildlife medicines and a series of arrests worldwide.

But more international efforts will be needed to reduce rhino poaching in southern Africa, said Oubaas Coetzer, an inspector with the South African Police Service at Kruger National Park.

Coetzer said local police have had success in making low-level arrests. Last year, they arrested 47 rhino poachers for 50 poaching incidents.

But poaching only increased.

"We cannot do anything about the black market price," Coetzer told AFP.

"So you catch somebody in the syndicate, he's now out of action. But there are still lots of others that can fill that space, because of the money. It's organised crime," he said.

"Arresting people and sending them to jail is not stopping (poaching). The only thing that can help is to reduce or completely stop the trade in rhino horn."

Red coral left 'unprotected' at wildlife trade talks

AFP - The UN wildlife trade body on Sunday rejected by secret ballot a proposal to require trade and scientific monitoring for precious red and pink corals harvested in the Mediterranean and the western Pacific.

The Conference on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), meeting in Doha through Thursday, was almost evenly split, with 64 countries voting in favour and 59 opposed, but the measure would have needed a two-thirds majority to pass.

Japan led the opposition to the measure, co-sponsored by the United States and the European Union.

Many north African countries with extensive cottage industries built up around the precious coral - which can sell for tens of thousands of dollar (euros) per kilo -- joined in the "no" vote.

The United States argued that overexploitation was responsible for an approximately 85 percent drop in harvests over the last three decades, and that global oversight was needed to prevent the species from slipping past the threshold of viability.

Japan and its allies countered that the deep-water, reef-building organisms were not facing extinction, and said that proponents had not sufficiently taken into account the impact on coastal fishing communities.

The measure targeted seven species in the Coralliidae family, one growing in the Mediterranean and the others in the western Pacific, including Hawaii.

It would also have covered another 24 so-called "look-alike" species to prevent accidental harvesting.

Environmental and marine conservation groups slammed the decision.

"To say that it is highly disappointing would be an understatement," said Ernie Cooper of the wildlife monitoring group TRAFFIC.

"The message of this COP is that it is going to be very difficult to achieve conservation for high-value marine species given the concerted effort to block any attempt to list these species on CITES."

Last week, CITES rejected a total ban on fishing of Atlantic bluefin tuna from the Mediterranean and the eastern Atlantic.

Historically, the UN trade body has dealt more with charismatic fauna such as great apes, big cats and elephants, rather than commercially harvested species worth billions.

"The unregulated and virtually unmanaged collection and trade of these 31 species is driving them to extinction. Today's decision sets a terrible precedent," said David Allison of Washington-based Oceana.



Dr Simon Stuart

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has lauded Qatar's efforts to save the Arabian Oryx from extinction.

"Qatar's captive breeding programme is very successful," IUCN's Species Survival Commission chair Dr Simon Stuart told Gulf Times yesterday after a visit to the Shahaniya Oryx Centre.

The Arabian Oryx was hunted heavily in the 20th century, resulting in it being classified as "endangered" on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

The antelope, native to the desert and steppe areas of the Arabian Peninsula, is also placed on Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) because of concerns relating to international trade.

Well-managed breeding and re-introduction efforts are improving the status of the Arabian Oryx and have led to the species becoming eligible to be down-listed to 'Vulnerable' on the IUCN Red List in 2011.

As of 2008, the animal's world population was estimated to be about 1,100 in the wild and 6,000-7,000 in captivity, zoos, reserves and private collections.

"In Qatar, we have more than 1,300 Arabian Oryx," the Ministry of Environment's wildlife and protected area consultant, Ghanim Abdulla Mohamed, explained.



In the late '50s and early '60s, the species had become near-extinct due to severe hunting with the availability of guns and 4WD vehicles.

"But, Sheikh Jassim bin Hamad al-Thani, uncle of HH the Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, became the first man in the region to capture few animals from the Empty Quarter enduring extreme hardships and bring them to Qatar, thus launching Operation Oryx," Mohamed recalled.

At more than 583,000sq km the Empty Quarter takes in substantial portions of Saudi Arabia, as well as parts of Oman, Yemen, and the UAE to create an arid wilderness larger than France.

"A group of British scientists took few Arabian Oryx from Qatar to London in the early '60s and then to Phoenix, Arizona, US, where their numbers increased on account of good protection and management," the official said.

Saudi Arabia and Oman also have active breeding programmes and re-introduced Arabian Oryx into the wild. Qatar has given some animals to certain countries in the region, but is yet to re-introduce them into the wild.

"In Qatar we now keep the Arabian Oryx in three reserves – Shahaniya, Ushajirij and Mazhabyah – after having lost a number of animals to foot and mouth disease several years ago," Mohamed said.

Qatar is the first country in the Gulf to have a vaccination programme for the Oryx, he added. Dr Stuart stated that the Qatari stock of the animal is very important for the future of the Arabian Oryx.

IUCN arranged the visit to the Shahaniya Oryx Centre on the sidelines of the ongoing 15th Conference of the Parties of the Cites.

IUCN, the world's oldest and largest global environmental network, helps the world find pragmatic solutions to the most pressing environment and development challenges.

It supports scientific research, manages field projects all over the world and brings governments, non-government organisations, United Nations agencies, companies and local communities together to develop and implement policy, laws and best practice.

Kenya : Summit Urges ICT Use to Control Poaching

Walter Menya

21 March 2010

AllAfrica.com

Nairobi — As poachers refine their criminal tactics, governments have been urged to adopt Internet and new Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to combat the vice.

Delegates at the ongoing Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in Doha, Qatar were advised exploit the growing importance of ICT in protecting wild fauna and flora.

KWS, the Kenya Police, the Lusaka Agreement Taskforce and Interpol have also told of the growing level of refinement being used by poachers to rob the continent of one of its most valuable assets.

"Formerly, the poachers used rudimentary weapons such as bows and arrows, but they have now acquired firearms," KWS deputy director in charge of security Peter Leitoro said. "The level of sophistication is really high."

Statistics indicate that the country lost 47 elephants in 2007 to poachers, but that figure more than tripled in 2008 to 145.

By the end of last month, Kenya had lost 216 elephants to the criminals, and KWS had managed to seize 1,087 kilogrammes of ivory. The vice has seen the elephant population drop from 167,000 in 1973 to only 30,000 in 2005.

The CITES secretariat acknowledged the growing importance in fighting the vice stating that it could also be used to connect legitimate traders of wildlife to consumers who include game watchers.

"Perhaps our biggest challenge is to find ways to help those consumers, who are becoming more and more used to ordering and paying on-line, to determine whether what they are being offered is legal and traded sustainably," the secretariat said in a statement after Saturday's deliberations.

Some countries are already using new technologies to optimize trade procedures, facilitate legal trade and harmonize CITES permit and certificate issuance procedures with new international norms and standards.

The advent of CITES electronic permitting and the single window environment illustrate these trends well.

The 15th Cites Conference of the Parties (COP15) runs from March 13 to 25

Demise of coral, salamander show impact of Web

DOHA, Qatar (AP) — The Internet has emerged as one of the greatest threats rare species, fueling the illegal wildlife trade and making it easier to buy everything from live baby lions to wine made from tiger bones, conservationists said Sunday. The Web's impact was made clear at the meeting of the 175-nation Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, or CITES. Delegates voted overwhelmingly Sunday to ban the trade of the Kaiser's spotted newt which the World Wildlife Fund says has been devastated by the Internet trade.

Sunday Tribune

The rhinoceros walking down the road at South Africa's largest game reserve had no horns, one of the few to survive a surge in poaching that has sent killings to a 15-year high.

A startled tourist alerted game rangers to the animal, the first time a poached rhino had been found still alive at Kruger National Park.

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South Africa and neighbouring Zimbabwe are responsible for 95 percent of the poaching, Traffic said.

Now conservation experts and South African parks officials say international crime syndicates have entered the trade.

The syndicates sponsor organised hunts and, increasingly, use helicopters, military-grade guns and prescription tranquillisers to pursue their prey.

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"Rhino poaching activity has escalated dramatically throughout South Africa," he said.

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Mabasa said the escalation has hit Kruger Park particularly hard.

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"I think the highest we'd ever had before was seven in one year" in 2008, he said. "Then in 2009 we lost 41."

International police agency Interpol is moving to crack down on the trade.

In February the organisation carried out a month-long sting operation that led to the seizure of 10 million euros (about R100-million) in illegal wildlife medicines and a series of arrests worldwide.

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"Arresting people and sending them to jail is not stopping (poaching). The only thing that can help is to reduce or completely stop the trade in rhino horn." - Sapa-AFP

Tiger range countries roar with one voice on trade controls

TRAFFIC

Doha, Qatar, 21 March 2010 —Tiger range countries, including China, reached a strong consensus at the CITES Conference in Qatar on the way forward to address pressing concerns of illegal trade threatening wild populations of Tiger and other Asian big cat species. The 13 range countries, with support from the CITES Parties, also agreed to continue with measures to address farming of captive populations, and stop breeding of tigers for trade in parts and derivatives.

A significant market for tiger products persists in China, but commitments from the Chinese government and traditional Chinese medicine associations point the way forward to making effective interventions to reduce consumer demand and stop illegal trade.

In January this year, China's State Forestry Administration issued a Directive which reaffirmed its policy regarding Tiger conservation and regulation of trade in tiger products, including control of existing farming activities. The Directive restates China's commitment to stopping illegal Tiger trade, which includes the maintenance of a domestic ban in place since 1993 to prohibit trade in Tiger bone.

Immediately prior to the CITES Parties meeting in Qatar, the World Federation of Chinese Medicine Societies (WFCMS) announced in Beijing their commitment to tiger conservation. The WFCMS, which has 195 member organizations in 57 countries, urged its members not to use tigers and other endangered wildlife species in traditional medicine.

Following substantive consultations in Doha between Tiger range countries and the EU, the Tiger range countries agreed on a strengthened platform to control illegal trade in Tiger and other Asian Big Cats.

Amendments to an EU document calling for strengthening of an existing CITES Resolution on trade in Asian Big Cats include improved reporting by the range countries on the conservation of, and trade in, Asian big cats; the establishment of regional enforcement networks; and the setting up of a database for Asian big cat trade.

The revised Resolution also urges CITES Parties to contribute financial and technical assistance to enable the range countries to implement the Resolution.

At CoP15, CITES Parties were also urged to support and participate in international conservation programmes such as the Global Tiger Initiative, the driving force behind the Global Tiger Summit which will take place in September 2010 in Vladivostok. The Summit will bring together Heads of State of range countries and interested donor countries to push for firm commitments on the protection of tigers against poaching, habitat loss, human encroachment and illegal trade.

"The strengthening of the CITES framework, combined with the commitments made by the Chinese government and other range countries provide the foundation necessary to make the Global Tiger Initiative deliver on its potential," said TRAFFIC's Pauline Verheij.

"If the global community is to save the tiger from extinction, we need to work together with China and the other range countries to reduce the demand for illegal tiger parts and products, protect the last remaining tiger habitats from poaching and human encroachment, and to ensure that traders benefiting from illegal trade in tiger and other Asian big cats are brought to justice."

Internet 'threatens' rare species

The internet has emerged as one of the biggest threats to endangered species, according to conservationists who are meeting in Doha, Qatar.

Campaigners say it is easier than ever before to buy and sell anything from live baby lions to polar bear pelts on online auction sites and chatrooms.

The findings were presented at the 175-nation Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (Cites).

Several proposals to give endangered species more protection were defeated.

Delegates will vote on changes to the trade in ivory later this week.

Web effect

"The internet is becoming the dominant factor overall in the global trade in protected species," Paul Todd of the International Fund for Animal Welfare was quoted as saying by the Associated Press news agency.

He said thousands of endangered species are regularly traded on the internet, as buyers and sellers take advantage of the anonymity - and vast global market - the world wide web can offer.

Those trying to police illegal sales say the size of problem is almost impossible to estimate. They say the US is the biggest market, but that Europe, China, Russia and Australia also play a large part.

On Sunday, delegates voted to ban all international trade in a rare type of Iranian salamander, the Kaiser's spotted newt, which the World Wildlife Fund says has been devastated by the internet trade.

But more high-profile attempts to ban trade in polar bears, bluefin tuna and rare corals have all failed, leaving environmental activists dismayed, the BBC's Stephanie Hancock reports from Doha.

A proposal from the US and Sweden to regulate the trade in red and pink coral - which is crafted into expensive jewellery and sold extensively on the web - was defeated.

Delegates voted the idea down mostly over concerns the increased regulations might impact poor fishing communities.

Story from BBC NEWS:
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/science/nature/8579310.stm>

Published: 2010/03/21 23:56:57 GMT

International CSOs petition Zambia, Tanzania's bid to lift ivory trade ban

By Kabanda Chulu in Kitwe

Mon 22 Mar. 2010, 04:00 CAT

The Post Online

Text size

[Print](#)

INTERNATIONAL Civil Society Organisations have warned the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) not to accept the proposal by Zambia and Tanzania to lift the ban on ivory trade because it will result in the extinction of elephants.

Tanzania and Zambia are lobbying the CITES for special exemptions from the ban on killing endangered elephants for ivory so that proceeds could be used to finance game management and wildlife conservation, which they claim to be too expensive to fund.

But Kenya and Mali together with other institutions are leading an effort to block this proposal by Tanzania and Zambia to change the endangered species status of elephants and sell off stockpiles of ivory.

In a petition comprising over 500,000 signatures from around the world that will be presented at the ongoing CITES meeting in Doha, Qatar, the NGOs led by AVAAZ, stated that there was need to uphold the ban on ivory trading and save whole populations of these magnificent animals.

It stated that as long as there was demand for ivory, elephants were at risk from poaching and smuggling and signing a petition was the only chance to protect them and crush the ivory criminals' profits.

"This proposal by Tanzania and Zambia will send a clear signal to the ivory crime syndicates that international protection is weakening and it is open-season on elephants. Our best chance to save the continent's remaining elephants is to support African conservationists and we only have days left and the UN Endangered Species body only meets every three years hence we are calling on people to sign this petition to protect elephants," it stated.

Over 20 years ago, the CITES passed a worldwide ban on ivory trading.

Poaching fell and ivory prices slumped. But poor enforcement coupled with 'experimental one-off

sales', like the one Tanzania and Zambia are seeking, drove poaching up and turned illegal trade into a lucrative business since poachers can launder their illegal ivory with the legal stockpiles.

"Now, despite the worldwide ban, each year over 30,000 elephants are gunned down and their tusks hacked off by poachers with axes and chainsaws. If Tanzania and Zambia are successful in exploiting the loophole, this unpleasant trade could get much worse and we have a one-off chance this week to extend the worldwide ban and repress poaching and trade prices before we lose even more elephant populations," it stated. "Across the world's cultures and throughout our history elephants have been revered in religions and have captured our imagination. But today these beautiful and highly intelligent creatures are being wiped out."

On Tuesday, Zambian tourism and environment minister Catherine Namugala defended the proposal, saying it would enable the country use benefits accruing from the sale of elephants for national development.

Namugala said the application to down list Zambia's elephant population would have no negative impact on elephants.

"Zambia's proposal to down list the elephant population is based on findings of a comprehensive assessment that showed that commercial trade would not be detrimental to the survival of the elephant," Namugala said.

Some 1,500 persons representing over 170 government, non- governmental groups, businesses and indigenous peoples are attending the triennial conference of the CITES.

Officially opening the meeting, CITES Secretary-General Willem Wijnstekers said governments had achieved many conservation successes during the 35 years of the CITES treaty but called for increased political support to meet the new challenges.

"We do not want to risk letting down the developing world in its struggle to ensure that trade in wild fauna and flora is conducted legally and sustainably," Wijnstekers said.

The proposal by Zambia and Tanzania, which was filed on November 17, 2009, seeks to 'transfer the population of the African elephant, from Appendix I to Appendix II' of CITES.

Because Appendix I species are considered to be 'threatened with extinction,' and trade is only permitted in exceptional circumstances.

However, if the African elephant is moved to Appendix II, species that are not necessarily threatened with extinction, but could be if trade is not controlled since avenues for trade will likely be opened up.

AVAAZ is an international civic organisation that promotes activism on issues such as climate change, human rights, and religious conflicts.

Web Complicit in Wildlife Demise?

Conservationists At UN Wildlife Meeting Say Internet Fueling Trade In Endangered Species

(CBS/ AP) The Internet has emerged as one of the greatest threats to rare species, fueling the illegal wildlife trade and making it easier to buy everything from live baby lions to wine made from tiger bones, conservationists and law enforcement officers said Sunday.

The Web's impact was made clear at the meeting of the 175-nation Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, or CITES. Delegates voted overwhelmingly Sunday to ban the trade of the Kaiser's spotted newt, which the World Wildlife Fund says has been devastated by the Internet trade.

A proposal from the United States and Sweden to regulate the trade in red and pink coral - which is crafted into expensive jewelry and sold extensively on the Web - was defeated. Delegates voted the idea down mostly over concerns the increased regulations might impact poor fishing communities.

Trade on the Web poses "one of the biggest challenges facing CITES," said Paul Todd, a campaign manager for the International Fund for Animal Welfare.

"The Internet is becoming the dominant factor overall in the global trade in protected species," he said. "There will come a time when country to country trade of large shipments between big buyers and big sellers in different countries is a thing of the past."

The IFAW has done several surveys of illegal trade on the Web and a three-month survey in 2008 found more than 7,000 species worth \$3.8 million sold on auction sites, classified ads and chat rooms, mostly in the United States but also Europe, China, Russia and Australia. Most of what is traded is illegal African ivory but the group has also found exotic birds along with rare products such as tiger-bone wine and pelts from protected species like polar bears and leopards.

A separate 2009 survey by the group Campaign Against the Cruelty to Animals targeted the Internet trade in Ecuador, finding offers to sell live capuchin monkeys, lion cubs and ocelots.

"As the Internet knows no borders, it causes several new problems regarding the enforcement of the protection of endangered species," the group said in its report.

John Sellar, CITES' chief law enforcement officer, argued the impact of the Web was overblown and that many species that appear illegal may in fact may be legal. He also said many big traders were reluctant to use the Internet, since payments can be traced and they can be ensnared in undercover operations.

"There seems to be little evidence that there are commercial operations using the Internet," Sellar said. "Although the risks may be small depending on which country you are living in, you can be identified when using the Internet. So there are clearly risks there."

Still, a CITES committee endorsed an e-commerce proposal Sunday that calls on governments to draft measures to address the Internet trade and law enforcement agencies to dedicate a unit to focus on it.

The private sector has also moved to limit the illegal trade.

EBay, which was singled out in the IFAW survey as being a main source of much of the ivory sales, said in a statement that it instituted a complete ban on the ivory trade in 2008, which activists said has helped slow the trade in tusks on the Web.

The newt is a textbook example of what can happen to one species through trade on the Web. According to a study by the WWF, the black and brown salamander with white spots is coveted in the pet trade. They number only around 1,000 and live in Iran's Zagros Mountains. About 200 have been traded annually over the years, mostly through a Web site operated out of Ukraine. Their population has fallen 80 percent.

"The Internet itself isn't the threat, but it's another way to market the product," said Ernie Cooper, who spearhead the investigation into the newt for TRAFFIC Canada. "Most people are not willing to pay \$300 for a salamander. But through the power of the Internet, tapping into the global market, you can find buyers."

The red and pink coral, which consist of 32 species, are harvested in deep Mediterranean waters and turned into expensive jewelry either in Italy or cheaper place like Taiwan and China, according to the marine conservation group SeaWeb.

It is the most widely traded and valuable of all precious corals but has no international protection, resulting in a brisk international trade in the species, the group said.

Opposition to the coral proposal was led by Japan, which also successfully spearheaded efforts last week to defeat a proposed ban on the international export of Atlantic bluefin tuna, a key ingredient in sushi. They were joined by several coastal states including Indonesia, Malaysia and Iceland, all of whom argued the corals are crucial to the survival of local communities and are not overharvested.

Meanwhile, delegates approved a voluntary conservation plan for endangered tigers that calls for tougher legislation in countries home to the big cats to tackle widespread smuggling and boost money spent on law enforcement.

The British plan also calls for countries to better control tiger farms and to phase out traditional medicine markets which fuel demand for tiger parts. The proposal includes no funding for the 13 tiger range countries, only a request for donor assistance.

The Tiger population has plummeted because of human encroachment, the loss of nine-tenths of their habitat and poaching to supply the illegal trade. Their numbers have fallen from 100,000 at the beginning of the 20th century to around 3,600 today.

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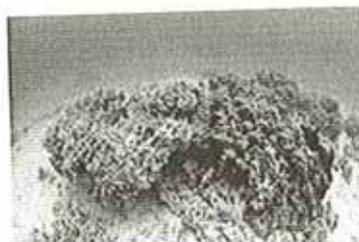
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Mar 21, 9:50 AM EDT

Demise of coral, salamander show impact of Web

By MICHAEL CASEY
AP Environmental Writer

DOHA, Qatar (AP) -- The Internet has emerged as one of the greatest threats to rare species, fueling the illegal wildlife trade and making it easier to buy everything from live baby lions to wine made from tiger bones, conservationists said Sunday.



AP Photo/Keoki Stender

The Web's impact was made clear at the meeting of the 175-nation Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, or CITES. Delegates voted overwhelmingly Sunday to ban the trade of the Kaiser's spotted newt, which the World Wildlife Fund says has been devastated by the Internet trade.

A proposal from the United States and Sweden to regulate the trade in red and pink coral - which is crafted into expensive jewelry and sold extensively on the Web - was defeated. Delegates voted the idea down mostly over concerns the increased regulations might impact poor fishing communities.

Trade on the Web poses "one of the biggest challenges facing CITES," said Paul Todd, a campaign manager for the International Fund for Animal Welfare.

"The Internet is becoming the dominant factor overall in the global trade in protected species," he said. "There will come a time when country to country trade of large shipments between big buyers and big sellers in different countries is a thing of

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the past."

The IFAW has done several surveys of illegal trade on the Web and found that thousands of species are sold on auction sites, classified ads and chat rooms, mostly in the United States but also Europe, China, Russia and Australia. Most of what is traded is illegal African ivory but the group has also found exotic birds along with rare products such as tiger-bone wine and pelts from protected species like polar bears and leopards.

A separate 2009 survey by the group Campaign Against the Cruelty to Animals targeted the Internet trade in Ecuador, finding offers to sell live capuchin monkeys, lion cubs and ocelots.

"As the Internet knows no borders, it causes several new problems regarding the enforcement of the protection of endangered species," the group said in its report.

The newt is a textbook example of what can happen to one species through trade on the web. According to a study by the WWF, the black and brown salamander with white spots is coveted in the pet trade. Number only around 1,000, about 200 annually are being traded over the years, mostly through a web site that was operated out Ukraine.

"The Internet itself isn't the threat, but it's another way to market the product," said Ernie Cooper, who spearhead the investigation into the newt for TRAFFIC Canada. "The Kaiser's spotted newt, for example, is expensive and most people are not willing to pay \$300 for a salamander. But through the power of the Internet, tapping into global market, you can find buyers."

The red and pink coral, which consist of 32 species, are harvested in deep Mediterranean waters and turned into expensive jewelry either in Italy or in cheaper locals like Taiwan and China, according to the marine conservation group SeaWeb.

It is the most widely traded and valuable of all precious corals but has no international protection, resulting in a brisk international trade in the species, the group claims.

The proposal is being opposed by the industry and some Asia countries which contend the corals are not over harvested and are still common in their range.

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Corals go unprotected at CITES

Web posted at: 3/22/2010 2:59:13
Source :: The Peninsula

By Huda NV

DOHA: A secret ballot and a majority support-vote could do nothing to protect the depleting red and pink corals (Corallidae), one of the most valuable wildlife commodities, at the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), yesterday. A proposal to monitor the trade of the corals, put forward by Sweden on behalf of the EU and US, went down the drain as opposing countries brought in issues of human livelihood.

The EU-US proposal, supported by Croatia and the UAE, had called for an Appendix II for the corals with an 18 month delay in putting the listing into effect so as to give parties involved time to resolve technical and administrative issues.

There are more than 30 species of Corallidae found worldwide, and 30 to 50 metric tonnes of red and pink corals are harvested annually to meet consumer demand for jewellery and decorative items. The United States alone imported 28 million pieces of red and pink coral between 2001 and 2008.

