

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



Sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties
Bangkok (Thailand), 3-14 March 2013

GUIDE FOR PARTICIPANTS

This document has been prepared by the Secretariat on the basis of the *Guide for participants* produced for the 12th, 13th, 14th and 15th meetings of the Conference of the Parties to CITES. It is based on the Rules of Procedure of the Conference of the Parties adopted by the Parties at CoP14 (The Hague, June 2007) and the present document is not intended as an official interpretation of them. The amendments to the Rules of Procedure proposed in documents CoP16 Doc. 4.2 and Doc. 4.3 are referred to in this document, but they are subject to approval by the Conference of the Parties.

The aim of this *Guide for participants* is to give participants a clearer idea of how a meeting of the Conference of the Parties should proceed. It is also meant to inform participants who are not familiar with CITES meetings of what exactly is expected of them.

1 – Introduction

Meetings of the Conference of the Parties to CITES are always busy gatherings and include discussions of a large number of complex and sensitive issues. Participants in the meetings, including delegates of Parties and observers, may have different views about the conservation of endangered species and, understandably, want to express their ideas as strongly as possible.

Some participants may not have attended large international gatherings before. Time for discussion on individual topics is limited. It is therefore very important that everyone taking part in meetings of the Conference of the Parties work together to make sure that the issues are examined in a thorough and objective way.

The Rules of Procedure are intended to provide a way of ensuring that debates are conducted in an orderly and constructive way. They give the Presiding Officer powers to direct discussion and control the proceedings. The Presiding Officer may, for example, on reasonable grounds, limit the number of speakers on a particular issue, set time limits for individual speakers or remind speakers to stick to the subject in order to secure expeditious and efficient treatment of the issues at hand.

2 – Functional bodies

Conference of the Parties

The Conference of the Parties, also known as 'the Conference', is the combined body of the Parties to CITES and is convened every two to three years. A meeting of the Conference is often referred to as a 'CoP'.

Bureau

The Bureau comprises the Chair, the Alternate Chair and the Vice-Chairs of the Conference, the Chairs of Committees I and II, the Chair of the Credentials Committee, the Chair and the other members of the Standing Committee, and the Secretariat. The Bureau, to be presided over by the Chair of the Conference, has the duty to ensure effective enforcement of the Rules of Procedure and forwarding of the business of the meeting. To ensure the effective completion of business, the Bureau may take steps to alter the timetable or structure of the meeting and, as a last resort, to limit the time for debates (Rule 15.1 of the Rules of Procedure).

The Bureau also has a task assigned to arbitrate conflicts that occur during the business outside meeting rooms. It will receive complaints from participants who consider themselves to have been subject to abuse by others (Rule 29). If a case is of the utmost gravity, the Bureau may recommend to the Conference withdrawal of the right of admission of an organization or the making of a formal complaint to a Party.

Plenary

The plenary sessions are the decision-making sessions of the Conference of the Parties.

Committee I

This Committee discusses and makes recommendations concerning proposals to amend the Appendices, quotas and ranching operations, and other scientific issues.

Committee II

This Committee II discusses and makes recommendations concerning the implementation and operation of the Convention.

The recommendations of Committees I and II, some of which may be in draft resolutions or decisions are forwarded to the plenary session for final approval.

Secretariat

The Secretariat services the meetings of the Conference of the Parties and serves as its Secretariat (Articles XI and XII of the Convention).

3 – A guide to the Rules of Procedure

This guide to the Rules of Procedure is designed to help delegates understand the Rules of Procedure that govern meetings of the Conference of the Parties to CITES. The Rules of Procedure (as proposed in document CoP16 Doc. 4.1) are the primary source of rules. Where the Rules of Procedure do not answer a question completely, this guide relies on *Robert's Rules of Order*¹.

The Rules of Procedure adopted at a meeting apply at the following meetings until they are amended (Rule 30).

Purpose of the Rules of Procedure

The purpose of the Rules of Procedure is to define the structure for the conduct of meetings of the Conference of the Parties, and the process for making decisions. While the Rules do not promote any particular outcome, they can often impact on the outcome of specific votes. For example, the number of votes needed to adopt a resolution or a species proposal can make approval relatively easier or more difficult. An effective set of rules provides for a balance between full and open discussion of all issues and efficient decision-making. Some concern for efficiency (limited time for discussion of an issue) is warranted because the CoP is limited to a two-week period.