While the red and pink populations are no longer commercially viable in some parts, in the Western Pacific they have depleted within five years of their discovery. Coral colonies which once used to be 50cm in height, in the Mediterranean, are now only three to five centimeters tall in 90 percent of the "coral-mining" area. The species grow less than one millimetre a year; the organisms take 100 years to reach maturity, but newly discovered beds are often exploited beyond the capacity to reproduce within a couple of years.

Unlike other coral species in trade, Corallidae receives no international trade protection.

An Appendix II listing would have ensured to introduce measures to implement regulations on international trade in these corals.

The opposition to the proposal was lead by Japan and Tunisia who said that proper management was in place and it would affect the livelihood of hundreds of poor fishermen. They also brushed aside overexploitation as baseless.

"These corals do not meet the criteria for being listed in Appendix II. Also, the listing will have serious negative repercussions. Coral generates 5,000 jobs in our country, and 1.4 million dinar every year," said a delegate from Tunisia, who called for a secret ballot. Joining the 'no' voted were, Libya, Malaysia, Morocco, Iceland and Singapore.

With 64 countries voting in favour of the proposal and 59 opposed, the measure fell short of two-thirds majority to pass and was rejected.

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"The majority support is significant and usually it takes more than one meeting to get international support for these issues," said Thomas L. Strickland, Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, US Department of the Interior and the Chief of US CITES delegation.

"We will still continue our efforts to bring in these issues including the tuna to the forefront. Our activities to conserve the species will continue as the only winners and losers here are the species and the planet," he told The Peninsula.

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Ivory bids fall on poaching fears

By Richard Black
Environment correspondent, BBC News

The UN's wildlife trade organisation has turned down Tanzania's and Zambia's requests to sell ivory, amid concern about elephant poaching.

The countries asked the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) meeting to permit one-off sales from government stockpiles.

The ivory trade was banned in 1989, but two sales have since been granted to nations showing effective conservation.

Kenya withdrew a bid to ban sales for 20 years, after finding little support.

Most conservation groups were delighted that the Tanzanian and Zambian bids were turned down.

"This is a real victory for elephants," said Jason Bell-Leask, director of Southern African operations with the International Fund for Animal Welfare (Ifaw).

Others argued that the real issue facing African elephants was poaching, not the occasional legal sale.

"While the issue of whether sales should be allowed to proceed or not has dominated much of the discussions here... the key driving force behind the ongoing elephant poaching is the continued existence of illegal domestic ivory markets across parts of Africa and Asia," said Steven Broad, executive director of Traffic, the body charged with monitoring the illegal wildlife trade.

Traffic's latest report shows that poaching and smuggling are rife in West Africa in particular, with several Asian nations complicit in smuggling.

Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Thailand are picked out as the worst offenders.

Organised crime syndicates are increasingly involved in the lucrative trade.

"Poaching and illegal ivory markets in central and western Africa must be effectively suppressed before any further ivory sales take place," said Elisabeth McLellan, species programme manager with WWF International.

Rejection slips

An expert report released on the eve of the CITES conference raised concerns about the extent to which organised crime rings are involved in Tanzania's poaching and smuggling operations.

Although commending the national wildlife services for their "professional" approach, it noted signs of a declining commitment to



Seizures of Ivory have risen markedly in recent years

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law enforcement and a lack of co-ordination between wildlife and customs services.

Traffic also noted that almost half of the ivory in the government's stockpiles - which would have been the source for the ivory sales - was of unknown origin.

As a result of this, it recommended rejecting Tanzania's bid. Similar misgivings also led to a recommendation to reject the Zambian proposal.

Both countries also failed in bids to switch their elephants from CITES Appendix One to Appendix Two, which would have permitted trades under certain restrictions.

The vote on the Zambian proposal was extremely close, and Zambia may seek to re-open the issue on Thursday, the conference's final day.

A number of conservation and animal welfare groups say the one-off ivory sales ensure there is an ongoing market into which crime rings can sell poached ivory, although the data is hard to interpret.

However, Eugene Lapointe, president of the IWMC World Conservation Trust and a former CITES secretary-general, said the one-off sales generated revenue that under CITES rules had to be ploughed back into elephant conservation.

"The situation is simple: prohibition plus poverty causes poaching," he said.

"Where people are given incentives to conserve, elephant stocks increase and poachers are put out of business."

The last legal sale - in Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe - took place in 2008.

Over the weekend, the CITES meeting in Doha, Qatar also turned down a bid to ban trade in red and pink corals from the Mediterranean Sea.

Conservation groups say the corals - which are used in jewellery - are threatened with local extinction if extraction continues.

Richard.Black-INTERNET@bbc.co.uk

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Death Knell for Polar Bears as CITES Votes Against Conservation



Posted by marin2008

PR Newswire

Monday, 22 March 2010

Ignoring the plight of polar bears, CITES Parties gathered in Doha at the 15th Conference of the Parties (CoP 15) of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) voted to hasten the polar bear's demise by failing to support an uplisting to Appendix I which would have banned all international commercial trade in the bears and their parts.

"CITES parties have turned their backs on this iconic species," said Jeff Flocken, IFAW DC Director and member of a polar bear coalition which consists of the Animal Welfare Institute, Defenders of Wildlife, Eurogroup for Animals, Humane Society International, International Fund for Animal Welfare, Natural Resources Defense Council, ProWildlife, and the Species Survival Network.

"With only 20,000 to 25,000 polar bears remaining, CITES Parties have chosen to ignore the latest science, which predicts the population will decline by two-thirds by 2050.

"Polar bears clearly meet the criteria for an uplisting to Appendix I, yet Parties are using the fact that climate change poses the greater long-term threat to the species as an excuse to do nothing about immediate threats hastening their decline.

"No one argues against the fact that climate change is the biggest threat to the long-term survival of the polar bear. However hundreds of bears are killed each and every year to supply an unnecessary commercial trade in polar bears such as skins, claws and jaws.

"Parties had an opportunity to take action to save more than 3,000 polar bears from commercial

trade over the next decade - yet they turned their backs.

"In years to come, people will look back on this moment with great shame."

The final vote was 48 votes in favour of the uplisting, 62 against and 11 Parties abstained.

Source: International Fund for Animal Welfare

CITES Gives Enforcement of Tiger Trade Ban Top Priority

DOHA, Qatar , March 22, 2010 (ENS) - Countries could begin treating illegal trade in tiger parts as seriously as they treat arms and drug trafficking under a deal reached today at the triennial meeting of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, CITES.

The UK-brokered agreement, the result of negotiations between the European Union and the tiger range countries India and China, provides for increased intelligence sharing against criminal networks that smuggle big cat parts, and builds on recent training provided by the international police force INTERPOL.

Parties to the CITES treaty agreed to develop a database to help monitor the illegal trade in tiger, leopard and snow leopard parts.

Although all commercial tiger trade has been banned by CITES since 1987, wild tiger populations have dropped by about half since the ban took effect.

With just 3,200 tigers left in the wild, tiger conservation advocates warn that the words of the new agreement must be turned into actions.

"There have been many promises this week, but getting countries to actually use these new enforcement tactics will be the real test of the commitment to ending tiger trade, and saving the species," said Debbie Banks, senior campaigner at the UK-based Environmental Investigation Agency, and chair of the Species Survival Network's Big Cat Working Group.

"Time is running out for tigers and other big cats. Tiger range countries and consumer nations need to work together to reduce demand for their parts and stamp out the illegal tiger trade," said Avinash Basker, legal consultant to the Wildlife Protection Society of India.

"This proposal was a test for the effectiveness of CITES as an international conservation agreement and despite the compromise, progress was made," said Carlos Drews, director,

Species Programme, WWF International. "But words alone will not save wild tigers as a global poaching epidemic empties Asia's forests and CITES governments will need to live up to the commitments made today."

The agreement comes as fresh evidence of trade in tiger parts was presented to CITES delegates by an animal conservation organization based in Singapore.

A three-month undercover investigation by Animal Concerns Research and Education Society, ACRES, revealed that 59 out of 134 jewelry and antique shops visited in Singapore offered alleged tiger parts for sale. Evidence of the 59 shops selling alleged tiger parts was recorded on video.

The ACRES report released Friday in Doha shows that 159 alleged tiger claws, 303 alleged tiger teeth and 38 pieces of alleged tiger skin were found on sale during the investigation, which was conducted from December 2009 until February 2010.

The alleged tiger parts were claimed to originate from Thailand, India, Sri Lanka, China, Myanmar, Indonesia, Laos and Cambodia.

Tiger parts are used for traditional medicine, jewelry, lucky charms and novelties. Pieces of tiger skin are made into amulets as religious lucky charms believed to bring authority, power and protection.

One shopkeeper told ACRES investigators the demand for tiger parts and the amount of tiger parts being stocked by the shops appeared to be higher over the Chinese New Year period in this Year of the Tiger.

ACRES investigators reported that 28 shopkeepers said an order for more tiger parts could be placed with them, with delivery times from one week to three months or more.

But only seven shopkeepers recognized that tigers are protected animals, that it is illegal to sell tiger parts, and that tiger parts are customs-controlled items.

Singapore has a law against the domestic sale, or offer for sale, of endangered species specimens that provides for a \$10,000 fine or a year in prison per species offered for sale.

"It is important to note that anyone who advertises for sale any tiger parts contravenes the act, even if the products turn out to be not authentic. By making a claim that the product is from tigers, the dealer is potentially driving up the demand for tiger parts, which directly contravenes the spirit of CITES and the local legislation meant to enforce CITES," said Anbarasi Boopal, director of the ACRES Wildlife Crime Unit.

ACRES Executive Director Louis Ng said, "The investigation findings showed the presence of an illegal trade in alleged tiger parts in Singapore and that there is an immediate need for continued serious efforts to curb this illegal trade. The investigation findings and footage have been submitted to the AVA [The Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority of Singapore] and we look forward to working closely with the AVA."

Singapore has previously been recognized as playing a role in the trade of tiger products from neighboring countries such as Indonesia, for both domestic trade and international re-exports.

Dr. Lim Wee Kiak, Member of Parliament for Sembawang GRC, said, "As long as there is demand, there will be supply. Legislation alone is insufficient to bring a complete halt to the illegal trading of endangered species and their parts. We must do more public education and awareness so demands for them can be curbed and supply will then terminate."

In Doha, government delegates supported an existing decision to ensure that tiger farms do not supply the illegal market for big cat products.

CITES Parties called for an urgent meeting of senior police and customs officers before a Head of State tiger summit to be held in Vladivostok, Russia later this year.

The Russian government, the global conservation organization WWF and the World Bank initiated the tiger summit, in which the heads of 13 states are expected to participate.

WWF estimates Russia's Khabarovsk and Primorye regions currently have 500 Amur tigers.

Russian Customs officers at the Vladivostok International Airport have gotten serious about detecting the smuggling of wildlife specimens. Since 2004, the Far Eastern Operative Customs has trained and placed into service 77 sniffing dogs.

On March 3, in advance of the CITES meeting in Doha, the sniffer dog divisions of Far Eastern Operative Customs and Vladivostok Customs together with WWF and the TRAFFIC wildlife monitoring network held a briefing for the media and demonstrated their work at the Vladivostok International Airport.

Customs officers told reporters that the dogs help to combat a new trend that has appeared in illegal wildlife trade - smuggling wildlife parts in small pieces hidden on the body or in clothing. In these cases, they said, only a specially trained dog can detect items hidden from customs control.

Is the Internet a Threat for Endangered Animals? Yes and No.

by Michael Graham Richard, Ottawa, Canada on 03.22.10

treehugger.com

Travel & Nature

Some conservationists at the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (Cites) in Doha, Qatar, said that the Internet created some new threats for protected animals. "The internet is becoming the dominant factor overall in the global trade in protected species," said Paul Todd of the International Fund for Animal Welfare. This is because it is now much easier to buy and sell anything and everything, and that includes polar bear pelts, live baby lions, poached ivory, etc.

From the BBC :

He said thousands of endangered species are regularly traded on the internet, as buyers and sellers take advantage of the anonymity - and vast global market - the world wide web can offer.

Those trying to police illegal sales say the size of problem is almost impossible to estimate. They say the US is the biggest market, but that Europe, China, Russia and Australia also play a large part.

This is a serious problem, and we need to work on a solution.

But as a commenter on another site said, it might be true that the Internet is "becoming the dominant factor overall in the global trade in protected species", but that's only because "The internet is becoming the dominant factor in *everything* ."

The net is a tremendously powerful tool, and it is helping people around the world better protect

the environment. For example, Google Earth has been used to fight illegal logging and better understand our oceans. Information on all kinds of environmental issues is more available than ever, and people can better organize to make change happen. Scientists all over the world can share data rapidly and directly, and projects like E.O. Wilson's Encyclopedia of Life could one day be invaluable tools for biodiversity protection. Most of this would be impossible, or much harder, without the Internet.

What Can Be Done to Reduce Online Illegal Trading?

That's a tough one. Maybe if even a small fraction of the money spent on the war on drugs was diverted to fighting these environmental crimes, we could make some progress. It's hard to completely eliminate the trade in endangered species, but by making it harder and more expensive, we could make it a lot less attractive to would-be poachers. We could also put more efforts in educating people about the issues (this includes fighting superstitions about "traditional medicine" and various other expensive placebos that use protected animals), and increasing the consequences for buyers.

Via BBC

Conservation groups see hope for shark proposals

By Bonnie James/Deputy News Editor

Gulf Times

With the ongoing 15th Conference of the Parties of the CITES scheduled to take up the shark proposals today, leading global conservation organisations are hoping for a positive outcome. The proposals are to include eight shark species (oceanic whitetip, dusky, sandbar, spurdog, porbeagle and scalloped, smooth and great hammerheads) in CITES Appendix II.

An Appendix II listing would require the use of export permits to ensure that the species were caught by a legal and sustainably managed fishery.

"We hope there will be an awakening to the goals of CITES and the eventual triumph of hope and science over fear, vanity and greed," leading global ocean protection and restoration environmental advocacy group Oceana's senior campaign director David Allison told Gulf Times.

"More than 73mn sharks are killed every year, primarily to use their fins for the Asian delicacy shark fin soup as well as for the meat trade," the PEW Environment Group's deputy director Dr Susan Lieberman stated.

Shark fin soup, a part of traditional Chinese culture, is one of the world's most expensive food products. A bowl of shark fin soup can cost \$100, with a single fin being worth more than \$1,300. Sharks play a vital role in maintaining the health of the marine ecosystem. Sharks are particularly vulnerable to overexploitation because they mature late in life, have very few offspring and live long lives.

Recent data suggests that the North Atlantic population of oceanic whitetips declined by an estimated 70% in the 1990s and scalloped hammerheads by 83% in the Northwest Atlantic since the 1980s.

"Disappointment, anger and dismay have swept through the Oceana delegation to CITES this past week," Allison said yesterday.

"The 'failure of the delegates' to fulfil their responsibilities to establish trade management provisions for threatened and endangered marine species like Atlantic bluefin tuna and vulnerable red and pink precious coral has been as rank as the pervasive stench of tobacco throughout the rooms and halls of the conference site," he charged.

Allison was of the view that 'theatrical performances by one delegate, including cursing, swearing and foul language' drew attention away the serious substance of the meeting.

"Effective use of the arcane procedures of the treaty provisions cut off debate and allowed delegates to vote on important trade management proposals in secret, allowing unjustified allegations of bias by Japan, Libya, Iceland and their fellow fishing countries against the countries making proposals for science based and well researched trade management provisions," he said.

"Many conservation organisations have felt the pervasive harm of the trading and fishing interests on the meeting this past week, but especially those like Oceana and our fellow marine conservation organisations," Allison added.

The 13-day CITES conference, being held under the patronage of HH the Heir Apparent Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, concludes on Thursday.

Posted by marin2008

Monday, 22 March 2010

Icelandic government records state that the country is exporting meat from slaughtered whales to Latvia and Denmark, as well as Japan - in defiance of international law and a global whaling ban.

Data from Statistics Iceland, the source for official Icelandic government statistics, show a number of recent exports of whale products from Iceland to the three countries. Exports to Denmark and Latvia are contrary to EU law, even if the products are re-exported. International trade in whale products is banned by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).

Exports to Latvia have been confirmed by the Latvian authorities, which have promised a full investigation, which is welcomed by IFAW.

The International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) is deeply concerned about illegal international trade in whale products, particularly in the context of current negotiations over a relaxation of the worldwide ban on commercial whaling.

Although both minke and fin whales have been hunted by Iceland in recent years, the products concerned are likely to be from fin whales, an endangered species.

Robbie Marsland, UK Director of IFAW, said: "Iceland appears to be riding roughshod over international law. This information comes at a time when the International Whaling Commission (IWC) is considering a compromise deal that could allow commercial whaling despite the moratorium.

"These exports provide further proof that this is exactly the wrong time for the IWC to consider any moves to 'legitimise' whaling. Whales need protection and the worldwide ban on whaling needs to be strengthened, not weakened."

Both Latvia and Denmark are members of the European Union. The importation of whale products into the EU would be a violation of both the EU Habitats Directive and the EU CITES Regulation. In addition, this trade would be illegal under CITES, of which Iceland, Latvia and Denmark are members.

Patrick Ramage, IFAW's Global Whale Programme Director, said: "Apparently Iceland wants to do for saving whales what it's already done for saving money and to the future of the IWC what it's already done to its own economy.

"EU governments and others at the IWC are being pushed to accept a 'compromise' proposal aggressively promoted by Iceland, Japan and Norway. Countries serious about whale conservation need to take action immediately to stop this sell-out and save the whales."

IFAW is lodging a formal complaint with the European Commission, the CITES Secretariat, CITES representatives for Latvia, Denmark and Iceland, Interpol and the World Customs Organisation.

About the International Fund for Animal Welfare - As one of the world's leading animal welfare organisations, IFAW has representation in 16 countries and carries out its animal welfare work in more than 40. IFAW works from its global headquarters in the United States and focuses its campaigns on improving the welfare of wild and domestic animals by reducing the commercial exploitation of animals, protecting wildlife habitats and assisting animals in distress. IFAW works both on the ground and in the halls of government to safeguard wild and domestic animals and seeks to motivate the public to prevent cruelty to animals and to promote animal welfare and conservation policies that advance the well-being of both animals and people. Visit www.ifaw.org

For more information or to arrange interviews contact Josey Sharrad at IFAW UK on tel 020 7587 6728, mob 07717 692099, email or Chris Cutter on tel 001 508 744 2066, mob 001 508 737 4623.

The International Whaling Commission adopted a moratorium on commercial whaling which came into effect in 1986 for the North Atlantic and 1985/1986 for the Southern Ocean. Iceland, which was a member of the IWC at the time did not file a formal objection to the moratorium and was therefore bound by it. Iceland then left the IWC in 1992 but rejoined in 2003, with a controversial post facto reservation to the moratorium, to which many countries filed formal diplomatic objections. Since 2003, Iceland has conducted a mixture of 'scientific whaling' and commercial whaling.

International commercial trade in whale products is currently banned by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, which lists all the great whales on Appendix 1 (no international commercial trade allowed). All the countries concerned (Iceland, Japan, Denmark and Latvia) are parties to CITES and are thus bound by the CITES convention. Parties to CITES can file reservations to the listing of particular species or populations of plants or animals. A reservation to a CITES Appendix I species means that it should be treated as if it were on CITES Appendix II (trade allowed provided that non-detriment findings and export permits are issued). Of the four countries listed above, only Japan and Iceland maintain reservations to the Appendix I listing of some of the great whale species.

Denmark. Statistics Iceland reports that in January 2009, 775 kg of whale 'meal', traditionally used as an agricultural fertiliser, was exported to Denmark. Then in March 2009 another 22,750 kg of whale meal was exported to Denmark. The first export is listed as worth 79,043 ISK (approx 410GBP/632 USD) and the latter is registered as being worth 1,802,658 ISK.(approx 9,396GBP/14,409USD)

Exports to Greenland and the Faroe islands, which are self-governing regions of the Kingdom of Denmark that are outside the EU, would be listed as such in Statistics Iceland.

Although Iceland maintains a reservation to the CITES Appendix 1 listing of most species of whales, Denmark does not. In addition, Denmark is a member of the EU. Thus such trade would be illegal under CITES and EU Law.

Japan. Statistics Iceland indicates that in January 2010 the following was exported, probably by sea: Frozen whale meat: 0. Other frozen whale products: 134,026,000 kg with a price of 308,215,584 ISK (2463 USD/1604GBP) free on board (fob). Fresh whale meat and other whale products 0.

International trade in CITES Appendix I species is contrary to the intent of the CITES convention, even if technically legal because the countries concerned have filed reservations. Both Japan and Iceland maintain reservations to the likely species of whales. Thus, providing that the appropriate documentation were completed, the trade would be legal providing that there was no importation into other countries en route.

Latvia. Statistics Iceland indicates that in January 2010 250Kg of frozen whale meat was exported to Latvia (Lettland) by sea with a price of 306,781 ISK (2452USD/1596GBP)

First Call Analyst:

FCMN Contact:

Source: International Fund for Animal Welfare

U.N. won't save the polar bears, or bluefin tuna

By [Nicole Gilbert](#) March 22, 2010 at 7:16 pm

statepress.com

When the United States finally backed a bill to limit international trade of endangered polar bears and Atlantic bluefin tuna last week, the U.N. rejected the proposal, sending a message about the current priorities of the global community.

Opposed by Japan, part of the ban would have ultimately put a halt to all trade of the dwindling populations of bluefin tuna, and a strain on Japanese fishermen.

Without the ban, it's likely fish populations will continue to drop by astronomical proportions as they have the past several years — so much so that it is liable to affect the Japanese economy regardless.

According to the U.N. Convention on International Trade and Endangered Species, bluefin tuna stocks have declined by over 80 percent in the past 40 years. The species continues to be hunted at staggering rates to satisfy the demand for sushi in Japan and around the world.

The polar bear situation is just as bleak — while the animals are already struggling due to a drastically warmer climate, they continue to be hunted for their skin, teeth and claws.

Animal extinction is a looming threat to the planet as the human population continues to grow and consume resources. In 2007, an International Union for Conservation and Nature press release reported that 8,462 animal species were known to be threatened, over 3,000 more than reports 11 years prior.

Unfortunately, many officials seem not to understand the possible significance of dwindling populations of various species. Any intro-level biology class teaches that a loss in biodiversity can have cascading effects on other species, including humans.

Several scientists and environmentalists have been concerned about the effects that mass extinctions of key species will have on the human population. Articles published in the Public Library of Science open-access journal share these fears.

"Biodiversity in the broad sense affects the properties of ecosystems and, therefore, the benefits that humans obtain from them," according to a 2006 article "Biodiversity Loss Threatens Human Well-Being" from the journal.

Essentially, the population of predators, like the polar bear and bluefin tuna, help determine the population of species lower on the food chain. As these predators are hunted out of the food web, their ecosystems change drastically, generally providing negative results.

By shutting down the proposal, members of the U.N. seemed not to be as concerned with environmental issues as they are with others plaguing the global community.

Changes in the environment are argued by many to be the greatest threats to worldwide peace, equity and economic wellbeing. And without biodiversity, environmental health will continue to deplete.

Nicole is trying to save the polar bears. Help her out at ndgilber@asu.edu

Japan happy with the rejection of the proposal to ban the Atlantic bluefin tuna

March 22nd, 2010 - 7:39 pm ICT by Pen Men At Work
Thaindian News -

March 22, 2010 (Pen Men at Work): A suggestion to outlaw intercontinental trade in Atlantic bluefin tuna has been discarded by a UN wildlife congregation at Doha in Qatar. The Atlantic bluefin tuna is one of the foundations of sushi in Japan.

The verdict came about after Japan, Canada and scores of underprivileged countries countered the measure on the ground that it would ravage and overwhelm the fishing economies.

Monaco listed the plan at the conference of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). Stocks have plunged by approximately 85% ever since the industrial fishing era commenced.

Monaco argued that the association accountable for running the bluefin fishery had not put into operation measures severe enough to make certain the continued existence of the species. This association is the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT).

Scientists and crusaders functioning with conservation institutes were dissatisfied with the conclusion. Glenn Sant, the person in charge of the international marine programme with Traffic, has pronounced that this pronouncement is an enormous setback and a severe blow to the campaign in favor of the debarment of worldwide business in Atlantic bluefin tuna.