Adoption of amendments to the Rules of Procedure

While some rules that govern the conduct of the CoP are found within the text of the Convention, the full set of rules is adopted by the Conference as one of the first orders of business at the start of the meeting (bearing in mind that the Rules last adopted apply until they are amended). This gives rise to one of the first difficulties – who is authorized to vote upon the adoption of amendments to the rules? As at most international governmental conferences, only Parties with approved credentials are permitted to vote (Rule 3). But at the beginning of a CoP, the Credentials Committee has not yet been appointed. Technically, no Party² is authorized to vote on

¹ MAJOR HENRY M. ROBERT, ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER: MODERN EDITION (revised by Darwin Patnode, 1989). *Robert's Rules have been in existence for more than a century and are used by many organizations and agencies. They are content neutral and are designed to allow an organization to focus quickly and efficiently on issues and make decisions in the clearest, most efficient process possible.*

² The term 'Party', in this guide, also refers to 'delegation', 'delegate of a Party' or 'the representative of a Party'.

amendments to the Rules of Procedure. The Parties have set aside this difficult issue by permitting any Party to vote to adopt the amended Rules. Standard practice is for amendments to the Rules of Procedure to enter into effect as soon as they are adopted. *Robert's Rules of Order* has been used as a framework for discussion and voting on the Rules of Procedure.

Implementation of the Rules of Procedure

The Chair of the meeting or the Chair of a Committee or working group is the person primarily responsible for ensuring that the Rules are implemented. Because the Chair must often make decisions quickly, it is important that he or she be very familiar with the Rules of Procedure specifically and *Robert's Rules of Order* generally. As will be discussed later, a Party delegate at a Committee meeting or in plenary session may challenge a procedural decision of the Chair by raising a 'point of order', and the Chair should be able to respond correctly. The Chairs, as well as Parties, can also request assistance from the Bureau in interpreting the Rules of Procedure, because the Bureau has the ultimate responsibility for "ensuring the effective enforcement of the Rules of Procedure and forwarding the business of the meeting" (Rule 15).

Starting the meeting – A quorum

Before the Parties may undertake any business in Committee I or II or plenary session, a quorum of the Parties must be present in the room. Under Rule 7, a quorum is "one-half of the Parties having delegations at the meeting". Under Rule 3, paragraph 4, delegates may participate provisionally in the meeting but not vote. For this reason, the phrase "delegations at the meeting" means all delegations of Parties that have registered as participants at the meeting. Thus, if 145 Parties have delegations at a meeting, then delegates from 73 Parties must be present in the room to start a particular session. If a Party believes that a quorum does not exist when the meeting starts, that Party may ask the Chair for a quorum count. If the required number of Parties is not present, then the Chair must wait until the necessary number is reached. This is why the Chairs and the Secretariat often urge the Parties to ensure that they have a representative in both Committee I and Committee II at all times.

Who can vote?

Each delegation of a Party to CITES that has had its credentials accepted at the CoP may cast one vote on any issue being considered by the Parties in plenary session, Committee I or Committee II. Each Party decides which of its delegates (either the Representative or an Alternate Representative) will cast its vote.

How many votes are necessary?

The number of votes necessary to adopt a decision is determined by two factors: 1. the number of affirmative votes necessary to adopt a particular motion, resolution, or proposal; and 2. the calculation of votes.

1. The number of affirmative votes necessary

The Rules of Procedure, like other rules, require a different number of affirmative votes to pass a motion, depending on the nature of the motion. A **two-thirds (2/3) majority** vote is necessary for most issues decided in a Committee and in plenary session (Rule 26). If a vote calls for a two-thirds majority and 99 Parties vote, at least 66 affirmative votes are necessary to approve the measure. At CITES meetings, the following issues require a two-thirds majority:

- recommendations to approve resolutions and decisions, in Committees I and II;
- recommendations to amend Appendices I and II, in Committee I;
- adoption of resolutions and proposals to amend Appendices I and II in plenary session; and
- motions to amend resolutions and proposals.

A simple majority of votes cast (meaning more than one-half of the votes if there are only two options 'in favour' or 'against') is necessary to adopt all procedural motions relating to the conduct of the business of the meeting, such as points of order (Rule 26). If 100 Parties vote on an issue that requires a simple majority, the motion is adopted if 51 Parties vote in the affirmative. If the numbers of votes for and against are equal, the motion shall not be carried. An affirmative vote of one-third (1/3) of the Parties is necessary

to reopen debate in plenary session on a matter covered by a recommendation from one of the Committees (Rule 19.1).