He expressed utter disenchantment and unhappiness with the functioning of the ICCAT and has mentioned that ICCAT has not been able to illustrate that it will enforce programs for the reinvigoration and preservation of the bluefin. Bluefin tuna was slated for listing on Appendix One - a full proscription.

The US, which endorsed and campaigned for the ban, also portrayed the ending as disappointing and disillusioning.

American representatives have proclaimed that they would be pressuring the global governments to honor the pledges to manage fishing through ICCAT.

Japan - the chief bluefin-devouring country - had made its antagonism to the bid clear before. It has explicated that commercial fisheries must be administered through associations such as ICCAT. Japan is happy that the proposal to ban has failed.

Ivory bids fall on poaching fears

The UN's wildlife trade organisations have turned down Tanzania's and Zambia's requests to sell ivory amid concern about elephant poaching.

The countries asked the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) meeting to permit one-off sales from government stockpiles.

The ivory trade was banned in 1989, but three sales have since been granted to nations showing effective conservation.

A Kenyan proposal to ban all such sales in future years was also defeated.

Most conservation groups were delighted that the Tanzanian and Zambian bids were turned down.

But they argue that illegal poaching is the main issue facing African elephants, rather than the occasional legal sale.

"Poaching and illegal ivory markets in central and western Africa must be effectively suppressed before any further ivory sales take place," said Elisabeth McLellan, species programme manager with WWF International.

The meeting in Doha, Qatar also turned down a bid to ban trade in red and pink corals from the Mediterranean Sea.

Story from BBC NEWS:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/science/nature/8580245.stm>

Published: 2010/03/22 13:53:11 GMT

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No Trade for Tanzanian Elephants

DOHA, Qatar , March 22 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- Parties voted to continue protection for Tanzanian elephants by retaining their listing on Appendix I, and rejecting a request for a one-off ivory sale today at the 15th Conference of the Parties (CoP 15) of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) meeting in Doha .

"Fighting to save these elephants paid off today with Parties taking note of the science demonstrating that Tanzanian elephants are still in peril," said Jason Bell-Leask , Director IFAW Southern Africa.

"Poaching of elephants and ivory seizures are escalating not decreasing -- this decision is a victory for common sense."

Tanzania and Zambia have submitted proposals seeking permission for a one-off sale of 112 tons of ivory. These two countries hoped to open the door for future ivory trade by 'down-listing' their elephant populations, which would mean that these elephants will lose the highest levels of protection.

"The same logic that Parties applied to the Tanzanian proposal must apply to the Zambian proposal -- down-listing and ivory sales must be rejected," said Bell-Leask.

At the last CITES conference in 2007, Parties agreed to a nine-year moratorium on any further trade in ivory.

The African Elephant Coalition of 23 African elephant range countries oppose the proposals for the down-listings and one-off sales, insisting that the nine-year resting period provides all African range states the opportunity to cooperatively secure elephants in their habitat.

The Tanzanian proposal was split with Parties voting separately on the one-off sale and the down-listing. The results were:

Down-listing – support 57, oppose 45, abstain 32

One-off sale – support 59, oppose 60, abstain 13

SOURCE International Fund for Animal Welfare

Lion cub: \$5,000. Fine for mistreating it: \$7. Better regulation: Priceless.

Posted By [Kipp](#) On March 22, 2010 @ 4:03 pm In [Kipp's Blog](#)

Lebanon is a haven for smugglers of endangered and exotic animals, not least due to lax law enforcement, and the paltry fines faced by offenders.

It is hard to estimate the extent of this highly profitable business, but campaigners say it is the third largest illegal trade in the region, after weapons and drugs.

An army of smugglers deal in exotic species like rare parrots, young chimpanzees, gorillas and leopards. Other animals like elephants, lions, tigers, snakes, crocodiles can also be found for purchase in the Lebanese capital.

Many end up in the 'private zoos' of rich individuals in Lebanon and the Gulf. But some don't quite make it. [According to a report by AP \[1\]](#), a two-year-old lion cub was rescued by members of local animal welfare organization BETA, after he was abandoned in Beirut by the owner of the pet shop that imported him. The group tried to save the severely dehydrated animal, but it died shortly after it was found.

The market price of the animals depends on their species, and consumer demand.

Surprisingly, lions are relatively cheap. Mona Houry, co-founder of Beirut for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (BETA), tells Kipp that the 'King of the Jungle' can be bought for \$5,000, while a tiger is worth \$6,000.

Yet the fine faced by owners who kill or abuse pets is miniscule: Penalties start at just LL10,000 (\$6.66), and never exceed LL22,600 (\$15).

That could be about to change. [According to a report in the Daily Star \[2\]](#), Lebanon could be set to join the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), whose signatories are meeting this month in Qatar. It is the first time the convention is meeting in an Arab country; delegates from almost 150 countries have gathered in Doha for the March 13-25 conference.

Lebanon and Bahrain are the only Arab countries yet to sign the convention.

But The Daily Star report was based on a press release issued by campaign group Animals Lebanon, whose officials were invited to sit in on talks between Beirut's Agriculture Minister Hussein al-Hajj Hassan and Willem Wijnstekers, the secretary general of CITES.

"The minister made it clear to the secretary general of CITES that he has every intention of having Lebanon join CITES within one year," the organization's president, Lana al-Khalil, said in the statement.

Let's hope al-Khalil is right – and that this isn't just wishful thinking.

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IFAW: Victory for elephants with rejection of Zambian proposal at CITES

Monday, 22, Mar 2010 12:00

Parties voted against the downlisting of Zambian elephants today at CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora).

Zambia amended its proposal to remove the request for a one-off sale of ivory, seeking only the downlisting of elephants from Appendix I to Appendix II.

"This is a real victory for elephants," said Jason Bell-Leask, Director of IFAW Southern Africa. "CITES Parties voted in favour of conservation, following the same logic applied to the Tanzanian proposal for a one-off sale and downlisting which was rejected earlier today.

"Common sense and sound conservation principles have prevailed today. We can only hope that Parties will also support the proposal from Congo, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Rwanda and Sierra Leone which calls for an amendment to the nine-year moratorium agreed at the last Conference of the Parties to apply to all African Range States.

"The Congo proposal will give all African range states the time they desperately need to put in place measures that will determine the true impact that these ivory-trade proposals have at CITES."

The Congo proposal suggests expanding a nine-year waiting period for future ivory sales to cover all African range states, rather than just the four countries involved in the most recent stockpile sales (Botswana, South Africa, Namibia and Zimbabwe).

Ends

CITES Toughens Up On Illegal Wildlife Trade Online

DOHA, Qatar , March 22 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- Stricter measures to control the illegal trade in wildlife over the Internet were endorsed today at the 15th Conference of the Parties (CoP 15) of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) meeting in Doha .

"Trade over the Internet poses one of the greatest threats to wildlife and undermines the CITES treaty itself," said IFAW's Paul Todd . "It is a vast global network that provides the cover of relative anonymity for wildlife traffickers, making it a huge enforcement challenge for Parties."

"Thousands of CITES listed species are traded each and every week around the world. More and more, individual citizens are taking part in the global wildlife trade online and away from the watchful eyes of CITES parties and their enforcement regimes, which raises new questions involving jurisdiction, technological capacity, legal responsibility, and burden of proof."

The CITES Parties endorsed a series of recommendations that will aid Parties in tightening enforcement against Internet trade in protected species and understanding the methods and pathways by which CITES specimens could be illegally traded online.

"The recommendations accepted today ask Parties to evaluate their domestic enforcement measures to see if they are sufficient to deal with the growing threat of online wildlife trafficking," said Todd. "While we believe this language could have been much stronger, we are glad the Parties are beginning to tackle this issue, and hope their engagement will grow as we learn more and more about this problem."

The International Fund for Animal Welfare has been a pioneer on the issue of the illegal Internet trade in wildlife for more than five years.

"IFAW's investigations around the world have discovered everything from elephant ivory to turtle shells, exotic birds to tiger bone wine – all available via the comfort of your home computer," said Todd.

"We have made real progress in understanding and controlling the online wildlife trade, working with countries like China , and online marketplaces such as eBay and Taobao.com. But, the support of the international community will really help to crack down on e-commerce in illegal wildlife."

SOURCE International Fund for Animal Welfare

CITES criticized for putting politics before animals and science

March 22, 4:57 PM · Animal Advocacy Examiner · P. Elizabeth Anderson

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, CITES, an international meeting of officials from 175 countries is getting very mixed reviews on decisions from its two-week meeting in Doha, Qatar. CITES established goals center on ensuring that international trade in wild animals and plants do not threaten their survival.

The group stepped up to protect elephants against proposals from Tanzania and Zambia to relax trade ivory stockpiles. Conservationists applaud this decision as one that can reduce the interest in ivory, diminish its illegal trade, and save the lives of elephants and humans who poach them.

This was an important victory, but CITES turned its back on measures to protect other vulnerable animals, most notably polar bears and the bluefin tuna.

In what the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) is calling shameful, CITES refused to ban trade on polar bear parts. In doing so, CITES infamously ignored scientific data which predicts the almost certain extinction of polar bears.

Climate change is clearly the biggest threat to polar bears, but CITES had an opportunity to save thousands of the endangered animals over the next decade. Merely 20,000 to 25,000 remain. Canada and Iceland were vocally opposed to the protections. The end of this powerful, beautiful animal is so certain and imminent that some of you may live to witness its extinction.

CITES also decided—again against overwhelming scientific evidence to the contrary—that corals are not important to the world's ecosystem by rejecting trade regulations for red and pink precious corals that are used in jewelry.

Yielding to pressure from Japan and Canada (again), CITES prominently rejected to approve protections for the endangered Atlantic bluefin tuna.

Finally, giving sway to China, CITES could not agree on broad protections for the domestic trading of tiger parts. CITES agreed only to more enforcement of existing protections and improved collection of data on violators.

Several reptiles (air breathing, cold-blooded animals with scales) and amphibians (cold-blooded animals with smooth skin that breathe in water during development, and air) from points as diverse as Central America and Iran received new protections.

Overall CITES is being criticized for short-sighted decisions that fly in the face of sound scientific reasoning.

The meeting ends in a few more days. I will keep you posted on which other species need to work on their bucket list thanks to CITES.

Tanzania, Zambia Bid for One-Off Ivory Sales Fail

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Published: March 22, 2010

The New York Times

Filed at 9:48 a.m. ET

DOHA, Qatar (AP) -- Proposals by Tanzania and Zambia to weaken the 21-year-old ban on ivory sales were shot down by a U.N. conservation meeting Monday over fears it would fuel the illegal trade of elephant tusks.

The 175-nation Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species first rejected the Tanzania proposal for a one-off sale of existing ivory stocks and then swept aside a Zambian compromise to allow for future sales of tusks.

The rulings were a rare victory for environmentalists at the two-week meeting where they have endured defeats of proposals ranging from an export ban on Atlantic bluefin tuna to a shark conservation plan to a measure to regulate trade of red and pink corals.

The proposals would have been the third and fourth such one-time ivory sales following cases in 1999 and 2008.

Prof. Samuel K. Wasser, director of the Center for Conservation Biology at the University of Washington, said there is a clear link between one-off sales and the rise in poaching. He said the sales revive dormant markets by sending consumers the message that it is OK in general to once again buy ivory and makes it difficult to differentiate between legal and illegal products.

"This is a rare victory for elephants," said Jason Bell-Leask, director of the International Fund for Animal Welfare, Southern Africa.

Tanzania was asking to sell almost 200,000 pounds (90,000 kilograms) of ivory that would have generated as much as \$20 million. It noted in its proposal that its elephant population has risen

from about 55,000 in 1989 to almost 137,000, according to a 2007 study.

Zambia wanted to sell 48,000 pounds (21,700 kilograms) of ivory. It withdrew a request for the ivory sale and offered a compromise to allow a regulated trade in elephants parts excluding ivory -- a first step toward future tusk sales.

It picked up support from the United States and some European nations, but the proposal was defeated mostly due to opposition from the 23-nation, African Elephant Coalition.

The two countries argued that its elephant population had reached the point where they were trampling crops and killing too many people. They also said preventing them from selling the stocks -- which come from natural deaths or controlled culling of problem animals -- would increase anger toward the beasts who are seen increasingly as pests by affected communities.

"Tanzania is committed to conservation of its wildlife including elephants," said Shamsa Selengia Mwangunga, the country's minister of natural resources and tourism. "But should this meeting fail to consider this proposal, we run the risk of enhancing hostility against elephants by our local community especially where human-elephant conflicts are prevalent. More elephants would be killed."

Zambia's Minister of Tourism, Environment and Natural Resources Catherine Namugala accused activists and other delegates of misrepresenting the poaching situation in her country and spreading rumors that it would spend the money raised from sales on election campaigns.

It also complained that her country was struggling to protect elephants when it couldn't provide its citizens with basic needs.

"We can't justify failure to take a child to school because we are using resources to conserve elephants," Namugala said. "I appeal to allow Zambia to utilize the natural resources given to us by God."

But several central and west African countries say the two nations have not done enough to combat poaching and slow the illegal trade in ivory. They also wanted more time to assess whether a 2008 ivory sale by Zimbabwe, Botswana, South Africa, Namibia had contributed to the illegal trade.

Ivory sales have in recent years been among the most contentious proposals at CITES and this time around African countries, and even some environmental groups, are divided. The ivory would be sold to China and Japan -- the only countries which have asked to purchase it.

TRAFFIC, the wildlife trade monitoring group, tracks ivory seizures and found that poaching and smuggling to markets mostly in Asia has risen steadily since 2004. They blame weak law enforcement in Africa and growing demand for ivory products like chopsticks and ivory jewelry mostly in China, Thailand and other Asian countries.

The price of ivory on the black market has risen from about \$200-a-kilo in 2004 to as much as \$1,500 now.

Africa elephants have seen their numbers drop in the past 40 years by more than to 600,000 mostly due to poaching. A global ban on the ivory trade in 1989 briefly halted their slide. But conservationists said that poaching, especially in central Africa, now leads to the loss of as many as 60,000 elephants each year. Without intervention, the elephants could be nearly extinct by 2020.

The political difference between elephants and tuna

Posted By Joshua Keating ■ Monday, March 22, 2010 - 12:25 PM

As mentioned in the brief, Tanzania and Zambia were rebuffed today in their attempts to relax the international ban on ivory sales at the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species in Doha. The decision is being hailed as a victory for conservationists after some setbacks earlier in the week:

The rulings were a rare victory for environmentalists at the two-week meeting where they have endured defeats of proposals ranging from an export ban on Atlantic bluefin tuna to a shark conservation plan to a measure to regulate trade of red and pink corals.

Not that I approve of killing elephants for their ivory, but the economic double-standard at work here seems troubling. The tuna ban, for instance, was strongly opposed by Japan, which imports 80 percent of the world's bluefin and led a concerted lobbying effort to have the current rules overturned.

Japan has, for years, employed a similar strategy in its campaign to loosen restrictions on whaling, exchanging foreign aid to disinterested countries like Togo and St. Kitts who join the International Whaling Commission and vote with the pro-whaling bloc. Economist Christian Dippel has studied this phenomenon and wrote about it in a recent piece for FP.

Aid-receiving countries like Tanzania and Zambia presumably don't have the resources to mount such a campaign, which is a large part of the reason they want the ban lifted in the first place. As Zambia's Minister of Tourism, Environment and Natural Resources Catherine Namugala put it, "We can't justify failure to take a child to school because we are using resources to conserve elephants. I appeal to allow Zambia to utilize the natural resources given to us by God."

Again, I tend to side with the conservationists on this, but I certainly understand the frustration of poor-country governments who are expected to make economic sacrifices for the sake of endangered species while the world's second-largest economy continues to hunt species on the brink of extinction.

ROBERTO SCHMIDT/AFP/Getty Images

Demise of coral, salamander show impact of Web

DOHA: The Internet has emerged as one of the greatest threats fueling the illegal wildlife trade, easier to buy everything from live baby lions to wine made from tiger bones, conservationists said. The Web's impact was made clear at the meeting of the 175-nation Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, or CITES. A vote Sunday was scheduled on a proposal to ban the sale of spotted newt which the World Wildlife Fund says has been devastated by the Internet trade. The United States and Sweden, meanwhile are proposing to regulate the trade in red and pink coral, crafted into expensive jewelry and sold extensively on the Web.

"This is one of the biggest challenges facing CITES," said Paul Todd, campaign manager for the International Fund for Animal Welfare.

"The Internet is becoming the dominant factor overall in the global trade in protected species. There will come a time when country to country trade of large shipments between big buyers in different countries is a thing of the past."

The IFW has done several surveys of illegal trade on the Web and found that thousands of species are advertised on auction sites, classified ads and chat rooms, mostly in the United States but also Europe, Canada and Australia. Most of what is traded is illegal African ivory but the group has also found exotic products such as tiger-bone wine and pelts from protected species like polar bears and lynx. A separate 2009 survey by the group Campaign Against the Cruelty to Animals targeted the Internet in Ecuador, finding offers to sell live capuchin monkeys, lion cubs and ocelots.

"As the Internet knows no borders, it causes several new problems regarding the enforcement of protection of endangered species," the group said in its report.

The newt is a textbook example of what can happen to one species through trade on the Web. In a study by the WWF, the black and brown salamander with white spots is coveted in the pet trade. Only around 1,000, about 200 annually are being traded over the years, mostly through a Web site operated out of Ukraine.

"The Internet itself isn't the threat, but it's another way to market the product," said Ernie Spearhead, spearhead of the investigation into the newt for TRAFFIC Canada. "The Kaiser's spotted newt, is expensive and most people are not willing to pay \$300 for a salamander. But through the Internet, tapping into global market, you can find buyers."

The red and pink coral, which consist of 32 species, are harvested in deep Mediterranean water into expensive jewelry either in Italy or in cheaper locals like Taiwan and China, according to conservation group SeaWeb.

It is the most widely traded and valuable of all precious corals but has no international protection. A brisk international trade in the species, the group claims.

The proposal is being opposed by the industry and some Asia countries which contend the coral is over harvested and are still common in their range.-AP

Last updated on Monday 22/3/2010

Al Watan Daily

Governments Fail to Protect Red and Pink Coral

Scientists, Conservationists and Industry Representatives Decry Move as Politically Motivated; Urge Industry to Act Where Governments Have Failed

DOHA, QATAR , March 21 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- International governments today failed to grant trade protection to the unique and valuable red and pink corals (Coralliidae) used in jewelry and home decor, despite sound science showing that regulation is needed for their continued survival. SeaWeb, an ocean conservation organization whose campaign *Too Precious to Wear* had called for governments to protect Coralliidae under Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), called the decision "a major step backward for the long-term survival of red and pink coral and the industries that depend on them." Intensive lobbying by coral industry interests occurred in the days leading up to the vote.

The vote to protect red and pink coral failed to receive the two-thirds majority needed at the 15th Conference of Parties of CITES (64 countries voted in favor, 59 against and 10 abstained), and comes just three days after a proposal to protect bluefin tuna was overwhelmingly defeated by delegates after intensive lobbying by fishing interests. The sought-after Appendix II listing for Coralliidae would have required countries wishing to export these species to prove that trade is not harming their continued survival. Trade in red and pink coral will now continue unchecked, with no guarantee as to its sustainability or the industries that depend on this resource. The United States and European Union, who put forward the proposal, have the opportunity to bring the issue back to a plenary vote on Thursday, but it is unclear whether or not this will happen.

"For the second time in three days, governments have put short-term political and economic interests ahead of sound science - first with bluefin tuna and now with red and pink coral," said Kristian Teleki , vice president of science initiatives for SeaWeb. "Coralliidae are in desperate need of a mechanism that controls the immense trade in these species. CITES could have provided that, but today the representatives failed to heed the science showing these populations are in steep decline. It is now up to the jewelry and design industries, and their customers, to act where governments have failed." SeaWeb's *Too Precious to Wear* campaign is calling on jewelers and designers to refuse to use or purchase red and pink coral until sound management is in place and populations of these long-lived, slow growing species have recovered.

Red and pink coral are among the world's most valuable wildlife commodities but have been intensively fished for centuries to meet consumer demand for jewelry and curios. These long-lived species support some of the slowest-growing fisheries in the world. They grow less than one millimeter a year and can live to more than 100 years old. Research shows that for populations to be sustained indefinitely, red coral should not be fished until it is 98 years old. Current practice is to remove colonies 7 to 10 years of age. According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization's data, more than 30 to 50 metric tons are taken from the ocean each year, but unlike other coral species in trade, Coralliidae receives no international trade protection.

The United States alone imported 28 million pieces of red and pink coral between 2001 and 2008. A finished red coral necklace can sell for hundreds of thousands of dollars. Jewelry retailer Tiffany & Co., jewelry designer Temple St. Clair, ocean conservationist Celine Cousteau and many others supported the United States and European Union's proposal to protect red and pink coral under Appendix II of CITES.

"The irony is that the Italian artisans who work in coral and helped create this resistance to an Appendix II listing feel that it would threaten their livelihood," said jewelry designer Temple St. Clair, who has lived and worked in Italy for over 25 years. "As we know, the real threat to their livelihood is not protecting these corals. If they stay on their current track, there will be no more coral for them to harvest. It's now up to the jewelry and design industry to stop buying and using this coral so populations can recover. If consumer demand is lessened, perhaps governments and the coral industry will get serious about protecting these precious animals for future generations," St. Clair added.

Conservationists have decried the decisions at the Doha CoP, with bluefin tuna and now red and pink corals failing to receive trade protection, despite showing clear populations declines due to overharvesting. Protection for eight species of sharks will be voted on in the coming days.

SeaWeb staff are in Doha at the 15th Conference of Parties, providing real-time updates as decisions are made from the conference at <http://seawebvoicesinaction.blogspot.com/>

For further information relating to the red and pink coral proposal, visit <http://www.seaweb.org/markets/cites.php>

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Hypocrisy behind tuna ban defeat

By Richard Black

Posted Monday, March 22 2010 at 00:00

The frustration of conservation groups at the outcome of last week's tuna trade discussions was all

The proposal to ban international trade in the Atlantic bluefin discussed at the UN Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) meeting - tabled by Monaco and backed by all of the important conservation organisations in the Mediterranean - fell by a substantial majority.

The numbers (described in the news story linked above) are a bit complex because there were actually two votes: one was voted against the proposal by almost two to one.

Recall that passing a CITES motion necessitates gaining a two-thirds majority, and it's clear just how

The world already has organisations that are supposed to regulate commercial fisheries and ensure

They are the Regional Fisheries Management Organisations; the one in question here is the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (Iccat).

So poorly has this body performed its task (it was declared a "disgrace" by an independent performance review) that conservationists have another way of interpreting its initials - the International Conspiracy to Catch

And it was in frustration with Iccat's annual habit of setting quotas higher than its scientists recommend (for the last few years) that conservationists turned to a CITES ban as an alternative way of reducing

Well, it hasn't worked; and there are perhaps three major reasons why.

Firstly, there is the issue of consistency.

The largest bloc supporting the bid was the European Union.

If it is so keen to see vast reductions in tuna catches, it could accomplish this through Iccat.

Instead it gets the largest share of the annual tuna catch from the Mediterranean, and as recently as last year voted hard against the moratorium that its own scientists had recommended.

The EU is deeply divided on the issue, with the tuna-fishing countries of Italy, Spain, and France on one side and fishermen would suffer under a moratorium. Japan - the largest bluefin consumer by a distance - has supported Iccat in order, rather than using a body such as CITES designed to restrict trade in endangered species.

It is a convenient argument for Japan to make; but the EU's position - giving bigger catch quotas with the other - is so obviously inconsistent as to give it added legitimacy.

You might think that in lobbying against a CITES ban, the tuna fishers are proof of the argument that a ban is a Christmas, as they will have nothing to catch if the bluefin population continues to fall; you might think that a suspension rather than against it.

And this is the second point: fisheries economics isn't as simple as that, particularly in the modern world where the trawlers search the tracts of ocean in search of new hauls.

As a commodity becomes scarcer, the price goes up; investing the extra short-term revenue accrued from higher catches is more profitable than cutting catches to ensure a sustainable fishery.

Sometimes - this is the real world, after all - fishermen also gain financial compensation from their governments for the loss of fish that brought the resource to its knees in the first place.

The end of the line is sometimes a profitable place to be.

The third issue is that in a sense, what countries were arguing about here isn't fish but the universal commons.

The cake can be anything desirable.

In the climate change arena, it's the atmosphere's "emissions space"; in fisheries, it's the total catchable stock.

It is the tragedy of the commons, with nations as the actors.

Always, the national interest expresses itself in trying to increase the size of that country's share of the commons, and that is predictable.

In recent years, new countries have entered the annual Mediterranean tuna race - North African countries that now have enough capacity to catch a year's worth of bluefin if EU nations pulled out.

Any nation is allowed to exempt itself from CITES rulings; Japan had indicated it would exempt itself from the ban that if North African nations did the same, the legal trade from the Med to Japan would have continued and the fleets which would now be out of the race.

Black is the BBC environment correspondent.

International CSOs petition Zambia, Tanzania's bid to lift ivory trade ban

By Kabanda Chulu in Kitwe

Mon 22 Mar. 2010, 04:00 CAT

The Post Online

Text size

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INTERNATIONAL Civil Society Organisations have warned the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) not to accept the proposal by Zambia and Tanzania to lift the ban on ivory trade because it will result in the extinction of elephants.

Tanzania and Zambia are lobbying the CITES for special exemptions from the ban on killing endangered elephants for ivory so that proceeds could be used to finance game management and wildlife conservation, which they claim to be too expensive to fund.

But Kenya and Mali together with other institutions are leading an effort to block this proposal by Tanzania and Zambia to change the endangered species status of elephants and sell off stockpiles of ivory.

In a petition comprising over 500,000 signatures from around the world that will be presented at the ongoing CITES meeting in Doha, Qatar, the NGOs led by AVAAZ, stated that there was need to uphold the ban on ivory trading and save whole populations of these magnificent animals.

It stated that as long as there was demand for ivory, elephants were at risk from poaching and smuggling and signing a petition was the only chance to protect them and crush the ivory criminals' profits.

"This proposal by Tanzania and Zambia will send a clear signal to the ivory crime syndicates that international protection is weakening and it is open-season on elephants. Our best chance to save the continent's remaining elephants is to support African conservationists and we only have days left and the UN Endangered Species body only meets every three years hence we are calling on people to sign this petition to protect elephants," it stated.

Over 20 years ago, the CITES passed a worldwide ban on ivory trading.

Poaching fell and ivory prices slumped. But poor enforcement coupled with 'experimental one-off

sales', like the one Tanzania and Zambia are seeking, drove poaching up and turned illegal trade into a lucrative business since poachers can launder their illegal ivory with the legal stockpiles.

"Now, despite the worldwide ban, each year over 30,000 elephants are gunned down and their tusks hacked off by poachers with axes and chainsaws. If Tanzania and Zambia are successful in exploiting the loophole, this unpleasant trade could get much worse and we have a one-off chance this week to extend the worldwide ban and repress poaching and trade prices before we lose even more elephant populations," it stated. "Across the world's cultures and throughout our history elephants have been revered in religions and have captured our imagination. But today these beautiful and highly intelligent creatures are being wiped out."

On Tuesday, Zambian tourism and environment minister Catherine Namugala defended the proposal, saying it would enable the country use benefits accruing from the sale of elephants for national development.

Namugala said the application to down list Zambia's elephant population would have no negative impact on elephants.

"Zambia's proposal to down list the elephant population is based on findings of a comprehensive assessment that showed that commercial trade would not be detrimental to the survival of the elephant," Namugala said.

Some 1,500 persons representing over 170 government, non- governmental groups, businesses and indigenous peoples are attending the triennial conference of the CITES.

Officially opening the meeting, CITES Secretary-General Willem Wijnstekers said governments had achieved many conservation successes during the 35 years of the CITES treaty but called for increased political support to meet the new challenges.

"We do not want to risk letting down the developing world in its struggle to ensure that trade in wild fauna and flora is conducted legally and sustainably," Wijnstekers said.

The proposal by Zambia and Tanzania, which was filed on November 17, 2009, seeks to 'transfer the population of the African elephant, from Appendix I to Appendix II' of CITES.

Because Appendix I species are considered to be 'threatened with extinction,' and trade is only permitted in exceptional circumstances.

However, if the African elephant is moved to Appendix II, species that are not necessarily threatened with extinction, but could be if trade is not controlled since avenues for trade will likely be opened up.

AVAAZ is an international civic organisation that promotes activism on issues such as climate change, human rights, and religious conflicts.

delegate from Tunisia, who called for a secret ballot. Joining the 'no' voted were, Libya, Malaysia, Morocco, Iceland and Singapore.

With 64 countries voting in favour of the proposal and 59 opposed, the measure fell short of two-thirds majority to pass and was rejected.

"The majority support is significant and usually it takes more than one meeting to get international support for these issues," said Thomas L Strickland, Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, US Department of the Interior and the Chief of US CITES delegation.

"We will still continue our efforts to bring in these issues including the tuna to the forefront. Our activities to conserve the species will continue as the only winners and losers here are the species and the planet," he told The Peninsula.

No fresh protection measures for tigers

Gulf Times

Despite rapidly dwindling numbers of wild tigers, no greater protection measures were afforded to the endangered animals at the 15th Conference of the Parties of the CITES yesterday. However, the member-states reaffirmed a decision from the previous CITES meeting that countries should not breed tigers for the trade of their parts and derivatives.

"We narrowly avoided making the Year of the Tiger into the year of the dead tiger," the International Fund for Animal Welfare's Asia regional director Grace Ge Gabriel said.

Illegal trade of tiger parts and products from farming operations are already stimulating demand for dead tigers which fuels poaching of wild tigers.

Recent investigations in China have found an increase in the illegal sale of products from tiger farming operations claiming to contain tiger parts, both online and in stores. While there are fewer than 50 wild tigers left in China, tiger farms collectively have over 6,000 tigers and boast an annual reproduction rate of 1,000. Operated also as safari parks for tourists, these tiger farms openly sell products such as 'tiger bone wine' as health tonics.

"While we had hoped that a previous resolution on Conservation of and Trade in Tigers and other Asian Appendix I Asian Big Cat Species could have been strengthened at this CoP by prohibiting the breeding of tigers for commercial trade, we are glad that the hard-fought decision from CoP14 was retained," said Gabriel.

"We are thankful that there is still a thin line of defence between farming tigers for commercial trade and the world's remaining wild tigers, with less than 3,200 left."

Decision 14.69 from CoP14 states that "parties with intensive operations breeding tigers on a commercial scale shall implement measures to restrict the captive population to a level supportive only to conserving wild tigers; tigers should not be bred for trade

Corals go unprotected at CITES

BY HUDA NV

DOHA: A secret ballot and a majority support-vote could do nothing to protect the depleting red and pink corals (Corallidae), one of the most valuable wildlife commodities, at the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), yesterday. A proposal to monitor the trade of the corals, put forward by Sweden on behalf of the EU and US, went down the drain as opposing countries brought in issues of human livelihood.

The EU-US proposal, supported by Croatia and the UAE, had called for an Appendix II for the corals with an 18 month delay in putting the listing into effect so as to give parties involved time to resolve technical and administrative issues.

There are more than 30 species of Corallidae found worldwide, and 30 to 50 metric tonnes of red and pink corals are harvested annually to meet consumer demand for jewelry and decorative items. The United States alone imported 28 million pieces of red and pink coral between 2001 and 2008.

While the red and pink populations are no longer commercially viable in some parts, in the Western Pacific they have depleted within five years of their



Red corals (Corallidae), one of the most valuable wildlife commodities.

discovery. Coral colonies which once used to be 50cm in height, in the Mediterranean, are now only three to five centimeters tall in 90 percent of the "coral-mining" area. The species grow less than one millimetre a year; reach maturity, but newly discovered beds are often exploited beyond the capacity to reproduce within a couple of years.

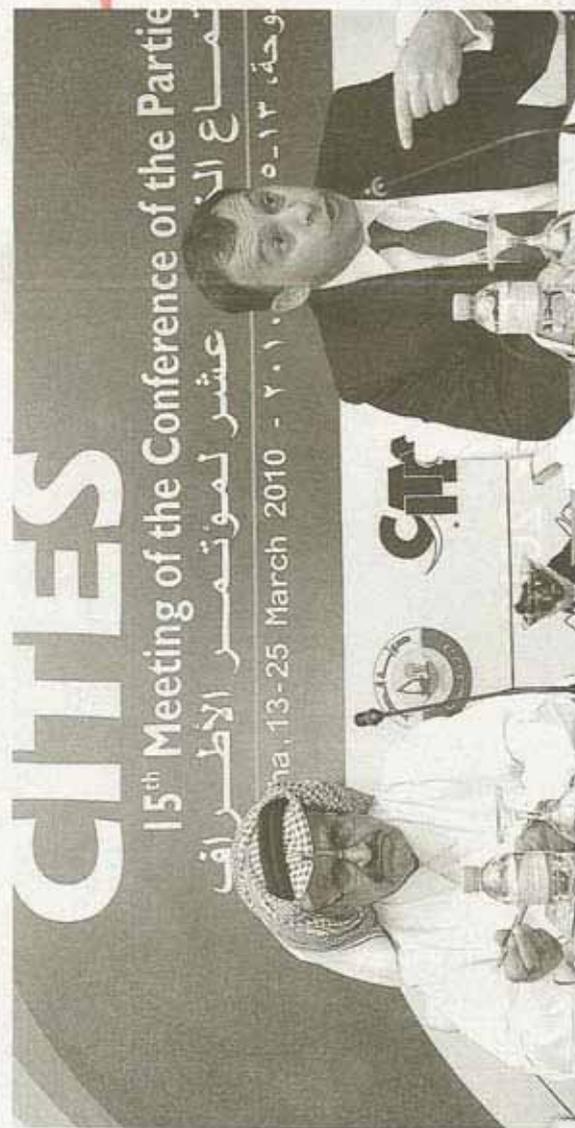
Unlike other coral species in trade, Corallidae receives no international trade protection.

An Appendix II listing would have ensured to introduce measures to implement regulations on international trade in these corals.

The opposition to the proposal was led by Japan and Tunisia who said that proper management was in place and it would affect the livelihood of hundreds of poor fishermen. They also brushed aside overexploitation as baseless.

THE PENINSULA

Continued on page 4



CITES spokesperson Juan Carlos Vasquez, right, addressing the media as Ghanim Abdullah Mohammed, Consultant of Wild Life, Ministry of Interior, Qatar looks on yesterday.

Experts call for steps to protect elephants

DOHA: World renowned elephant scientists and researchers presented new data on world's elephant population and the volume of legal ivory trade at the 15th Conference of the Parties (CoP 15) of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) meeting here yesterday, calling for Parties to reject downlisting and ivory sale proposals.

Iain Douglas-Hamilton of Save the Elephants, Conservation biologist, Dr. Sam Wasser and elephant research specialist Dr. Joyce Poole of ElephantVoices and the Amboseli Elephant Research Project, presented data on the precarious state of elephant populations in Zambia and Tanzania and the urgent need for protection of elephants.

"The data are clear — Tanzania and Zambia are among the largest sources of, and conduits for, the illegal ivory trade in Africa," said Dr. Wasser. "Both the Tanzanian and Zambian elephants meet the biological criteria to remain on Appendix I. Moreover, petitions for one-off sales encourage poaching by increasing anticipation of legal trade."

"We disagree with the Secretary's statement that the biological criteria show that *Loxodonta africana* does not meet the criteria for retention in Appendix I," said Iain Douglas-Hamilton. "There are no figures available for the Tanzanian elephant population three generations ago with which to compare present estimates. "There has been a massive drop of over 65 percent of the elephants since 1979. After a period of recovery following the 1989 ivory trade ban, there is once again an ominous decline of 30,000 elephants in the last three years. On evidence of recent surveys, cited in the Panel of Experts, Tanzania may be at a tipping point poised for massive declines."

The experts presented further evidence on Zambian elephants indicating the very high probability that the population has declined by more than 50 percent over the last 70 years, meeting the criterion for retention in Appendix I.

"It is absolutely imperative that Parties examine all the data relating to these elephants, if they do it is clear that downlistings cannot be considered at this time," said Dr. Poole. "We implore Parties to apply the precautionary principle and reject the Tanzanian and Zambian proposals — it is critical to protect the long-term future of African elephants."

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'No' vote dims survival of corals

Continued from Page 1

"These corals do not meet the criteria for being listed in Appendix II. Also, the listing will have serious negative repercussions. Coral generates 5,000 jobs in our country, and 1.4 million dinar every year," said a delegate from Tunisia, who called for a secret ballot. Joining the 'no' voted were Libya, Malaysia, Morocco, Iceland and Singapore.

With 64 countries voting in favour of the proposal and 59 opposed, the measure fell short of two-thirds majority to pass and was rejected.

THE PENINSULA

Wildlife e-trade curbs endorsed

CITES seeks tougher measures to control Internet trading of endangered species

DOHA: Stricter measures to control the illegal trade in wildlife over the Internet were endorsed at the 15th Conference of the Parties (CoP 15) of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) meeting here yesterday.

"Trade over the Internet poses one of the greatest threats to wildlife and undermines the CITES treaty itself," said IFAW's Paul Todd. "It is a vast global network that provides the cover of relative anonymity for wildlife traffickers, making it a huge enforcement challenge for Parties."

"Thousands of CITES listed species are traded each and every week around the world. More and more, individual citizens are taking part in the global wildlife trade online and away from the watchful eyes of CITES parties and their enforcement regimes, which raises new questions involving jurisdiction, technological capacity, legal responsibility, and burden of proof."

The CITES Parties endorsed a serious set of recommendations that will aid Parties in tightening enforcement against Internet trade in protected species and understanding the methods and pathways by which CITES specimens could be illegally traded online.

"The recommendations accepted today ask Parties to evaluate their domestic enforcement measures to see if they are sufficient to deal with the growing threat of online wildlife trafficking," said Todd. "While we believe this language could have been much stronger, we are glad the Parties are beginning to tackle this issue, and hope their engagement will grow as we learn more and more about this problem."

Appendix II at yesterday's meeting when all government presented supported proposals submitted by Guatemala and Honduras.

"These are critically endangered species and poached individuals can sell for as much as \$100 as part of the illegal international pet trade," said Maria Elena Sanchez, Coordinator of the Latin America Regional Bureau for the Species Survival Network and executive director of the Mexico-based organization Tegueli. "We congratulate Honduras and Guatemala on their successful proposals to protect these rare animals."

Central American tree frogs, another critically endangered species, are also headed for CITES Appendix II list. The proposals to list five similar species of tree frogs in the genus *Agalychnis*, was submitted by Honduras and Mexico.

THE PENINSULA



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PRESS RELEASE

Porbeagle by-caughted by CITES

Proposal to regulate trade in red and pink corals widely used in jewellery defeated again

Doha, 23 March 2010 – A two-week meeting of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) decided by consensus today to include several reptiles and amphibians from Central America and the Islamic Republic of Iran in its lists.

Governments did not have any objection to regulating trade in a Guatemalan Spiny-tailed iguana (*Ctenosaura palearis*) and other three species of iguanas native to central and south-eastern Mexico, the Yucatan Peninsula and Central America. These iguanas are mainly vegetarian, but occasionally feed on insects (ants, wasps and beetles), and are known to be in demand for the international exotic pet trade, mainly in Europe and the United States.

The CITES summit also adopted measures to protect a whole genus of tree frogs from Central and South America that is under pressure owing to habitat degradation and loss, and to the fungal disease *chytridiomycosis*. Some of these frogs are subject to international trade.

Continuing in the same trend for terrestrial species, a salamander endemic to the Islamic Republic of Iran was also listed by consensus in Appendix I, which means that international commercial trade is prohibited. The Kaiser's newt (*Neurergus kaiseri*) is protected in its range State and the main concern is the demand for this species on the international market. Individuals caught in the wild are being illegally exported and find their way into the pet trade for use in aquaria.

Towards the end of the afternoon, the agenda turned again to marine species to consider a proposal submitted by the United States to control trade in 31 species of red and pink precious corals (Appendix II). Three years after a similar proposal was rejected at the Hague meeting, delegates have defeated for the second time (with 64 votes in favour, 59 against and 10 abstentions) the attempt to list some additional precious corals in CITES (black corals are already protected by CITES).

The family *Coralliidae* includes over 30 pink and red coral species, the most commercially valuable precious corals. These species have been fished for millennia, and millions of items are traded internationally each year. According to the proposal of the United States, the greatest risk to populations of *Coralliidae* is fishing to supply international trade, with landings that have declining by 60-80 % since the 1980s, and reductions in the size structure of populations in fished areas equivalent to a loss of 80-90 % of the reproductive modules (polyps). International demand has contributed to serial depletions of most known populations of pink and red corals, and newly-discovered stocks have been rapidly exhausted.

In early December 2009, an FAO Expert Panel concluded that the available evidence did not support the proposal to include all species in the family Coralliidae (*Corallium* spp. and *Paracorallium* spp.) in CITES Appendix II.

The Panel considered that populations representing a large proportion of the abundance of the seven species [*Corallium rubrum*, *C. japonicum*, *C. secundum*, *C. elatius*, *C. konojoi*, *Corallium* sp. nov., *C. lauense* (*C. regale*)] globally did not meet the biological criteria for listing in Appendix II.

Lack of sufficient scientific evidence and the impact on the livelihoods of coastal local populations depending on corals were the main arguments advanced by the opponents to this proposal. Coming tomorrow, elephant conservation and ivory sales.

Note to journalists: For more information, contact Juan Carlos Vasquez at +974-4175621 or +974-5692804 (cell), or juan.vasquez@cites.org



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CITES rejects Tanzania, Zambia proposals

Web posted at: 3/23/2010 3:37:8
Source :: The Peninsula

DOHA: Governments participating in the UN Convention on the International Trade of Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora (CITES) rejected proposals by Tanzania and Zambia to relax trade restrictions on their elephant populations by moving them from Appendix I — the highest level of protection under the Convention banning all international commercial trade — to Appendix II here yesterday.

Zambia and Tanzania had also initially, asked in addition to their down listing requests, that they be able to hold a one-off sale of their ivory stockpiles. The two countries have submitted proposals seeking permission for a one-off sale of 112 tonnes of ivory hoping to open the door for future ivory trade by 'down-listing' their elephant populations.

No commercial ivory sale is permitted if their elephants remain in Appendix I, but are possible with the Appendix II listing, which allows some regulated international commercial trade.

But neither country was given permission to sell their ivory at this stage or relax trade controls on their elephant populations. The decisions come amid a poaching crisis among elephant populations in Asia and Africa. Governments rejected Tanzania's downlisting and ivory sales request. They also voted against Zambia's request to move their elephant populations off Appendix I — a decision which came despite an amendment by Zambia to remove the request for a one-off sale of their ivory stockpiles from their original proposal.

"While the issue of whether sales should be allowed to proceed or not has dominated much of the discussions here in Qatar, WWF and TRAFFIC believe the key driving force behind the ongoing elephant poaching is the continued existence of illegal domestic ivory markets across parts of Africa and Asia," said Steven Broad, Executive Director of TRAFFIC, the wildlife trade monitoring network of WWF and International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

The Elephant Trade Information System (ETIS) was also formally presented to delegates at the meeting. The report found that the illegal trade in ivory, which has been increasing in volume since 2004, moved up sharply in 2009 and there continues to be a highly significant



FROM LEFT: Wilbur Dovey, Chairman, Committee II; Dr Ladislaus C Komba, Permanent Secretary, UN Representative of Tanzania; Juan Carlos Vasques, official spokesperson, CITES; and Ghanem Abdulla Mohammed, Director of Wildlife Conservation at the Ministry of Environment, Qatar; attending a news briefing on the progress of the ongoing CITES meet at the Doha Sheraton yesterday.

correlation between large-scale domestic ivory markets in Asia and Africa and poor law enforcement, suggesting that illicit ivory trade flows typically follow a path to destinations where law enforcement is weak and markets function with little regulatory impediment.

"Poaching and illegal ivory markets in central and western Africa must be effectively suppressed before any further ivory sales take place," said Elisabeth McLellan, Species Programme Manager, WWF International.

"This is a real victory for elephants," said Jason Bell-Leask, Director IFAW Southern Africa. "CITES parties voted in favour of conservation, following the same logic applied to the Tanzanian proposal for a one-off sale and downlisting which was rejected earlier today."

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Sea lilies evolved creep from predators over 200 million years

Posted on March 23, 2010 | 0 Comments

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With their feathery arms and long stalks, sea lilies look like their land-based namesakes. But unlike the lilies of the land, sea lilies are able to pick up and move. Over 200 million years of being eaten by sea urchins they have evolved escape strategies, including pulling themselves out of reach along the ocean floor.



The oral side of a sea urchin with the Aristotle's lantern (mouth structure) and a piece of crinoid arm that it is consuming.

Photo by F. J. Gahn

Scientists have known for some years that sea lilies are able to move away from urchins. Now a new study by University of Michigan paleontologist Tomasz Baumiller and colleagues, funded in part by the National Geographic Society, finds that urchins have been preying on sea lilies--marine animals known as crinoids--for more than 200 million years.



Research Grant

Predation over so much time drove the sea lily to develop the ability to escape by creeping along the ocean floor, according to the research, which was published online in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS).

"Nature abounds with examples of evolutionary arms races. Certain marine snails, for example, evolved thick shells and spines to avoid be eaten, but crabs and fish foiled the snails by developing shell-crushing claws and jaws," the University of Michigan said in a news statement about the paper.

Feather star on a coral from Palau.

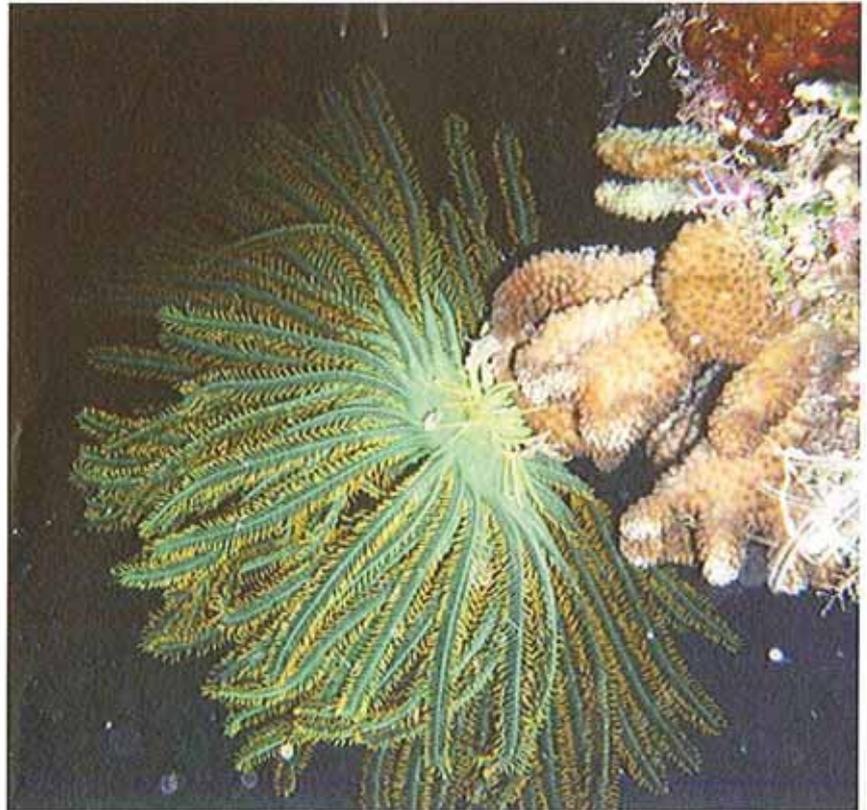


Photo by F. J. Gahn

Baumliller's study builds on previous research on present-day sea lilies and urchins, tracing the evolutionary arms race between them way back in time.

"With their long stalks and feathery arms, sea lilies look a lot like their garden-variety namesakes. Perhaps because of that resemblance, scientists long had thought that sea lilies stayed rooted instead of moving around like their stalkless relatives, the feather stars," U-M said.