2. The calculation of votes

Only the votes of those Parties "present and voting" are counted. To be considered "present and voting", a Party must first have its credentials³ accepted. In addition, a Party must be represented in the room where the meeting is taking place and that Party must cast an affirmative or negative vote. Parties that abstain from voting or that cast a vote of abstention are not counted for purposes of calculating the majority (Rule 26.2).

Based on these rules, it is possible that a relatively small number of Parties could decide the outcome of a vote. For example, if 145 Parties attend the meeting, but the credentials have been accepted of only 100 Parties and they are present in a meeting for a vote on an issue, only 67 votes are needed to adopt a resolution or a proposal to amend the Appendices (a 'species proposal') because 2/3 of 100 is 66.66. Thus, it is very important for Parties to ensure that their credentials are accepted and that they attend each meeting.

Motions – Amending a Resolution or a proposal

A Party may request action on a particular subject by making a 'motion'. A motion is a formal proposal by a delegation that the assembly take a certain action. In Committee I, for example, a Party may make a motion to amend a species proposal.

Making a point of order

A 'point of order' is an assertion by a Party that the Chair or another Party is violating a Rule of procedure and a request to have the Rule enforced, or that it wants a certain action to be taken (e.g. adjourning the debate, voting). Under Rule 18, a Party directs a point of order to the Chair of the meeting. The Chair must make a decision relating to the point of order before any other action is taken. A Party may make a point of order at any time. A Party may interrupt a speaker to make a point of order, provided that the point of order relates to a continuing violation of the Rules of Procedure. Thus, if the Chair makes a ruling regarding the Rules of Procedure, such as limiting debate or determining the order of voting on species proposals, a Party can make a point of order to ask the Chair to reconsider. The Chair must immediately make a decision on the point of order. A Party may appeal the decision of the Chair relating to a point of order (see below).

Appealing decisions of the Chair

If a Party disagrees with the decision of the Chair on a point of order, the Party may appeal the decision of the Chair. A Party appeals the decision of the Chair by stating: "I appeal the decision of the Chair". The Chair must immediately put the appeal to a vote (Rule 18.1).

The Parties must then vote on whether or not to sustain the decision of the Chair. The decision of the Chair is affirmed unless a simple majority of the Parties votes to reject the decision of the Chair (Rule 18.1).

Amending and voting on species proposals

A proposal to include a species in the Appendices, to transfer a species from one Appendix to another or to delete a species from the Appendices must be submitted by a Party at least 150 days before a CoP [Article XV, paragraph 1 (a), of the Convention; Rule 22.1]. The Parties, however, may amend species proposals before approving or rejecting them, a process that raises several questions of procedure.

The process for approving an amendment to a species proposal differs depending on whether the proponent amends the proposal or another Party proposes to amend it. Rule 22.2 allows the proponent to withdraw or amend the proposal to reduce its scope "at any time". The use of the phrase "at any time" indicates that a vote is not necessary to amend the proposal at the request of the proponent. In contrast, Rule 23.5 allows any Party to "propose" an amendment, which must be put to a vote.

³ *The Rules of Procedure provide that copies of credentials may not be accepted by the Credentials Committee. They also require that the credentials of delegations should include the Advisers. Further, they make clear that persons whose credentials have been found to be unacceptable may not participate in the meetings.*

A proposal can only be amended to "make it more precise" or to "reduce its scope". The Rules of Procedure do not define the phrases to "make it more precise" or "reduce its scope", but both phrases have logical meanings. The phrase "make it more precise" means to "clarify" the proposal. The phrase "to reduce its scope" refers to the effect of a proposal in relation to a species's status in the Appendices. For example, if a Party proposes to transfer three populations of a species from Appendix I to Appendix II, an amendment to apply the proposal to only one population would reduce the scope of the proposal. Similarly, an amendment to transfer these populations to Appendix II subject to a quota could reduce the scope of the proposal, because the original proposal sought an Appendix-II listing without other conditions. On the other hand, an amendment to apply the proposal to a fourth population, or to delete the species from the Appendices, would increase the scope of the proposal, and therefore would be ruled out of order.