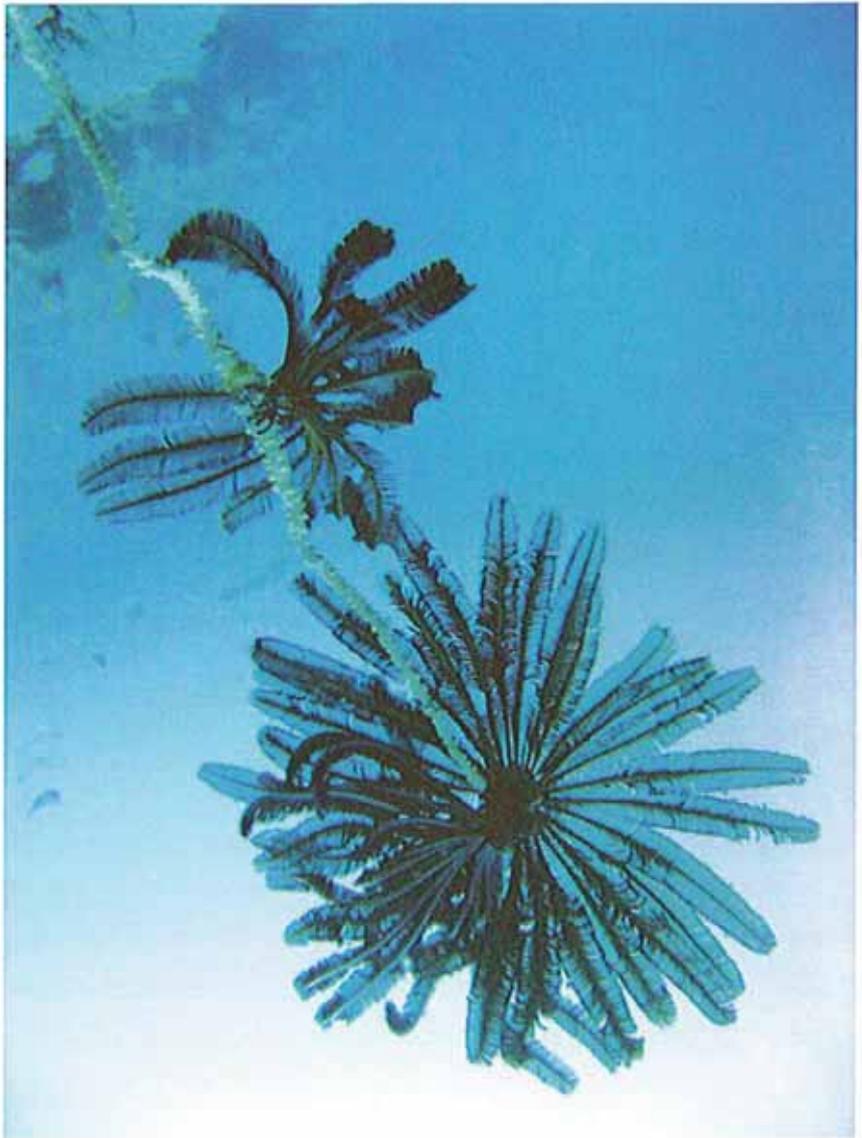


Photo of sea lily by F. J. Gahn

"But in the 1980s, Baumliller and collaborator Charles Messing of Nova Southeastern University's Oceanographic Center in Dania Beach, Florida, observed sea lilies shedding the ends of their stalks to release themselves from their anchor points and using their feathery arms to crawl away, dragging their stalks behind them.

"Then, while going through hundreds of hours of video shot during submersible dives, the two researchers came across footage that offered an explanation for why sea lilies might get up and go. The videos showed sea urchins lurking in gardens of sea lilies, some of which appeared to be creeping away from the predators."

In some photos, the sea floor around the urchins was littered with sea lily arms, "like table scraps left from a feast." U-M said.

"Further studies by Baumliller, Messing and Rich Mooi of the California Academy of Sciences suggested that sea urchins don't simply scavenge bits of dead sea lilies that they find on the ocean floor; they bite pieces right off their prey, giving sea lilies plenty of reason to shed their stalk ends like lizards' tails and scoot away."

When those findings were announced in 2005, the researchers said the next step was to scrutinize fossil crinoids for clues to how and when sea lilies developed the ability to shed their stalk ends and move around.

A stalked crinoid, *Neocnusus decorus*.

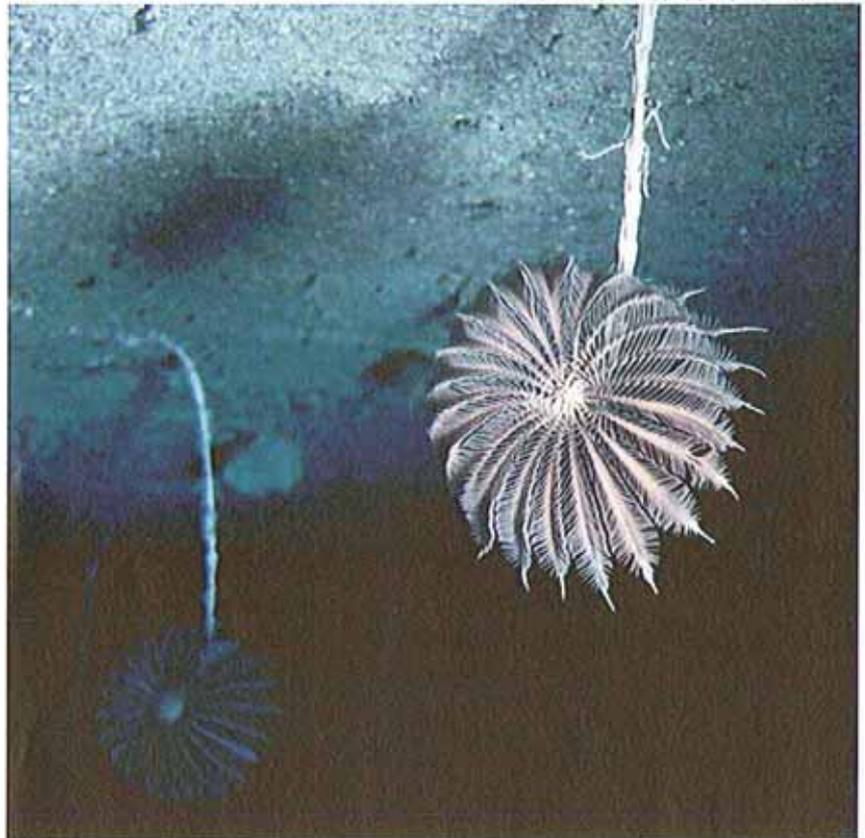


Photo by C. G. Messing

In the new research being reported in PNAS, that's what they, along with Forest Gahn of Brigham Young University and Polish collaborators Mariusz Salamon and Przemyslaw Gorzelak, have done.

"First, the researchers put sea urchins into a tank with detached crinoid arms, pieces of crinoid stalks and arms, and live crinoids. Every urchin that was given the opportunity at least nibbled on crinoids, and one even ate a whole feather star. This experiment not only confirmed that urchins prey on crinoids, but it also revealed that crinoid parts that pass undigested through urchins bear characteristic scratches and pits that match the size and shape of the teeth in the urchin's 'mouth,'" the University of Michigan said.

The researchers looked for the same kinds of bite marks on more than 2,500 crinoid stalk fossils from Poland, dating back to the middle of the Triassic period, some 225 million years ago. More than 500 of the fossils had the same bite marks, they found.



A sea urchin with a piece of crinoid stalk (the white) in its jaws.

Photo by F. J. Gahn

The findings suggest that the development of mollily in crinoids, that in some groups included swimming and floating, were stimulated by their interactions with predators, the researchers said.

The time frame is significant, too, said Baumliller, professor of geological sciences and a curator at the U-M Museum of Paleontology.

"Some of the best examples of the effects of escalating interactions between predators and prey come from something called the Mesozoic Marine Revolution (MMR), a dramatic increase in the diversity of predators and their prey that started during the late Mesozoic Era, about 150 million years ago. But the new study suggests that, at least for crinoids and their predators, the arms race began even earlier," U-M said.

The research was funded by the National Science Foundation, National Geographic Society Committee for Research and Exploration, and the Foundation for Polish Science.

You might be interested in:

[Sea Urchin Genome Reveals Striking Similarities to Humans](#)

Rejection of coral-trade ban cheers industry

Izuru Jitsumori / Yomiuri Shimbun Correspondent

DOHA--Sunday's rejection of a proposal to control red and pink coral trade by the U.N. wildlife trade body has dispelled, for the time being, fears that the market might contract and jobs could be lost.

The domestic red and pink coral industry, including the harvest, processing and distribution of the coral, is worth more than 10 billion yen and employs about 3,000 people.

The Conference on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) voted down the proposal by secret ballot in Doha, with 64 countries voting in favor and 59 opposed. The measure needed a two-thirds majority to pass. It had been feared that passage of the proposal could jeopardize the jobs of people involved in the industry and tarnish the image of coral trade.

At the meeting, the United States, which proposed the control, argued that overexploitation was responsible for falling coral harvests in recent years.

Japan asserted that harvests are already being carried out under strict controls, an argument that won support from more than one-third of votes--enough to defeat the proposal.

Red and pink coral is cultivated more than 100 meters below the ocean's surface off Japan. Kochi, Okinawa and Kago-shima prefectures are the main production areas of the coral, which is mostly exported as a raw material or made into jewelry. About 80 percent is exported to China and Taiwan.

Coral can be distributed domestically with an export permit. However, the proposal to control trade of red and pink corals had hurt the image of the coral, and prompted fears in the industry that leading department stores might become reluctant to handle them.

Sunday's decision will go a long way to alleviating those concerns.

<http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/>

CITES meeting rejected hammerhead regulatory red

March 23, 2010 19:49

[Doha] Joint Meeting of the Parties to CITES held in Doha in one committee yesterday, and the hammerhead sharks that are caught just for red meat and shark fin in Japan, the country's export permits during the international trade requiring the publication "Annex 2" for the two seek to reject the proposal.

Proposal for two species, such as northern dogfish, to vote on the same day.

The two had been rejected for the proposal, hammerhead red and gray shark, and six species Yagore. Reducing the number of bycatch in fishing nets and shark's fin-motivated, as proposed by the United States and Palau could cause the extinction of unregulated international trade should continue.

European Union (EU) and the "bycatch is caught in the mass, which reduces the number of individuals" and support. Meanwhile, Japan and China "should be managed in the region" "Once the process is difficult to discern. Impossible to crack down" as opposed to on the annex.

Around the country came to agree to be subject to regulation by reducing the shark, the U.S. proposed revised six species from four species, but the country's two-thirds vote needed to pass did not reach.



Northern dogfish (jointly provide the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)

March 23, 2010

Sharks lose fight at UN meeting

By MICHAEL CASEY
AP Environmental Writer

U.S.-backed proposals to protect the heavily fished hammerhead and oceanic whitetip sharks were narrowly rejected Tuesday over concerns by Asian nations that regulating the booming trade in shark fins could hurt poor coastal nations.

Japan, which successfully campaigned against an export ban on Atlantic bluefin tuna and regulations on the coral trade, led the opposition to the shark proposal at the 175-nation Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species.

China, Indonesia and other nations that benefit from the trade in fins joined the opposition to the proposals arguing that trade restrictions were not the answer and would be difficult to apply.

"This is not about trade issues but fisheries enforcement," Masanori Miyahara, chief counselor of the Fisheries Agency of Japan, told delegates. "Poaching is a big problem. Small scale long liners are chasing sharks all over the world."

But the United States supported by Europe, Australia and many Arab countries argued that the unregulated trade has led to widespread illegal fishing and has caused the populations of the endangered scalloped hammerhead, great hammerhead and the threatened smooth hammerhead to plummet by as much as 85 percent.

"The greatest threat to the hammerhead is from harvest for the international fin trade and the fin of the species is among highly valued of the trade," Strickland said. Shark fin soup is a much prized delicacy in China.

Oceanic whitetip sharks face similar threats and their numbers are down 60 to 70 percent, Strickland said.

The hammerhead measure was only narrowly rejected by the U.N. committee, falling by five votes to take the necessary two-thirds of majority. The whitetip proposal fell nine votes short of approval.

Strickland said it was possible they would try and revive the proposal at the larger, plenary meeting which begins Wednesday.

"It's disappointing we didn't get the two-thirds but that is the way the rules are set up," Strickland said. "We are going to continue our efforts both here and going forward to put the necessary protection in place for these shark species."

The tiny Pacific nation of Palau, which last year created the first ever shark sanctuary, joined the Americans in introducing the shark proposals. It called on countries to protect the species so they can be fished well into the future.

"We must preserve for our children these amazing species," said Palau's Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment & Tourism Harry R. Fritz, adding that his country supports the protection of other shark species as well.

CITES was due to take up European proposals later in the day for protections of the porbeagle shark which is also killed for its meat and the spiny dogfish shark — a chief ingredient of fish and chips and fish sticks.

Conservationists were outraged and disappointed by the rulings, since it came after a string of defeats on marine species including a proposal last week on a shark conservation plan. Japan and China led efforts to kill that proposal, as well.

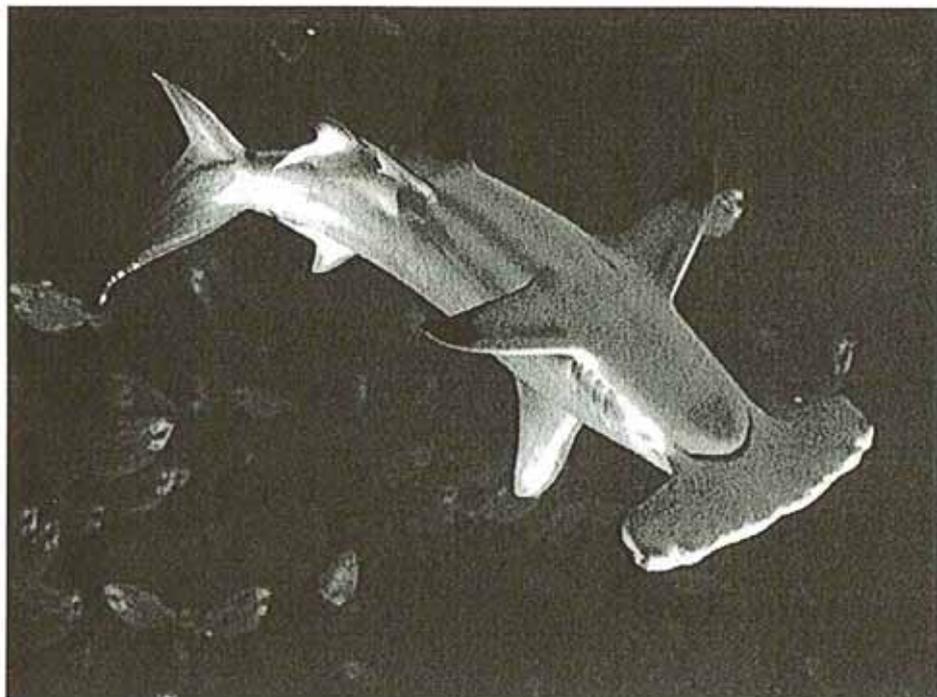
"Today is a huge loss for the oceans. This is a case of politics prevailing over science," Oceana's Fisheries Campaign Manager Elizabeth Griffin said. "The world failed to stand up today to protect some of the ocean's top predators."
Jupp Baron Kerckhove, president of the Shark Research Institute based in Millbrook, N.Y., acknowledged he was "very disappointed and frustrated right now."
"Japan has been voting the shark proposals down because they are catching them, Singapore voted them down because they make money selling the fins and China makes money because they eat them," he said. "How can we win?"

The Pew Environmental Group said the sharks are especially vulnerable to overfishing because they are slow growing and have low reproductive rates. Fishermen, both industrial and small-scale and many operating illegally, slice off the fins and throw the carcasses back in the ocean.

Shark fin soup has long played central part in traditional Chinese culture, often being served at weddings and banquets. Demand for the soup has surged as increasing numbers of Chinese middle class family become wealthier.

On the Net:

CITES: <http://www.cites.org/>



FILE--An Oct. 27, 2005 file photo shows a hammerhead shark in a large tank at the Georgia Aquarium, in Atlanta. A U.S.-backed proposal to protect the heavily fished hammerhead sharks was narrowly rejected Tuesday, March 23, 2010, over concerns by Asia nations that regulating the booming trade in shark fins could hurt poor nations. (AP Photo/John Bazemore, file)

Whaling: the great betrayal

Outrage as secret deal set to sweep away international moratorium
By Michael McCarthy, Environment Editor

Tuesday, 23 March 2010
The Independent (UK)

The moratorium on commercial whaling, one of the environmental movement's greatest achievements, looks likely to be swept away this summer by a new international deal being negotiated behind closed doors. The new arrangement would legitimise the whaling activities of the three countries which have continued to hunt whales in defiance of the ban – Japan, Norway and Iceland – and would allow commercial whaling in the Southern Ocean Sanctuary set up by the International Whaling Commission (IWC) in 1994.

Conservationists regard it as catastrophic, but fear there is a very real chance of its being accepted at the next IWC meeting in Morocco in June, not least because it is being strongly supported by the US – previously one of whaling's most determined opponents.

Should the deal go ahead, it would represent one of the most significant setbacks ever for conservation, and as big a failure for wildlife protection as December's Copenhagen conference was for action on climate change.

Agreed in 1982, and introduced in 1986, the whaling moratorium was brought in after a prolonged and intense campaign by green pressure groups highlighting the fact that many populations of the great whales had been drastically reduced by over-hunting – blue whales, the largest of all, had been driven to the brink of extinction – and that whaling itself, based on the firing of explosive harpoons into large and intelligent animals, was cruel.

However, three countries carried on commercial hunting regardless: Japan, by labelling its killing "scientific research" – a fiction believed by no one – and Norway and Iceland simply by lodging formal objections to the agreement.

Between them, although there is little market for whale meat, they have since killed more than 30,000 great whales, mainly minke whales, but also Bryde's, fin, sei and sperm whales – to the anger of many conservation-minded countries, in particular a group led by the US, Britain, Australia and New Zealand.

The result has been that IWC meetings have been characterised by unending confrontation between pro- and anti-whaling factions and the proposed new deal has arisen out of a three-year attempt to bring the altercations and arguments to an end.

After a series of meetings – behind closed doors – two IWC working groups have crafted a compromise proposal which is intended to end the confrontation by "giving something to both sides".

[https://webmail.unog.ch/mail4/vrothenb.nsf/\(\\$Inbox\)/628DC4E21BF325F2C12576BF001...](https://webmail.unog.ch/mail4/vrothenb.nsf/($Inbox)/628DC4E21BF325F2C12576BF001...) 3/23/2010

For conservationists, it suggests there might be reduced catches by the whaling countries, observers on some whaling boats, and a DNA database to trace the origin of whalemeat. But in return, there will be official IWC "quotas" set for whales they may hunt, in all the places where they currently hunt them in defiance of the moratorium, including the Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary, for the first time in 25 years. The quotas are being negotiated for a final version of the proposal, which is currently in draft, due in a month's time. It will be voted on at the IWC conference in Agadir, Morocco, in June.

Despite the fact that the proposal says "the moratorium shall remain in place", meaning that it will not be specifically abolished, the new arrangements overturn it and mean commercial whaling will be legitimised.

"This deal spells disaster for whales," said Vassili Papatavrou, whale scientist for the International Fund for Animal Welfare. "I can't imagine how the very countries that fought so hard for the adoption of the whaling moratorium and the establishment of the Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary should now even be considering legitimising commercial whaling. If this goes ahead, the IWC will abandon science and return to the dark days of the 1950s."

The fact that the proposal says the moratorium will remain was "being extremely economical with the truth", said Mark Simmonds, head of science for the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society. "These are weasel words," he said. "Even though the moratorium would remain in place, the reality is that it will be nullified. The proposal on the table is quite frankly disastrous. It legitimises commercial whaling once again." The British Government is unhappy with the proposed new deal. "At present we have a number of significant concerns which mean we could not support it, not least that there's no guarantee of a significant reduction in the number of whales killed in the short term," Huw Irranca-Davies, the Fisheries minister, said last night. "Nor does it provide for a phasing-out of either scientific or commercial whaling."

The proposal has some powerful backers, even among countries which were formerly solidly opposed to commercial whaling's return – a fact which substantially increases its chances of adoption at Agadir. Principal among them is the US, whose officials in the negotiations have been strongly backing the proposal. This is thought to be in part because of a specific problem – the subsistence whaling quotas for indigenous Inuit peoples in Alaska, which the US is obliged to seek from the IWC every few years.

In 2002, in return for American hostility to its "scientific" whaling, Japan blocked the quota, causing the US considerable embarrassment before the Japanese backed down. The next quota request is due in 2012 and some observers think the US wants to make sure it is on terms with Japan so the quota will not be blocked again.

Another surprise supporter of the proposal is New Zealand, although Australia is strongly opposed to the plan.

Conservation victory: bid to trade ivory falls

Bids by Tanzania and Zambia to lower protection for their elephant populations were rejected yesterday by countries meeting to discuss the global trade in threatened wildlife.

The conference of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (Cites) in Qatar turned down their request to make ivory tradable on international markets. It also refused a request from Tanzania to hold a one-off sale of legal ivory stocks.

The vote was welcomed as a "victory for common sense" by the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and by conservationists, who feared the one-off sale and lower protection for elephants could prompt an increase in poaching and ivory smuggling.

Industrial-scale harvesting on the high-seas has caused bluefin stocks to plummet by up to 80 per cent in the Mediterranean and eastern Atlantic, the two regions which would have been affected by the ban.

sustainable way," he said.

It looked to the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) -- an inter-governmental body -- "to take its responsibility to ensure that stocks are managed in a

Europe remained committed to safeguarding the dwindling bluefin tuna stocks, Potoznik stressed.

The proposal was rejected amid strong opposition from Japan and others.

added.

"If action is not taken, there is a very serious danger that the bluefin will no longer exist," he

"We remain convinced that stringent measures are needed to ensure the recovery of Atlantic bluefin tuna," said the EU's Environmental Commissioner Janez Potoznik in a statement.

with extinction and subject to a trade ban.

"We are disappointed with the outcome of the CITES meeting," the commission said after the talks in Doha rejected a European Union (EU) proposal to list the fish as a species threatened

species at risk, the European Commission (EC) warned Thursday.

The failure of the United Nations (UN) wildlife trade body Convention on the International Trade of Endangered Species (CITES) to protect Atlantic bluefin tuna, a sushi mainstay, puts the

Tuesday, March 23, 2010, 01:00 (GMT + 9)

EUROPEAN UNION

EU warns failure to protect bluefin tuna could see extinction

News Source © 2010 Barcelona Reporter

Following the find, the Civil Guard forwarded the case on to the Customs and excise department of Barcelona

The 24 un-carved tusks weighed 210 kilograms and, at the time of his arrest, the owner did not have the credited CITES documentation, thereby violating regulations on the protection of species of fauna and flora regulating its trade.

The intervention of the ivory, which occurred in a private home in El Masnou, was due to intensive research by the authorities, who are aware of the money involved in the illegal trading of the tusks.

The Civil Guard on Thursday confiscated, in El Masnou (Barcelona) 24 elephant tusks that lacked any documentation attesting to their legal import.

illegal trading of the tusks

The intervention of the ivory, which occurred in a private home in El Masnou, was due to intensive research by the authorities, who are aware of the money involved in the

24 illegal elephant tusks found in a flat in El Masnou, Barcelona.

Sharks Sold Out at CITES

DOHA, Qatar, March 23 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- Sharks were the big losers today at the 15th Conference of the Parties (COP 15) of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) meeting in Doha.

"CITES Parties voted by the slimmest of margins to protect porbeagle sharks, but rejected all other shark proposals at this meeting," said Dr. Ralf Sonntag, Director IFAW Germany. "An Appendix II listing would have given sharks a fighting chance against the devastation that shark finning is causing around the world."

"Sharks have been sold out today. Short-term profits have won again at CITES."

With more than 100 million sharks caught each year, some species are estimated to have declined by as much as 80 percent in the past decade.

Shark parts and products fetch high prices (e.g., good quality fins sell for up to US\$740/kg and jaws can sell for more than US\$10,000 each).

Four proposals were submitted to CITES for uplisting of shark species to Appendix II to offer them greater protection: Proposal 15 for five shark species (Scalloped, Great and Smooth Hammerhead, Sandbar and Dusky Shark -- amended to remove the Sandbar and Dusky Shark); Proposal 16 for the Oceanic Whitetip by Palau and the United States; Proposal 17 for the Porbeagle Shark; and Proposal 18 for the Spiny Dogfish proposed by the EU and Palau.

The Spiny Dogfish was rejected with 60 votes in favour, 67 votes against and 11 abstaining.

SOURCE International Fund for Animal Welfare

have declined by as much as 98% in some regions. Two other look-alike species, the great and smooth hammerheads, were included because they're also vulnerable to overfishing because of the similarity of their fins

- Oceanic whitetip sharks. These sharks have been fished down to 10% of their historical populations in the central Pacific Ocean and to only 1% in the Gulf of Mexico, because their

- Spiny dogfish sharks. These sharks have the longest pregnancy of any animal with a backbone, up to two years, so they reproduce very slowly, and consequently take a very long time to recover from overfishing.

Up to 73 million sharks a year are not killed not for their meat but for their fins, which are prized to make shark fin soup in China. Often the fin is sliced off the living shark and then the body is thrown back into the ocean to die. In Europe, shark meat, especially from spiny dogfish and porbeagle sharks, is also highly prized.

"The shark fin trade which is responsible for the killing of up to 73 million sharks each year remains largely unregulated," said Rand.

Conservationists lamented that short-term economic gain seemed to be trumping the possible survival of species. "It appears that science no longer matters. CITES is not fulfilling its obligation to protect species threatened by international trade. When will we realize that short-term profits will not last?" said Elizabeth Griffin, the marine scientist and fisheries campaign manager for Oceana, a large marine conservation group.

By Elizabeth Weise

UN rejects bid to protect hammerhead shark

By RFI

The United Nations body that regulates trade in rare species rejected a proposal on Tuesday to up protection for the heavily fished scalloped hammerhead shark, whose fins are a delicacy in China. The Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species (Cites) rejected the motion by a narrow margin at its 12-day meeting in Doha.

China and Japan led the opposition to the United States' proposal to increase restrictions on cross-border trade in hammerhead fins.

Chinese delegates argued that border controls would not be enforceable, while Japan insisted that management of shark populations was up to regional fisheries, not Cites.

But conservationists say that the trade in sharks must be made sustainable, especially as most species of shark take many years to mature and produce relatively few young.

In contrast with other species such as tuna, shark fins can currently be sold largely unregulated. Intensive fishing has reduced shark populations by roughly 80 per cent globally, according to experts.

Between 1.5 and 2.3 million sharks are caught each year, most of them tossed back into the sea after their fins have been removed.

The dried fins are the signature ingredient of shark fin soup, a luxury dish typically served on special occasions in China.

US Proposals To Protect Endangered Sharks Rejected Over Trade

3/23/2010 11:08 AM ET
RTTNews) -

The 175-nation Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) has rejected U.S.-backed proposals to regulate international trade in a variety of endangered species of shark.

Asian countries, led by Japan, voted against the proposal in Doha Tuesday, preventing it to win two-thirds majority by narrow margin.

Japan in recent times had successfully campaigned against an export ban on Atlantic blue fin tuna and regulations on the coral trade.

Nations that benefit from the booming trade in shark fins joined the opposition to the proposals arguing that trade restrictions could hurt poor coastal nations and that it would be difficult to apply.

Shark fin soup is a much prized delicacy in China, while countries such as Singapore and Indonesia are engaged in high-volume fin trade.

Massive scale fishing has endangered the scalloped hammerhead and oceanic whitetip sharks, which were among the most common of the semi-coastal sharks.

It is estimated that by-catch and intensive fishing for fins have slashed their populations by about 80 per cent globally, with intensity in the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

Failure of the U.N. body overseeing global trade in threatened species to stand up to protect some of the ocean's "top predators" has been criticized by conservationists and environmental groups.

The United States, Europe, Australia and many Arab countries support the restriction on fin trade. Tom Strickland, U.S. Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish, said an effort to revive the proposal at the larger, plenary meeting that begins on Wednesday will be made.

by RTT Staff Writer

For comments and feedback: contact editorial@rttnews.com

Sushi-cide: Secret ballot kills hopes for bluefin tuna protections

By Robin Lloyd

Scientific American

The triennial meeting of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) is still underway in Doha, Qatar, this week, but so far news coming out of the conference is a mixed bag. Some trees have been protected, tigers gained a few friends, and a rare salamander got some attention, but all hopes to save the critically endangered bluefin tuna were sunk in a secret ballot that put commerce ahead of science and conservation.

As I've written here before, populations of Atlantic bluefin tuna (*Thunnus thynnus*) have dropped 97 percent since 1960, but the tasty fish remains in high demand in Japan, where sushi bars are willing to pay up to \$100,000 or more per fish. A possible CITES ban on bluefin tuna—supported by the U.S. and 27 European Union nations—has been in the works for months. Japan, meanwhile, had already announced that it would not comply with such a ban if it were enacted.

Unfortunately, the ban failed, and fishing will continue. CITES's own press release, titled "Governments not ready for trade ban on bluefin tuna," is surprisingly candid about how this happened:

"Japan, Canada and several members States of the Arab league opposed the proposal arguing that regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) as ICCAT [the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas] were best placed to tackle the decline of bluefin tuna stocks. They added that an Appendix I listing [which would ban trade in the species] would not stop the fishing of the species. After a passionate but relatively short debate, the representative of Libya requested to close the deliberations and go for a vote. Iceland called for a secret ballot. The amendment introduced by the European Union and Monaco's proposal were defeated (20 votes in favor, 68 against, 30 abstentions) in the middle of much confusion about the voting procedures and mixed feelings of satisfaction and frustration from participants."

Obviously, pro-tuna groups were not happy about this series of events. "It is scandalous that governments did not even get the chance to engage in meaningful debate about the international trade ban proposal for Atlantic bluefin tuna," said Sergi Tudela, head of fisheries for the WWF Mediterranean Programme Office, in a prepared statement.

Oceana, a conservation group devoted to the health of the oceans, called this "a clear win by short-term economic interest over the long-term health of the ocean and the rebuilding of Atlantic bluefin tuna populations." And Greenpeace International oceans campaigner Oliver Knowles stated, "The abject failure of governments here at CITES to protect Atlantic bluefin tuna spells disaster for its future and sets the species on a pathway to extinction."

We'll be covering more CITES decisions—both good and bad—all week.

Only the porbeagle shark received protection today from the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). Seven other shark species failed to win international protection despite plummeting populations due to overfishing.

Once again, Japan led the opposition to regulating the trade in white-tipped sharks and scalloped hammerheads, including two look-alike species: the great hammerhead and the smooth hammerhead. Japan has dominated the CITES meeting, successfully leading resistance to banning the trade in the Critically Endangered Atlantic bluefin tuna and against monitoring the coral trade.

"The devastating result this morning sees hammerheads and oceanic whitetip sharks join the Atlantic bluefin, and red and pink corals, as victims of short-term economic interest winning out over efforts to save species from extinction at this CITES meeting," Greenpeace International Oceans Campaigner Oliver Knowles said.

Sharks are increasingly targeted for shark fin soup, a delicacy in many Asian countries, including Japan. The trade has decimated some species, for example the scalloped hammerhead has dropped by 98 percent in some regions while the oceanic whitetip sharks has decline by 90 percent in the central Pacific Ocean and 99 percent in the Gulf of Mexico.

"The shark fin trade which is responsible for the killing of up to 73 million sharks each year remains largely unregulated," said Matt Rand, director of global shark conservation for the Pew Environment Group. "Today's votes only help porbeagle populations. Even with scientific data showing that many shark populations are plummeting, international fisheries management bodies and now international conservation forums mostly favor commerce over protection. Individual nations need to answer the call to protect threatened species if sharks are to remain in our oceans."

The only winner today, the porbeagle shark, is caught both for its prized-meat and its large fins.

The species is a cousin to the great white shark.

The spiny dogfish also lost a vote for protection. This shark has a two year gestation making it incredibly vulnerable to overfishing.

"Sharks have been on our planet for more than 400 million years," Rand said. "But if governments do not act, many shark species will not last—even iconic species like the hammerheads. Most species reproduce late in life, have few young and simply do not have the capacity to recover from commercial overfishing and global trade."

Two other shark species—the sandbar shark and the dusky shark—were removed from proposals before reaching the voting stage.

"Governments at CITES have in the past had a good track record of protecting rare species, but can they rise to the challenge of protecting species which are now seriously depleted, and simultaneously worth a lot of money? Sadly, the signs from this meeting are not good. It's clear that more and more governments attending CITES are not trying to protect species, but adding that 'proposal after proposal designed to protect massively overfished marine species have failed to pass at CITES. It's an appalling result, the impacts of which will effect our marine environment for generations to come."

While CITES has largely failed the world's marine species, the international body voted yesterday to against allowing sales of ivory from Tanzania and Zambia, fearing that it would worsen the current poaching crisis against the world's elephants.

Marine biologist, Jennifer Jacquet, recently said in her blog on *Gully Planet* that CITES failure to protect marine life was "another failure to see fish as wildlife"

Pew Applauds Vote Giving International Protections to Porbeagle Sharks

Rejection of Scientific Data for Other Threatened Sharks Undermines Conservation Effort

DOHA, Qatar , March 23 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- Government delegates attending the meeting of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) voted today to list porbeagle sharks in Appendix II of the treaty, but rejected protections for three other vulnerable shark species. An Appendix II listing requires exporting countries to ensure that international trade is legal and will not harm the survival of these species.

"Sharks have been on our planet for more than 400 million years," said Matt Rand , director of global shark conservation for the Pew Environment Group. "But if governments do not act, many shark species will not last - even iconic species like the hammerheads. Most species reproduce late in life, have few young and simply do not have the capacity to recover from commercial overfishing and global trade."

Four shark proposals were considered at the CITES meeting, taking place in Doha, Qatar :

- Porbeagle sharks, which passed by a vote of 86 for, 42 against and 8 abstentions. Cousins of the great white shark, porbeagle meat is among the most prized of all shark meat and their large fins are also frequently found in the global fin market.
- Scalloped hammerhead sharks, which failed by a vote of 75 for, 45 against and 14 abstentions. Known for their distinctive silhouettes, these sharks have declined by as much as 98% in some regions. Great and smooth hammerheads, vulnerable to overfishing because of the similarity of their fins, also were included in this proposal as "look-alike" species.
- Oceanic whitetip sharks, which failed by a vote of 75 for, 51 against and 16 abstentions. Mostly because their large fins have been valued at \$45 - \$85 per kilogram, oceanic whitetip populations have declined by as much as 90 percent in the central Pacific Ocean and 99 percent in the Gulf of Mexico .
- Spiny dogfish sharks, which failed by a vote of 60 for, 67 against and 11 abstentions. Spiny dogfish has one of the longest gestation periods for any vertebrate on the planet - up to two years - making the species extremely susceptible to overfishing.

"The shark fin trade, which is responsible for the killing of up to 73 million sharks each year remains largely unregulated," said Rand. "Today's votes only help porbeagle populations. Even with scientific data showing that many shark populations are plummeting, international fisheries management bodies and now international conservation forums mostly favor commerce over protection. Individual nations need to answer the call to protect threatened species if sharks are to remain in our oceans."

The Pew Environment Group is the conservation arm of The Pew Charitable Trusts, a non-governmental organization that applies a rigorous, analytical approach to improve public policy, inform the public and stimulate civic life.

Background : For position papers on these shark proposals and more information on CITES, go to www.pewenvironment.org/CITES . High-definition broadcast quality b-roll of scalloped hammerheads, oceanic whitetips, porbeagles and spiny dogfish is available upon request.

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SOURCE Pew Environment Group

U.N. protects one shark species, but not three others

11:15 AM
USA Today

One vulnerable shark species, the Porbeagle shark, was protected today at the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species meeting in Doha, Qatar, but protection for three others was rejected.

The Porbeagle shark, a cousin of the great white shark, is targeted by fishermen because its large fin is worth a great deal in Asian markets for shark's fin soup. It was added to CITES Appendix II, requiring exporting countries to make sure that international trade is legal and won't harm the survival of the species.

"Sharks have been on our planet for more than 400 million years," said Matt Rand, director of global shark conservation for the Pew Environment Group. "But if governments do not act, many shark species will not last - even iconic species like the hammerheads. Most species reproduce late in life, have few young and simply do not have the capacity to recover from commercial overfishing and global trade."

However, three other species were rejected:

- Scalloped hammerhead sharks. By some counts, these sharks, with their distinctive heads,

have declined by as much as 98% in some regions. Two other look-alike species, the great and smooth hammerheads, were included because they're also vulnerable to overfishing because of the similarity of their fins

- Oceanic whitetip sharks. These sharks have been fished down to 10% of their historical populations in the central Pacific Ocean and to only 1% in the Gulf of Mexico, because their Mostly large fins can cost up to \$40 per pound.

- Spikey dogfish sharks. These sharks have the longest pregnancy of any animal with a backbone, up to two years, so they reproduce very slowly, and consequently take a very long time to recover from overfishing.

Up to 73 million sharks a year are not killed not for their meat but for their fins, which are prized to make shark fin soup in China. Often the fin is sliced off the living shark and then the body is thrown back into the ocean to die. In Europe, shark meat, especially from spiny dogfish and porbeagle sharks, is also highly prized.

"The shark fin trade which is responsible for the killing of up to 73 million sharks each year remains largely unregulated," said Rand.

Conservationists lamented that short-term economic gain seemed to be trumping the possible survival of species. "It appears that science no longer matters. CITES is not fulfilling its obligation to protect species threatened by international trade. When will we realize that short-term profits will not last?" said Elizabeth Griffin, the marine scientist and fisheries campaign manager for Oceana, a large marine conservation group.



Conférence des Parties
23 March 2010

of HH Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani the Heir Apparent

الأمير

CITES

15th Meeting of the Conference of

الأمم المتحدة لمؤتمر الأطراف

Doha 5 March 2010 - ٢٠١٠ مارس



FROM LEFT: Wilbur Dovey, Chairman, Committee II; Dr Ladislaus C Komba, Permanent Secretary, UN Representative of Tanzania; Juan Carlos Vasques, official spokesperson, CITES; and Ghanem Abdulla Mohammed, Director of Wildlife Conservation at the Ministry of Environment, Qatar; attending a news briefing on the progress of the ongoing CITES meet at the Doha Sheraton yesterday. (SALIM MATRAMKOT)

CITES rejects Tanzania, Zambia proposals

DOHA: Governments participating in the UN Convention on the International Trade of Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora (CITES) rejected proposals by Tanzania and Zambia to relax trade restrictions on their elephant populations by moving them from Appendix I — the highest level of protection under the Convention banning all international commercial trade — to Appendix II here yesterday.

Zambia and Tanzania had also initially, asked in addition to their down listing requests, that they be able to hold a one-off sale of their ivory stockpiles. The two countries have submitted proposals seeking permission for a one-off sale of 112 tonnes of ivory hoping to open the door for future ivory trade by 'down-listing' their elephant populations.

No commercial ivory sale is permitted if their elephants remain in Appendix I, but are possible with the Appendix II listing, which allows some regulated international commercial trade.

But neither country was given permission to sell their ivory at this stage or relax trade controls on their elephant populations. The decisions come amid a poaching crisis among elephant populations in Asia and Africa. Governments rejected Tanzania's downlisting and ivory sales request. They also voted against Zambia's request to move their elephant populations off Appendix I — a decision which came despite an amendment by Zambia to remove the request for a one-off sale of their ivory stockpiles from their original proposal.

"While the issue of whether

sales should be allowed to proceed or not has dominated much of the discussions here in Qatar, WWF and TRAFFIC believe the key driving force behind the ongoing elephant poaching is the continued existence of illegal domestic ivory markets across parts of Africa and Asia," said Steven Broad, Executive Director of TRAFFIC, the wildlife trade monitoring network of WWF and International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

The Elephant Trade Information System (ETIS) was also formally presented to delegates at the meeting. The report found that the illegal trade in ivory, which has been increasing in volume since 2004, moved up sharply in 2009 and there continues to be a highly significant correlation between large-scale domestic ivory

markets in Asia and Africa and poor law enforcement, suggesting that illicit ivory trade flows typically follow a path to destinations where law enforcement is weak and markets function with little regulatory impediment.

"Poaching and illegal ivory markets in central and western Africa must be effectively suppressed before any further ivory sales take place," said Elisabeth McLellan, Species Programme Manager, WWF International.

"This is a real victory for elephants," said Jason Bell-Leask, Director IFAW Southern Africa. "CITES parties voted in favour of conservation, following the same logic applied to the Tanzanian proposal for a one-off sale and downlisting which was rejected earlier today."

THE PENINSULA



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PRESS RELEASE

Bringing an organized response to organized wildlife crime

Doha, 24 March 2010 – Illegal trade in elephant ivory, precious timber, caviar, rare plants, rhinoceros horn and tiger skins and bones has been the subject of discussion by enforcement experts from Interpol, Customs and governments attending the triennial general assembly of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). The illegal wildlife trade that take place around the world is often highly organized and sophisticated and can involve criminal gangs, armed with automatic weapons, who don't hesitate to murder the wardens, game scouts or forest guards whose daily job it is to protect our planet's natural resources.

"In the past, all too often, the response to such criminals has not been equally organized or sophisticated", said Willem Wijnstekers, Secretary-General of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). He was speaking as the 175 Parties to CITES meet in Doha, Qatar, for their 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties. "We are determined that there will be a level playing field and that a new era of wildlife law enforcement is introduced. An era where those who rob countries and communities of their natural resources will face a determined and formidable opposition. It is high time that more wildlife criminals end up behind bars, where they belong," he added.

Aiming to introduce this era is the recently-formed International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC). Made up of the CITES Secretariat, INTERPOL, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the World Bank and the World Customs Organization, the Consortium is engaging in a number of joint activities to bring wildlife criminals to justice. These include: a manual to help gather more intelligence when smugglers are arrested; threat assessment tools intended to help countries design their response to wildlife crime; specialized advice on dealing with money-laundering and asset recovery; guidance on the international exchange of information between enforcement agencies; and efforts to raise funds for national capacity-building.

With as few as 3,200 tigers left in the wild, with significant incidents of elephant ivory smuggling being noted, and with an increasing demand for rhinoceros horn in parts of Asia (where criminals claim it can cure cancer), a higher priority for wildlife law enforcement has never been more needed.

The CITES Secretariat continues to use its Alert system to provide risk-assessment, targeting and profiling intelligence to countries around the world. Since the last Conference of the Parties, alerts have been issued on such subjects as illegal trade in caviar, falcons and great apes, and smuggling techniques involving postal and courier services. The CITES Alerts are widely used to help Customs and other border control agencies intercept shipments of illegally-harvested wildlife being moved from one continent to another.

Note to journalists: The CITES Secretariat is organizing a 12h30 press briefing today in the Al Maha room where John M. Sellar, Chief of Enforcement in the Secretariat will be joined by Ms Shennie Patel of the United States Department of Justice.

For more information, contact Juan Carlos Vasquez at +974-4175621 or +974-5692804 (cell), or juan.vasquez@cites.org

Hammerhead sharks get a jolt at CITES meet

RAJESH MISHRA

DOHA

IN what appears to be major jolt to conservation efforts for sharks, the 15th Conference of the Parties (CoP 15) of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) on Tuesday voted against up-listing of the hammerhead sharks oceanic whitetips and spiny dogfish to Appendix II. The confer-

ence, however, adopted the proposal to include porbeagle sharks on Appendix II.

The population of hammerhead sharks and oceanic whitetips has declined by 80 to 90 percent and 60 to 70 percent respectively in recent times and experts fear that given the trend, the species might get extinct in years to come.

"Some populations of the scalloped hammerhead shark have declined by 80 to 90 per-

cent and yet parties have not seen it fit to up-list the

The population of hammerhead sharks and oceanic whitetips has declined by 80 to 90 percent and 60 to 70 percent in recent times.

species to Appendix II. This decision may lead to the disappearance of this charis-

matic species", the International Fund for Animal Welfare quoted an expert, Ralf Sontang as saying.

"These sharks have fins that contain a large amount of cartilage, which makes them highly desirable for shark fin soup. A listing on Appendix II would have at least helped ensure collecting of accurate data about the species, assisting the sustainable species-specific manage-

ment of their international trade which is currently lacking", he added.

A marine biologist and director of IFAW, Germany, Sontang pointed out that oceanic whitetip was exploited mainly for its highly valued fin.

"There is also considerable by catch in global pelagic fisheries. This has led to massive declines, in some areas between 60 percent and 70 percent", he said.

Ray of hope for sharks at CITES

Vote on Appendix II to be reviewed

DOHA: Sharks still see a small ray of expectation of obtaining protection against extinction as the parties at the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) are expected to review the proposal again, today. Many of the proposals and agendas which were rejected at small margins are being gone through again as the convention concludes today.

Two US-proposals to list Scalloped hammerhead, Great Hammerhead, Smooth Hammerhead and Oceanic Whitetip Shark under CITES Appendix II was rejected on Tuesday due to lack of a few votes. An Appendix II would ensure sustainable trading of the species and their parts, which are at the threat of extinction.

"We are looking at the options available to us and meeting with various parties associated to this," said Thomas L Strickland, Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, US department of the Interior and the Chief of US CITES Delegation. "The shark species are mainly threatened by trade due to international demands as food items. The sharks, polar bear and corals

proposals were opposed on ground that it is a major livelihood of many. However, if action is not taken now, there won't be any more of them and livelihood will be lost."

Apart from the major combat between science and economic interest at the CITES 2010, it was for the first time that climate change became a major topic of discussion. Majority of the species discussed at the meeting loss of habitat was a major issue.

Polar bear proposal was rejected on the ground that climate change more than trade was the main threat. US had called for an Appendix I listing arguing that through the melting Arctic habitat was a major threat, trade added to the threat.

"This is the first time ever in the CITES history that climate change has been discussed and will be carried on to the coming ones. Though it was a difficult conference for the species, the GCC countries had shown their support for conserving the planet. However, our activities do not end here, we will go ahead in protecting the species as much as we can and many of them may be again discussed in the next CITES conference," he said.



Assistant Secretary of Interior for Fish and Wildlife and Park Thomas Strickland, left, and US Ambassador Joseph LeBaron during the press conference yesterday.

ABDUL BASIT

Stuffed tiger seized from studio

Officers have seized a stuffed adult tiger from a central London studio, which is believed to have been touted for an illegal sale.

A 47-year-old man was also arrested after the Metropolitan Police's Wildlife Crime Unit (WCU) became aware of the planned sale of the animal.

He was taken to a south London police station but later released on bail.

The stuffed animal was once used by the late fashion designer Alexander McQueen in a photoshoot.

'Strictly enforced'

Stuffed tigers are allowed to be sold in the UK but it is believed this tiger was made available for sale through the studio without sufficient documentation to verify its origin.

Without that paperwork any potential transaction would contravene Article Eight of the Convention on the International Trade of Endangered Species (CITES).

Det Sgt Ian Knox, of the WCU, said: "In order to discourage the trade in rare animals and related items, it is crucial that regulations surrounding their sale are strictly enforced.

"Where an item is suspected of breaching the CITES regulations designed to protect our planet's most endangered flora and fauna, we will take the appropriate action to establish its origin and, when necessary, seize it as evidence.

"Anyone who wishes to trade in endangered species can find the information they need to do so lawfully on the Defra website."

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There are only 1,411 Tigers left in India

Last updated on: March 22, 2010 12:48 IST

In just 10 weeks since January, at least 13 tigers died, five each in January and March in various reserves across the country.

Last year, 60 deaths were recorded. Now, merely 3,500 big cats are left in the wild of which **1,411** are in India [[Images](#)].

Little wonder that the whole world is crying itself hoarse over the sharp drop in the population of this endangered species from the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh [[Images](#)] deciding to step in to save the big cats and Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh [[Images](#)] making a wakeup call by blaming mafia supported by politicians for its extinction.

A UN's wildlife body, Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) too in its ongoing meeting in Doha has noted that despite several years of efforts the world has failed miserably to protect tigers.

"Construction and mining mafia do not want the tigers to survive in the forest. They want the land for construction of malls and mining," Ramesh said recently of the threat faced by the big cat in the country's 37 reserves.

He expressed hope that the prime minister's initiatives to talk to the states over the action needed to save the endangered species might help besides encouraging them to expedite notification process of buffer areas in protected areas and reserves to minimise impact on wildlife.

However, even as the authorities deliberate over the reasons, tiger deaths continue unabated due to various reasons such as poaching, infighting and conflict with villagers. On March 15, a tiger died in Tarai West, Ramnagar in Uttarakhand [[Images](#)].

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During the same month, a total of four tigers died in Valmiki Tiger Reserve in Bihar, Ranthambore National Park and Wayanad in Kerala [[Images](#)].

In February, a six-year-old male tiger was found dead after being caught in a snare put up by suspected poachers in Corbett Tiger Reserve in Uttarakhand. Loss of habitat for farming and human habitation apart, ever growing huge market for tiger parts and bone in the international front has been taking a heavy toll on this threatened species.

"If we use tiger numbers as a performance indicator, then we must admit that we have failed miserably and that we are continuing to fail," says Willem Wijnstekers, secretary general, CITES at the meeting where the illegal trade in Asian big cat products was a key discussion issue.

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Sharks get hammered at UN wildlife trade meet

By Marlowe Hood (AFP) – 3 hours ago

DOHA — The UN wildlife trade body slapped down bids on Tuesday to regulate cross-border commerce for two species of sharks threatened with extinction through overfishing, sparking anger from conservationists.

Millions of scalloped hammerhead and oceanic whitetip sharks are extracted from seas each year, mainly to satisfy a burgeoning appetite for sharkfin soup, a prestige food in Chinese communities around the world.

The 175-nation Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), meeting in Doha, rejected the US-sponsored proposals but only by a narrow margin, opening the possibility that one or both could get a second hearing on Thursday when the 13-day conference ends.

Only decades ago, the two species were among the most common of the semi-coastal and open-water sharks.

But bycatch, or fish caught accidentally, and demand for fins has slashed hammerhead populations by about 80 percent globally, and by up to 90 percent in the Indian and Pacific oceans, experts say.

Many of the fish are tossed back into the water after their precious fins have been removed.

The whitetip, found in all the world's oceans, is listed by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as "critically endangered" in the northwestern Atlantic, and "vulnerable" globally.

Once the highest level of biomass in the Gulf of Mexico, the species is 99 percent depleted there today, according to marine biologist Julia Baum.

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China spoke against the hammerhead proposal in plenary session, saying that even their well-trained fisheries officials had been unable to distinguish between fins once they were cut off.

"Our experience has shown that control of these species at the borders would not be enforceable," a Chinese delegate said.

Japan led opposition to both measures, arguing that management of shark populations should be left to regional fisheries groups, not CITES.

Conservationists counter that fishing for sharks is currently unregulated.

"The problem today is not there is serious mismanagement of trade in sharks, as for tuna, but that there is no management at all," said Sue Lieberman, policy director for the Washington-based Pew Environment Group.

They also point out that sharks are especially vulnerable to overfishing because most species take years to mature and have relatively few young.

Initially, four other "look-alike" species were also to be covered in the two US proposals, to prevent accidental harvesting.

But the US withdrew two of the species -- the dusky and sandbar sharks -- whose fins resemble the scalloped hammerhead's, retaining only the smooth and great hammerhead.

The proposals called for listing on CITES' Appendix II, which requires countries to monitor and report all exports, and to demonstrate that fishing is done in a sustainable manner.

The bids was supported by the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, as well as the secretariat of CITES, which makes recommendations on all measures.

Conservation groups reacted angrily to the votes.

"We see clearly now the Japanese motivation for opposing all these marine species proposals," said Anne Schroer, an Madrid-based economist with Oceana.

"For the whales they say we are catching it traditionally. For the bluefin tuna, they say we are eating it. But for the sharks, there is nothing but pure economic interest."

In a vote on bluefin tuna last week, the CITES meeting voted down a proposal for Appendix I status, which imposes a total ban on cross-border trade.

The fight over bluefin pitted commercial interests against conservationists, and the result suggests it was a mismatched fight.

In the case of sharks, there is business on both sides of the issue: dozens of small island nations, and some bigger ones, reap serious revenue from scuba-related tourism.

Two other sharks species -- the porbeagle and spiny dogfish -- were set to come up for Appendix II listing votes later on Tuesday.

All told, a third of the world's 64 species of pelagic, or open water, sharks face extinction, according to report issued last June by the IUCN's Shark Specialist Group.

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No protection for 7 shark species

Web posted at: 3/24/2010 3:6:7
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By Huda N V

DOHA: Concerns over trade regulations restricting the livelihood of coastal nations and a burgeoning appetite for sharks have left the depleting marine predator unprotected at sea. An Appendix II listing of seven out of eight species of sharks was rejected, mostly at narrow margins, at the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), yesterday.

Porbeagle was the only species successful to be listed under Appendix II though proposals had called for similar listing for Scalloped hammerhead, Great Hammerhead, Smooth Hammerhead, Sandbar Shark, Dusky Shark, Oceanic Whitetip Shark and Spiny Dogfish.

Most of these sharks, hammerheads and whitetip are extracted from seas each year for shark-fin soup, a prestige food in Chinese communities around the world. Porbeagle shark is prized mostly by Europe for its high-valued meat and spiny dogfish shark is a key ingredient in fish and chips in Europe.

The hammerhead and Whitetip proposals were brought in by the US and Palau with support from Spain on behalf of the EU, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE and few other countries. Initially, four other "look-alike" species of Scalloped hammerhead were also to be covered in the two US proposals, to prevent accidental harvesting. But the US withdrew two of the species - the dusky and sandbar sharks - whose fins resemble the scalloped hammerhead. US also extended its 18 month period to resolve technical and administrative issues.

The proposal made a convincing case that the scalloped hammerhead is likely to become threatened with extinction unless the trade in its fins, parts and derivatives is monitored and regulated. The northwest Atlantic population of the scalloped hammerhead has declined by 89 percent over 15 years and fins of hammerheads have an average auction price of \$125 per kilo, and at least 2.7m scalloped and smooth hammerheads are taken annually for the shark fin trade. Oceanic whitetip sharks face similar threats and their numbers are down 60 to 70 percent. The whitetip, found in all the world's oceans, is listed by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as "critically endangered" in the northwestern Atlantic, and "vulnerable" globally.

However, Japan, China, Singapore, Cuba, Vietnam and Indonesia spoke against the proposals, arguing that trade restrictions is not the answer for the problem and would be difficult to apply. China spoke against the hammerhead proposal arguing that even their well-trained fisheries officials had been unable to distinguish between fins once they were cut off and cross border control of the merine species were not enforceable.

Interestingly, secret ballots for both hammerhead and whitetip proposals saw a majority-support from 75 countries. However the hammerhead fell

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short of five and whitetip of nine votes each, to get a two-third majority and was rejected.

However, EU- Porbeagle shark proposal was accepted with a majority of 86 nations supporting it against 42. The Porbeagle shark is targeted by fishermen because its large fin is worth a great deal in Asian markets for shark's fin soup. It was added to CITES Appendix II, requiring exporting countries to make sure that international trade is legal and won't harm the survival of the species.

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Qatari firm backs Mount Everest expedition team member

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

companies, has already scaled the highest peaks in three continents of South America, Africa and Europe.

Talking to *Qatar Tribune*, Howard said, "Ronnie Muhi, a friend of mine who has tried to climb Everest twice from the north side and with whom I climbed Aconcagua in South America, has invited me to join him in the attempt to climb the Everest from south."

"Even the thought of the sacrifices that my family would have to make and the huge favour my employer would be doing in allowing me to be absent from work for up to two months could not prevent me from asking my chairman Khalid al Rabban if he saw any possibility of my joining the expedition. I reckoned I had a reasonable chance, given that Rabban has been a sports lover all his life with belief in a healthy mind residing in a healthy body," Howard recalled.

He added: "As expected, Rabban not only allowed me to go on the expedition but also offered to get one of his companies, Rayyan Water, to sponsor me."

"Like many mountaineers, I have always dreamt of conquering the highest peak of the world," said Howard. "For me, climbing mountains is a spiritual experience."

The 55-year-old mountaineer with a steely heart has already undergone a thorough medical check-up for this expedition.

Nepal's mountains, legends and stories of brave Gurkhas have always fascinated me. And I am very much excited to be in the land of the Himalaya," Howard gushed. The 55-year-old mountaineer with a steely heart has already undergone a thorough medical check-up for this expedition.

"As a property owner and resident of Qatar, I shall also be taking a Qatari flag with me," he added.

Starting on Sunday, the Rayyan Expedition climber hopes to be atop the Everest in late May and get back to Qatar in the first week of June provided the Himalayan weather remains favourable for climbing.

African gorillas pushed closer to extinction

AFP
DOHA

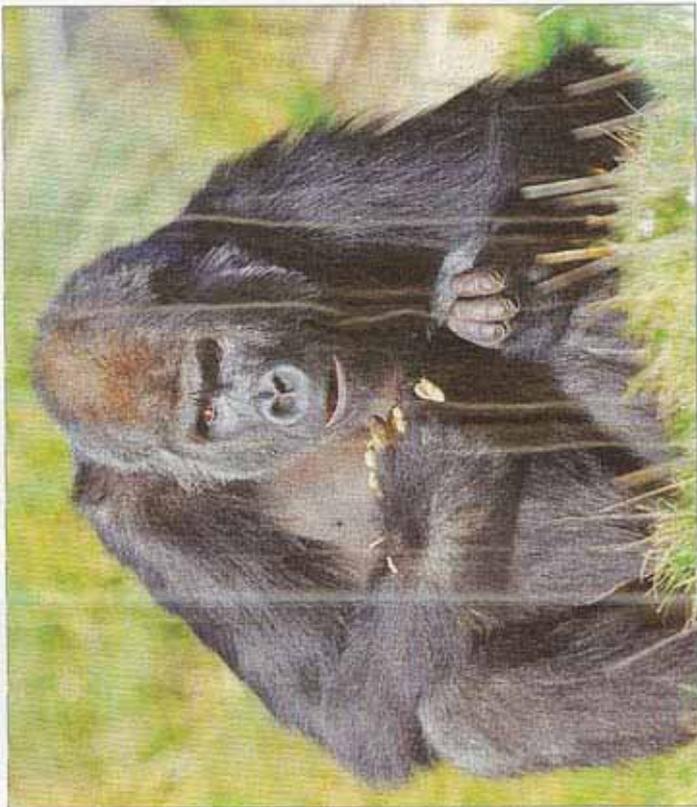
ILLEGAL logging, mining and poaching for bushmeat are pushing gorillas and other great apes in Africa's Congo basin ever closer to extinction, according to a report released on Wednesday.

Earlier estimates that the natural habitat of gorillas could shrink by 90 percent within two decades now seem overly optimistic, said the report, compiled jointly by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and international police organisation Interpol.

"With the current accelerated rate of poaching for bushmeat and habitat loss, the gorilla of the Greater Congo Basin may now disappear from most of their present range within 10 to 15 years," said UNEP's Christian Nellemann.

Outbreaks of Ebola fever have dimmed survival prospects even further, said the report, launched at a meeting of the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) in the Qatari capital Doha.

The virus has killed thousands of great apes, including gorillas, with about 90 percent of infected animals doomed to



A 12-year-old male gorilla at a zoo, in London, recently. (AFP)

die. The report, entitled *The Last Stand of the Gorilla* -

Environmental Crime and Conflict in the Congo Basin,

points an accusing finger at rebel militias ensconced in the remote reaches of eastern Democratic Republic of

militias to fund their conflict, it found.

Insecurity caused by the fighting, meanwhile, has driven hundreds of thousands of people into refugee camps, creating a demand for ape meat as food.

12.5% royalty cut to boost Qtel's profit

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

trend, Qatar Telecom's share price surged 3.27 percent to QR154.50 at the Qatar Exchange on Wednesday, the sharpest gain in over four months.

The Qatar Exchange's 20 stock benchmark index fell 0.60 percent, or 44 points, to 7,372, led by selling pressure in banking and industrial scrips.

Qatar Telecom's fourth-quarter profit fell nearly 8 percent to QR43million as compared with QR468 million recorded in the previous year.

The company had said early this month that its net profit during 2009 increased to QR2.8 billion as compared with QR2.3 billion recorded in 2008. Qtel profit rose in 2009 mainly because of the growth in the overseas markets, including Iraq, Algeria and Indonesia.

Qtel has announced distribution of QR7 per share cash dividend, which is equivalent to 70 percent of the company's paid-up share capital.

The government-run Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) controls 55 percent stake in Qtel. The reduced royalty is seen as an incentive for the company because it is facing competition as a result of the entry of Vodafone-Qatar in the market.

Stuffed tiger seized from studio

Officers have seized a stuffed adult tiger from a central London studio, which is believed to have been touted for an illegal sale.

A 47-year-old man was also arrested after the Metropolitan Police's Wildlife Crime Unit (WCU) became aware of the planned sale of the animal.

He was taken to a south London police station but later released on bail.

The stuffed animal was once used by the late fashion designer Alexander McQueen in a photo shoot.

'Strictly enforced'

Stuffed tigers are allowed to be sold in the UK but it is believed this tiger was made available for sale through the studio without sufficient documentation to verify its origin.

Without that paperwork any potential transaction would contravene Article Eight of the Convention on the International Trade of Endangered Species (CITES).

Det Sgt Ian Knox, of the WCU, said: "In order to discourage the trade in rare animals and related items, it is crucial that regulations surrounding their sale are strictly enforced.

"Where an item is suspected of breaching the CITES regulations designed to protect our planet's most endangered flora and fauna, we will take the appropriate action to establish its origin and, when necessary, seize it as evidence.

"Anyone who wishes to trade in endangered species can find the information they need to do so lawfully on the Defra website."

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PRESS RELEASE

CITES conference ends without new sharks in its net

Doha, 25 March 2010 –An intense two-week meeting of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) closed here today without agreeing on new trade measures to protect marine species. Over 150 Governments voting at the meeting adopted, however, decisions to strengthen wildlife management for several reptiles, combat illegal trafficking in tigers and rhinos and update the trade rules for a wide range of plant and animal species.

The Doha conference is an important step in the long journey for the conservation of commercial marine species. The quality of the debate and the simple majority reached by three sharks and the red and pink coral proposals sends a strong signal to the international community on the urgent need to stop overexploitation. The [results](#) do not reflect well the real impact of this meeting, which will be only seen and understood when other international regimes discuss the fate of bluefin tuna and sharks in the coming months," said Secretary-General Willem Wijnstekers of CITES, whose secretariat is administered by the UN Environment Programme.

CITES will be closely watching the progress made on the adoption of conservation measures to protect marine species in other fora. To say that the Conference was a disaster is simply an exaggeration. I am convinced that governments, NGOs and businesses have learnt a good lesson: the solutions to conserve the earth's rich heritage of biological diversity cannot be incompatible with the sustainable development of local communities and national economies," he said.

Four proposals to include sharks in CITES Appendix II were rejected. The scalloped hammerhead, Oceanic whitetip, porbeagle and spiny dogfish - four fish species of great commercial value - were not added to CITES and can therefore continue to be traded without CITES permits.

In recent years CITES has started to list commercially valuable fish species such as sturgeon, seahorses, and the basking and whale sharks. The rejection of more listings this week reflects a transitional process to adjust existing regimes managing depleted fishery stocks towards something more robust and coherent," said Mr. Wijnstekers.

CITES trade controls would enter into force in 90 days for The holywood (*Bulnesia sarmientoi*), Brazilian rosewood (*Aniba rosaeodora*), several plants from Madagascar, some lizards and frogs from Central America, a salamander from Iran and other animals and plants.

Last week the polar bear proposal was rejected by a majority of Governments, led by Canada. They recognized insufficient scientific evidence to support an Appendix I listing and the role of polar bears in the culture and economy of indigenous people living in the harsh conditions of the Arctic sea.

The African elephant was the subject of extensive debate. Requests by Tanzania and Zambia for downlisting their elephants populations to the Appendix II were also rejected. A Kenyan proposal for a 20-year moratorium was withdrawn.

The Mexican population of *Crocodylus moreletti* was transferred from Appendix I to Appendix II with a zero quota for wild specimens. The Egyptian population of the Nile crocodile was similarly downlisted.

Decisions that will promote the practical implementation of the Convention were taken on synergies with other Biodiversity-related Conventions, livelihoods of the rural poor, effective wildlife trade policies and a 6% increase in the core budget.

The 15th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention was held from 13 - 25 March. It was attended by some 1,200 participants from 150 governments and numerous observer organizations. COP16 will be held in 2013 in Thailand.

Note to journalists: All the results on the 42 proposals can be seen [here](#). For more information, contact Juan Carlos Vasquez at +974-4175621 or +974-5692804 (cell), or juan.vasquez@cites.org

High-value marine species left in lurch



A hammerhead shark in a tank at the Georgia Aquarium, in Atlanta. (AP)

RAJESH MISHRA
DOHA

REPRESENTATIVES of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) as well as majority of participants at the 15th Conference of Parties (CoP) were disappointed with the outcome of the summit on Thursday.

The disappointment was, however, not without a reason as majority of the proposals, which included bringing the Atlantic bluefin tuna in Appendix 1 or

listing porbeagle sharks, hammerhead sharks and oceanic whitetips in Appendix II were rejected. The decision to adopt the proposal to list the porbeagle shark and hammerhead shark in Appendix II taken earlier were overturned on Thursday at the final plenary session.

The summit also saw questions being raised about CITES being qualified enough to deal with the issues of conservation of marine species and continuance of secret voting pattern.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15 ►►

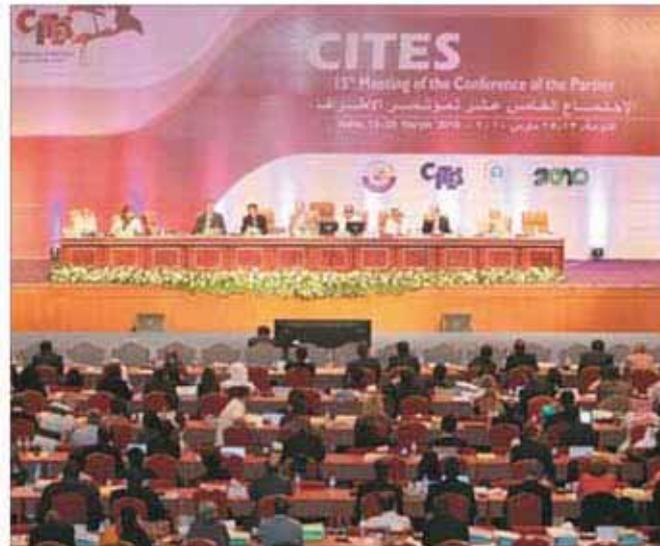
High-value marine species left in lurch

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

At the concluding session of the CoP, a representative of the Japanese delegation said, "The listing of Atlantic bluefin tuna on CITES appendices would be damaging for sustainable use of the fishery resources. Therefore, the population of Atlantic bluefin tuna should be conserved and managed by the International Commission for Conservation for Atlantic Tuna (ICCAT)."

He added, "The observation, however, does not mean that CITES parties will sit pretty waiting for ICCAT to implement their conservation measures. Japan and other like-minded parties are deeply concerned over the recent decline in the stocks of Atlantic bluefin tuna and cannot afford to remain complacent. We need to intensify conservation efforts under the ICCAT."

According to a press release circulated by an agency, the normal price of bluefin tuna was \$ 30 per kilogramme and not \$100,000 and \$200,000 as being propagated. The release added, "The fact of the matter is that only one fish is



The final session of the 15th Conference of the Parties of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, in Doha, on Thursday. (JALAL PATHIYDOR)

sold at such a price every year. The first fish of the year goes at a price 100-200 times the normal price of the fish. The first fish of the decade and century go at even higher price."

Later addressing a press conference, the Chair of the Conference Plenary and representative of the Ministry of Environment of Qatar Ghanem Abdullah Mohammed said though there

were differences of opinions on conservation methods for different species of flora and fauna among countries, regional bodies and CITES, there was unanimity among all over the conservation of endangered species.

Meanwhile, the outgoing Secretary-General of CITES William Wijnstekars said that of the 13 CITES conferences he had attended this was the

most 'disappointing' in terms of results as most of the key proposals were rejected.

The Chair of Committee 1 John Donaldson said that the Doha summit was relevant as two major issues came up for discussion, a mistrust of CITES appendices and climate change as a threat to conservation.

The Chair of Committee II Wilbur Dovey also expressed his disappointment at the overall outcome of the 14-day CoP meet but pointed out that significant breakthrough was made in terms of CITES budget and conservation of tigers and rhinos.

Despite many failures there were some notable successes at Doha summit, which included, ban on international trade of Kaiser's newt, regulation of international pet trade of tree frogs and Madagascan plants. In addition positive steps were also made towards elephant conservation, with no further sales of ivory agreed to by the parties at the meeting and Tanzania and Zambia's elephant populations remaining on Appendix 1.

Cites cover 'doesn't prevent species from being traded'

By **Nolmot Olayiwola**
Staff Reporter

The belief that the listing of any species on the appendices of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (Cites) is the end of trade in those species 'is misleading and not true', Cites outgoing secretary general Willem Wijnstekers clarified yesterday.

He was addressing mediapersons a few hours before the official closing of the two-week-long 15th conference of parties to Cites.

Wijnstekers said Cites has the means and instruments as well as tools to protect marine species and the rest adding that it would be a mistake if those tools were left unused.

"Selling species listed on Cites appendices is misleading as there is no argument for people to sell them even if they are believed to be sustainable," he stressed.

The official argued that proposals on major marine species failed because some fishing countries believed that the regional fisheries management

organisation should be responsible for management and trade in those species and not Cites.

"These countries are also greatly interested in catching these species, especially sharks and tuna, and trade in them more than dealing with Cites, which requires them to obtain a piece of paper for their trading," he said.

However, he said the positive effect of having a species covered in Cites was to make trade an incentive as well as an assurance that what was being sold to people were not caught or killed illegally.

"Another thing about tunas was that the EU came up with a proposal that nobody really understood arguing that ban on the Atlantic bluefin tuna should not come into force until May 2011. Even if we had followed this proposal it would not have happened in the middle of 2012 as we wouldn't have gotten sufficient votes and it would have been probably 2013 instead," he explained.

Wijnstekers argued that the position of the African countries also trampled the proposals.

"African countries opposed the proposal because they believed it would stop internation-



"Selling species listed on Cites appendices is misleading as there is no argument for people to sell them even if they are believed to be sustainable"

al trade and they claimed that the EU that gets the biggest market will continue to trade in the tunas they catch, while African countries can't sell beyond their shores," he said.

Reacting to non-governmental organisations' accusations that Cites has failed in its regulatory role by watching parties reject most of the proposal on marine species, he said: "Cites has done what it is supposed to do by giving its opinions on

each and every proposal that was discussed but we don't dictate unfortunately, giving the number and diversity of parties."

He added that Cites will soon have around 180 parties, meaning more differences in interests.

"Unfortunately, it is the convention that decides how things go and only through voting," he maintained.

He used the opportunity to clear ground on misunderstanding regarding the 2007 decision for a nine-year moratorium placed on some African elephant range states.

"Kenya kept claiming that the decision affects all African elephant range state. But it was actually applicable to only those four countries that already have the species listed on appendix II, which are Botswana, South Africa, Zimbabwe and Libya. And so, Zambia and Tanzania as well as others have the right to submit fresh proposals to the CoP," he clarified.

The secretary general highlighted issues discussed within the two-week triennial conference mentioning the really simple proposals to most cumbersome such as those affecting look alike species.

A 'disaster' for conservation

By **Bonnie James**
Deputy News Editor

Conservation organisations have come down heavily on the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (Cites) as it has been 'disappointing in addressing the world's rapidly disappearing biodiversity.'

The 15th Conference of the Parties of the Cites, attended by delegates from the 175 member states, concluded in Doha yesterday, after meeting for 13 days under the patronage of HH the Heir Apparent Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani.

"Short-term profits rather than long-term conservation has once again been the theme of this meeting," the Cites delegation head of the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) Azzedine Downes said.

"The biggest losers include polar bears, Atlantic bluefin tuna and all the sharks - with Parties refusing to acknowledge the science showing drastic declines in populations," he stated.

Greenpeace International Oceans campaigner Oliver Knowles charged that 'too many governments have voted to protect profits not endangered species,' and branded the conference 'a disaster for conservation.'

"The backsliding on porbeagle protection by the Cites parties is deeply regrettable as are their previous decisions to reject trade safeguards for similarly threatened hammerheads, spiny dogfish and oceanic whitetip sharks," said Heike Zidowitz, president of Europe's leading association of shark scientists and the head of the Shark Alliance delegation to the conference.

The official was of the view that despite the setbacks, the Cites conference debates have

served to highlight the urgent plight of sharks and increase recognition of the role that Cites can play in their conservation.

"This is truly catastrophic for sharks," IFAW's programme director Peter Peuschel said while pointing out that close to 100mn sharks are caught every year and some shark species may have declined by as much as 80% in the past decade.

The high demand for shark fins is a major threat to hammerhead and oceanic whitetip sharks while porbeagles and spiny dogfish are sought primarily to satisfy European demand for their meat.

"We cannot continue to empty our oceans without consequence," Pew Environment Group's international policy director Susan Lieberman observed while asserting that the effort to protect the larger iconic species is an imperative now more than ever.

"In the past, Cites was a treaty that restricted trade in species for the sake of conservation; at this meeting, governments decided for marine species to restrict conservation for the sake of trade," she lamented.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature's delegation head Sue Mainka said it is time for joint action and for regulatory bodies to work together to ensure the continued survival of species threatened by wildlife trade.

The decisions taken at the conference should stimulate further evolution of Cites including development of tools and mechanisms needed to support efforts to achieve sustainable management of natural resources, she suggested.

The number of commercially important species on Cites conference agendas has been steadily increasing and there is no indication that this trend will change.



Porbeagle shark caught in the net as Cites meet ends

Protection for some species continues; Cites chief 'disappointed'; Qatar thanks participants

By Peter Townson
Staff Reporter

The 15th Conference of the Parties (COP15) to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species concluded yesterday, with delegations voting to overturn the previous decision to add the porbeagle shark to Appendix II during the plenary session.

Apart from this withdrawal there were no other major changes to the outcomes of the votes in previous sessions.

This year's conference has been described as a failure by many observers, who have referred to decisions failing to protect a large selection of marine species as the overriding theme of the event, which

seems to have taken the economic and political interests of delegations more seriously than conservation issues and science presented by the NGOs in attendance.

And a sense of underachievement was another theme at the closing conference, as secretary-general Willem Wijnstekers described himself as disappointed for the first time in 13 COP meetings.

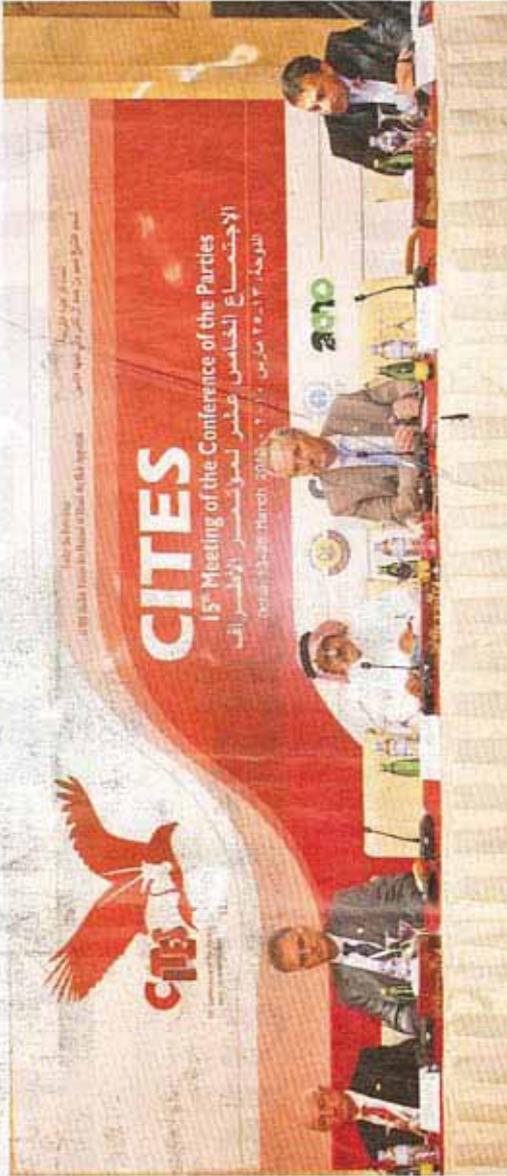
"I don't really know what to make of the results," he said.

"The minute money gets involved, everything becomes different," he claimed, "countries who would normally vote for conservation change when money is involved."

Director of Wildlife Conservation at the Ministry of Environment, Qatar, Ghanem Abdulla Mohamed, thanked the participating delegations for their attendance and input at the conference.

He assured members of the media that the only consideration being taken into account by all delegations was the cause of conservation and sustainability, and that disagreements over how this should be managed do not indicate otherwise.

Chairman of committee I, John Donaldson, said he would be taking three things away from the conference, the challenge of



(Left to right) Chairman of committee I, John Donaldson; chairman of committee II, Wilbur Dovey; host chair, Ghanem Abdulla Mohamed, and secretary general, Willem Wijnstekers, at the closing session of the conference yesterday.

introducing the threat of climate change to Cites and considerations of trade; the difficulty of dispelling widespread mistrust about Cites Appendix II and thirdly, his disappointment at the lack of engagement on many issues, with delegations representing entrenched views and failing to contribute to a meaningful and fresh debate.

Chairman of committee II, Wilbur Dovey, also said that he had been left feeling disappointed overall by the lack of proposals adopted by the conference, but argued that a number of positive steps had been taken in some areas and that the results regarding the budget had been particularly well managed.

"We have managed to persuade a lot of people at this conference," he said, adding: "And we are now looking seriously at the responsibility we have for acting in the future."

The Spanish representative argued that disappointing results mean that the country will continue to fight for the causes they represented at the conference, but stated that this event

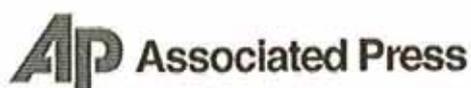
has allowed positive steps to be taken.

And the US representative quoted their head of delegation, assistant secretary for interior for wildlife, fish and parks, Tom Strickland, who pledged to "double the US efforts," arguing that the results of the votes are only a "temporary measure," implying that measures to protect these species may change in the future.

Members of various delegations also addressed the media, with the Japanese representative claiming that his country had "mixed feelings" about the re-

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March 25, 2010

Japan scores victories at UN wildlife meeting

Delegates and activists say Japan came out the big winner at a U.N. wildlife conservation meeting, killing off almost all efforts to protect marine species, including tuna and sharks.

The key to their success was an aggressive and relentless lobbying campaign, which started before the 175-nation Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, or CITES, and carried through to the meeting's end Thursday.

The Japanese led the fight to defeat a ban on Atlantic bluefin tuna. They also joined other Asian nations, including China, in preventing several shark species used in the fin trade from gaining protection.

For some activists, the Japanese tactics were proof that CITES has been transformed from a clubby, conservation body to one driven by big money, trade and economics.

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Rejected tuna embargo, the last day meeting to approve the Washington Convention

March 25, 2010 16:22

[Co Doha Conference of the Parties of CITES is the last day of 25, began the final plenary discussion. Atlantic to the Mediterranean bluefin tuna ban on international trade in the "Annex 1" is expected to be formally approved on rejection of a proposal to ask.

Bluefin tuna, the embargo as required by the Washington Treaty, proposed by Monaco. Japan is the largest consuming country, the country lobbied against the treaty to take place in Washington strongly opposed the regulation of commercial fish species. First day of the 18 committee vote, opposition from developing countries around the fishing industry and other Asian countries and China, was rejected by a wide margin.

This meeting is the first rejection of the proposal and seek permission for the export of African elephant ivory and coral jewelry proposed regulations that Japan is one country of origin is a major decision of the committee report.

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Participants laud key role played by event

Publish Date: Thursday, 25 March, 2010, at 12:52 PM Doha Time

By Nolmot Olayiwola

Representatives of international non-government organisations attending the 15th conference of parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (Cites) yesterday shared the success stories of the conference, perspectives on future challenges and emerging opportunities about issues discussed at the meet.

The speakers during a panel discussion organised by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) consisted IUCN delegation head Sue Mainka, Traffic executive director Steven Broad, IUCN/SSS African Rhinoceros Specialist Group member Dr Richard Emslie, IUCN/SSS African Elephant Specialist Group's Dr Holly Dublin and IUCN/SSS Turtles and Tortoise Specialist Group's Peter Paul van Dijk.

All the officials shared their views about various negotiations ahead of the closing of the meeting today.

"We were able to produce a report on rhino conservation and also reviewed the resolution to include registering information from implicated states in poaching and illegal killing of rhinos such as Vietnam," Dr Emslie explained. He added that the group also took into account the suggestions made by the CITES secretariat to keep an eye on killing of rhinos in South Africa and Zimbabwe as well as the illegal export of rhino horns and parts to Vietnam, China and other places.

The official mentioned that the issue of low prosecution rate of illegal poachers caught in Zimbabwe was being addressed.

Dr Dublin observed that delegates will definitely work away from the meeting to deal with a number of issues, especially those from the 37 African elephant range states.

"Acrimony on the issue of African elephants and ivory was compounded by differences among range states. They need to identify their individual needs and challenges," she explained.

On issue of turtles and tortoise, Paul van Dijk acknowledged the role played by Cites in the 90s to save the species from over-exploitation for consumption in a number of countries in Asia and Africa as well as pet trade in the US.

Broad said putting in place a compliance mechanism was very important to ensure that the trade rules, especially in fisheries, are adhered to in order to achieve sustainability of the species. "We want to ensure that fishing activities are done sustainably," he said.

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Japan big winner at UN conservation meeting

By MICHAEL CASEY (AP) – 6 hours ago

DOHA, Qatar — The Japanese seemed to be everywhere at the U.N. wildlife trade meeting.

Dozens of government officials worked the floor the past two weeks ahead of key votes, offering guidance to confused but supportive delegates. They held a reception for select representatives at their embassy in Qatar, offering up Atlantic bluefin tuna sushi — a typical food served at Japanese formal occasions — the night before the vote on the export ban of the overfished species.

Their aggressive and relentless lobbying campaign appeared to pay dividends.

Japan came out the big winner at the 175-nation Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, or CITES, which wraps up Thursday, successfully defeating the proposed bluefin ban, voting down efforts to regulate the coral trade and joining other Asian nations to prevent several shark species used in the fin trade from gaining protection.

For some activists, the Japanese tactics were proof that CITES has been transformed from a clubby, conservation body to one driven by big money, trade and economics. The meeting is becoming more like U.N. climate change meetings, they said, where politics at times trumps science and a deals are struck by world leaders behind closed doors.

"Japan clearly mobilized massive efforts to keep fisheries out of CITES," said Mark W. Roberts, senior counsel and policy adviser for the watchdog group Environmental Investigation Agency.

It's not that the Japanese were the only ones to stake out a position, but they were more organized and persistent, delegates said, than the divided European Union and the United States, which didn't announce its position on the tuna ban until late in the game.

Japan launched its global campaign months ago, repeatedly meeting with governments big and small. And when it came to the conference in Qatar, they sent a 30-strong delegation that was stacked with fisheries people who have years of experience working the hallways at CITES.

The Japanese insist they were just one of many delegations searching for votes. But they were also under intense pressure at home to defeat the proposed ban on Atlantic bluefin tuna, given it could devastate the country's fisheries industry since it imports 80 percent of the fish.

Hisashi Endo, the director of the Ecosystem and Conservation Office in the Fisheries Agency of Japan, said delegates stuck to the facts. They argued that regional fisheries bodies were better suited to regulate marine species and that the CITES ban was unfair. They also argued that the ban proposed by Monaco would penalize the Japanese sushi industry, while allowing American and European fisheries to keep catching Atlantic bluefin.

"We are not pressuring anyone," Endo said. "We are talking to many countries and expressing our opinion and seeking their understanding."

But some delegates accused Japan of using tactics that went beyond diplomacy and violated the spirit of CITES.

Kenya, which fought the Japanese over tuna and a proposed sale of Zambian and Tanzanian ivory stocks, accused Tokyo of pressuring delegates to support its positions and paying fisheries officials from unnamed African countries to attend the conference — something the Japanese repeatedly denied.

"The way we have seen this conference operate, there is a lot of influence that is quite unnecessary," said Patrick Omondi, a member of Kenya's delegation. "That is not very good for species that are affected by trade."

Javier Rosero, a member of the Ecuadorean delegation that supported most of the marine listings, acknowledged the Japanese played hardball, but argued the United States and others could learn a thing or two from them.

AP

Photo



FILE - I photo, a popular Tsukiji Tokyo. govern floor the of key v trade m Thursd Doha, C top rear bluefin Numbe Guttenf



Map



He said the Americans were often too slow to react and were not forceful enough when they did. And in meetings with Ecuadorean officials, Rosero said the Americans didn't bring anything to offer to the table.

"I have been talking to Japan and they say, 'What do you need? What kind of project are you able to do?'" Rosero said. "The Japanese come to make business and the States come to explain."

Others, however, dismissed talk of Japan's influence as overstated. The Egyptians said it was nonsense, as did the Zambians. Even the Libyans, who supported Japan on the coral and tuna proposals, denied there was any quid pro quo.

"We were with Japan on tuna but not the sharks," said Hussin Ali Zarough, who was among the most vocal opponents of the tuna ban and called for the crucial vote. "That shows Libyan independence."

Masanori Miyahara, chief counselor of the Fisheries Agency of Japan, acknowledged the government has funds that were aimed at helping developing countries build their fishing capacity. He said the funds were used by nations to attend CITES and other fisheries conferences — though he did not say how much or which countries benefited from the funds.

"Participation is very important for them to learn what is going on internationally," Miyahara said. "They use the money for tuna regional fisheries management meeting and other meetings. CITES is one of them."

But he denied his government "was buying votes" with such funding or its offers of bluefin tuna at its reception.

"We wanted to show what it is," Miyahara said of the tuna sushi served at the reception. "You can't buy the vote by just serving bluefin tuna. That's a silly idea."

Roberts said Japan's tactics are reminiscent of the way it operates at the International Whaling Commission, where heavy lobbying and allegations of vote-buying are common. He said activists brought non-whaling governments into the body to win a moratorium on commercial whaling and Japan followed suit, leading to political gridlock with little room for scientific debate.

"That is what happened here," he said. "The science on the bluefin tuna — if there was no economic factor — would have been a slam dunk. But given that there is millions, if not billions of dollars at stake, it became a political decision."

On the Net:

- CITES: <http://www.cites.org/>

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DNA key tool against illegal wildlife trade

DOHA: DNA analysis has become a potent weapon against the multi-billion-dollar traffic in wild animals and by-products, from ivory to tiger-bone beverage to turtles cooked alive in top Asian restaurants, experts said.

The black market in endangered fauna and flora is driven by a global demand for exotic pets, precious jewellery, forbidden foods and potions with alleged curative and virility-boosting powers, the experts told a UN conference.

In the last decade, organised criminal networks drawn by a low-risk, high-profit business — especially in Asia, where much of the trade is centered — have made things worse.

But new gene-based investigative methods are helping resource-starved wildlife police even the playing field, at least a bit. They have led to arrests, and can put the lie to claims by some vendors that the illicit wildlife they openly peddle is farm-raised or from non-endangered species.

"There is a lot of laundering of animals taken from the wild through captive breeding facilities," said John Sellar, the top enforcement official at the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).

Meeting in Doha during the past 13 days, CITES is the only convention with the power to ban or restrict cross-border commerce in animals, plants and their derivatives.

Until recently, it was often impossible to determine whether an ivory carving purchased in, say, Bangkok was made from legally from the tusk of a domesticated Asian elephant or illegally from its African cousin.

But today a simple DNA test costing a couple of hundred dollars can spot the contraband.

In November, it uncovered a major cache of African ivory in Thailand and led to the arrest of two men.

The evidence for that and other busts was processed at a forensics lab in Ashland, Oregon run by the US government and frequently used for CITES-related cases.



Delegates representing EU, US, Libya, Qatar, Spain and Japan addressing a press conference on the concluding day of the CITES conference at Doha Sheraton yesterday. (SALIM MATRAMKOT)

"It is the only one in the world dedicated to serving wildlife crime," explained Benito Perez, chief law enforcement officer for the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

The same methods were applied in a recent case involving sea turtles, he said.

"We bought products that we suspected were made of protected sea turtle skin, and all we had to do is determine what species it came from," he said.

But matching requires a reference library of genetic information, which only exists today for a handful of species.

"We have a large database of DNA profiles for elephants, tigers and sturgeon," the source of caviar, said Sellar.

But for hundreds of other species the database-building groundwork has yet to be done.

In the case of African elephants, which spurred acrimonious debate in Doha and at every CITES meeting in the three decades, DNA fingerprinting has already

moved to the next level.

A nugget of ivory can tell University of Washington professor Steve Wasser not only which species of elephant it came from but where in Africa the animal once roamed.

"To track elephants genetically, you have to develop a genetic map across the entire continent," Wasser said in an interview.

The least invasive way to do so was by collect dung samples, a project that took nearly a decade.

But two problems remained: genetic variation linked to region was limited, and the standard method for extracting DNA heat damaged its molecular structure.

Wasser looked at so-called "junk DNA," the 99 percent of genetic material that is not genes. Because these regions are more subject to mutation, he reasoned correctly, minor differences within herds were likely to show up.

Using a liquid nitrogen as a medium, he also found a way

to crush the ivory without heating it.

The method revealed recent multi-tonne seizures of ivory in Asia came in significant measure from Tanzania and Zambia.

The findings helped sink proposals in Doha by both countries to carry out one-time sales of ivory stocks, bids based in part on the contention their populations were well managed.

They also showed poaching was concentrated geographically, suggesting the involvement of highly-organised crime networks able to execute large-scale raids.

Still, it may be years before DNA testing becomes routine, experts say.

"DNA analysis has major potential, but has not yet had a significant impact — it is difficult to use as a tool remains pretty costly," said Holly Dublin, head of the Elephants Specialist Group of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature.

AGENCIES

CITES vows to redouble efforts

Continued from page 1

"This is a significant setback for these marine species but we view it as only a temporary setback. We will redouble our efforts with other countries around the world to fight for the protection of marine species imperiled by international trade," said Thomas L Strickland, Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, US Department of the Interior and the head of US CITES Delegation.

Japanese delegation said that the absence of listing doesn't mean that CITES parties can wait for other fishery organisation to implement their conservation measures. "We are concerned by

the recent stock decline of the tuna, and cannot afford to remain complacent, and hence need to initiate immediate action for intensified efforts to support the species. The parties should ensure that conservation measures are strengthened and implemented in the coming years."

However, Doha did not become another Copenhagen as governments made progress towards implementing better protection for rhinos, tigers, some lesser plants, reptile and insect species. Requests by Tanzania and Zambia to relax trade restrictions on their elephant populations were both voted down, and approved conservation plans to

protect Asian big cats as well as rhinos at the meeting.

Also, the polar bear proposal has introduced climate change into CITES agenda for the first time. A number of budget proposals were agreed upon including more financial resources for tackling enforcement and the recently-formed International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICCC), made up of the CITES Secretariat, INTERPOL, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the World Bank and the World Customs Organisation, the Consortium has committed to engage on a number of joint activities to bring wildlife criminals to justice. THE PENINSULA

Economy wins the argument at Doha

BY HUDA NV

DOHA: The 15th Conference of Parties (CoP15) to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) that concluded here yesterday rang the death toll for many species as economy overshadowed ecology. As the summit came to a close, parties withdrew protection for the Porbeagle Sharks—the only marine species that was granted protection during the 13-day event — disappointing environmentalists.

The 175-nation meet saw many of the species protection proposals being rejected as countries argued on lines of livelihood, business and economy. Further, all the marine species were voted down saying regional fisheries groups — not CITES — should manage local populations.

"As soon as big money gets involved, the 's' of science is crossed out by two vertical stripes (Science—spelt with a dollar sign). There is an enormous economic interest in catching and trading these species, and a CITES piece

of paper is really a nuisance for traders," said Willem Wijnstekers, Secretary General, CITES told the media.

Prominent lobbying for votes was evident in the conference with Kenyan delegation asking the authorities to put an end to it.

"We have seen this conference operate in a way that there is lot of influence of parties that is quite unnecessary. This happens before and after the conference and is not good for species that are affected by trade. We had tried our best to brush off the pressures coming from politicians," a Kenyan delegate said.

Japan and China led by the supporting countries led the two-weeks of negotiations to repeated rejection of proposals to enhance protection for marine species, such as the Atlantic Bluefin tuna, 31 species of red and pink coral and several shark species.

Over-fishing and the demand of international trade are driving these species to the brink of extinction. **THE PENINSULA**

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Protecting sharks (or not) by a margin of error

Natasha Loder

- Mar 24th 2010, 16:52 by NL | DOHA

I'm at a meeting for the [Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species](http://www.cites.org/) (<http://www.cites.org/>), where government delegates are voting on whether to protect endangered species from excessive international trade. These happen every two or three years. In the good old days, delegates' votes were collected on little pieces of paper and counted. It was time-consuming, as delegates might be called upon to vote on many issues a day for a two-week meeting. Technology, thankfully, has intervened, in the form of a nifty electronic voting system. Each member country inserts its voting card into the machine and presses "2" for yes, "3" for no and "4" to abstain. In thirty seconds the job is done.

What could be simpler?

A lot, it seems. This year, about 137 countries are represented. Yesterday, during a vote on protection for a shark called the porbeagle (*Lamna nasus*) the electronic voting system seized up, and two nations complained the voting machine had just "flashed red". So the chair ordered the technicians to reset the system. Before a new vote on the porbeagle, a test was ordered. "Could everyone please vote 'Yes' now?" he said. After thirty seconds the chair said he had received votes from everyone in the room, and that the system was working. He then observed dryly that of the 137 nations that had been supposed to vote 'Yes', seven had voted 'No' and two had voted to abstain.

The technology may work perfectly. Humans, it appears, do not. But the imperfect "Yes" vote gave us some idea of the error level with the voting system at these meetings. When a species such as the hammerhead shark (*Sphyrna lewini*) fails to by a handful of votes to reach protection from trade, might this be down to fumble fingers?

Today another test was conducted and this time the delegates did a little better. They were asked to answer a question. "Is Doha the capital of Qatar?" asked the chair. All nations except Cameroon, Croatia and China

managed to vote "Yes". One voted "No", and two abstained. The slightly frustrated chair decided a third test was necessary, and everyone was just ordered to vote "Yes". This time Nigeria and Azerbaijan managed to abstain. After some kerfuffle a technician confirmed that both countries had simply pressed the wrong button.

The lesson from all this is that electronic voting systems can only be as accurate as the humans that operate them. Often, at two-week international conferences, these humans are bored, full or hung over. That means it is important to have a good idea of the voting error, which may need to be tested on several occasions . If one cannot design an idiot-proof system, then counting the number of idiots using the system is surely the next best thing.

(The photograph of a rather unprotected porbeagle is from [pfig](http://www.flickr.com/photos/pfig/378602623/) (<http://www.flickr.com/photos/pfig/378602623/>) on Flickr.)

(<http://www.economist.com/comment/503395#comment-503395>)(<http://www.economist.com/comment/503675#comment-503675>)

Japan's statement on the conservation of Atlantic Bluefin Tuna

Since it was proposed by Principality of Monaco to list Atlantic Bluefin Tuna in Appendix I last July, Japan has expressed our opposition to the proposal and sought understanding by all parties to our position, stressing that the stock population of Atlantic Bluefin Tuna should be conserved and managed by ICCAT, International Commission for Conservation of Atlantic Tuna, and that the listing on the CITES Appendices would be damaging on the sustainable use of the fishery resources.

Throughout the discussion at this Conference of Parties, our delegation has seen many countries increasingly share the concern with us, which greatly encouraged us and confirmed our belief. On behalf of the Government of Japan, our delegation would like to convey our sincere appreciation to those delegations who supported our views.

This observation of ours, however, does not mean that CITES parties can just wait for the ICCAT to implement their conservation measures. Japan and other parties, who are so much concerned about the recent stock decline of Atlantic Bluefin Tuna, cannot afford to remain complacent, but need to initiate immediate actions for intensified efforts under the ICCAT. We cannot overemphasize that the recovery of depleted fishery resources must be ensured and would lead to benefit to us who are actually using and relying on such resources.

Taking this opportunity in the plenary session, Japan calls upon parties concerned to enhance our cooperation to ensure ICCAT measures will be further strengthened and surely implemented in the coming years. In ending the discussion on Atlantic Bluefin Tuna at this Conference of Parties of CITES, we reiterate that Japan is ready to take leadership in the global efforts to conserve this fishery resource and to cooperate with any other parties who wish to do so.



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