These same rules apply to a proposal to transfer three populations of a species from Appendix II to Appendix I. An amendment to limit the proposal to one population would reduce the scope of the proposal, as would an amendment to retain the three populations in Appendix II with quotas.

The order of voting when two or more proposals relate to the same taxon

In some cases, two or more proposals may exist relating to the same species, but be different in substance. In these cases, the Parties must vote first on the proposal that has "the least restrictive effect on the trade" (Rule 23.6). If the Parties adopt a proposal that would have a less restrictive effect on trade in the species concerned than another proposal relating to the same species, then the Parties cannot consider the second proposal (Rule 23.6).

The same principle would apply in the case where amendments are moved to a proposal for amendment of Appendix I or II. When such a proposal is under consideration, one or more Parties may move an amendment. Rule 23.6 provides that an amendment to a proposal shall be regarded as a separate proposal. The potential effect on trade would determine the order for consideration. The first amendment to be decided upon would be the amendment that would have the least restrictive effect on the trade in the species. If however the original proposal would have a less restrictive effect than any of the proposed amendments to it, then the original proposal would be decided upon first. If it is rejected then no further amendment can be proposed but the remaining amendments would be considered in order until one is accepted or all are rejected (Rule 23.6).

Limitations on debate

To complete the work of the meeting, it may be necessary to impose limitations on debate, such as restrictions on the time allowed each speaker or on the number of times a Party may speak. Under the Rules of Procedure, the Chair may propose time limits for debate, but it is the Parties that ultimately decide. If the Chair proposes to limit debate, he/she must seek the consent of the Parties. If the views of the Parties are divided and it is necessary to vote, a simple majority is required to approve a proposal to limit debate, because this is a procedural matter relating to the conduct of the meeting (Rule 26).

Reopening of matters in plenary session

The Parties spend much of their time debating draft resolutions in Committees I and II and proposals to amend the Appendices in Committee I. The decisions of the Committees, however, are not the decisions of the Conference. They are recommendations to the Conference that must be adopted or rejected in a plenary session. Because the Parties debate the issues thoroughly in Committees and often create working groups to resolve difficult issues, the Parties generally accept the recommendations of Committees I and II. Accordingly, the Rules of Procedure allow no further discussion on recommendations in plenary session, unless a Party makes a motion in a plenary session to reconsider a recommendation of a Committee (Rule 19.1).

To reopen debate on a Committee recommendation concerning a draft resolution, a draft decision or a species proposal, a Party must make a motion to reopen debate, another Party must second the motion, and one-third of the Parties present and voting must support the motion (Rule 19.1). If one-third of the Parties agree, then the Parties may debate the matter again in plenary session. The Parties then must vote again – by a two-thirds majority of the Parties present and voting – to adopt the proposal. Once the Parties adopt or reject a proposal to amend Appendices I and II in plenary session, they cannot reconsider the matter (Rule 19.2). The Rules of Procedure are silent concerning the finality of decisions in plenary session regarding resolutions and decisions. Thus, it should be possible, by a simple majority vote to reopen debate on a resolution adopted or rejected in plenary session.

The Parties may also reopen debate on decisions that are made in plenary session without a recommendation originating from any Committee. These decisions can be reopened for debate in plenary session if a Party makes a motion to reopen, another Party seconds the motion, and a two-thirds majority supports the motion (Rules 19.3). Only the Party presenting the motion and the seconder may speak in support of the motion and only two Parties may speak against it (Rules 19.3). If the motion to reopen debate succeeds, then the Parties may debate the matter again. The Parties must then vote again – by a two-thirds majority of Parties present and voting – to adopt the draft resolution or other document.

Observers

Under the terms of the Convention, governmental and non-governmental organizations may qualify to be represented at meetings of the Conference by observers (Article XI, paragraph 7, of the Convention). Once properly admitted, observers have "the right to participate but not to vote". For observers, the right to participate includes the right to have representatives present at all the sessions of the Committees and in plenary sessions, and the right, subject to time limitations, to contribute to the discussions. Observers traditionally have also been allowed to participate in various *ad hoc* committees and working groups with the permission of the Chair of the committee or group, and provided that there is sufficient seating space in the meeting room (Rule 12.2)

The Rules of Procedure provide that the right of participation for observers that is granted by the Conference of the Parties may also be withdrawn by the Conference of the Parties (Rule 2, paragraph 2).

4 – Inside the meeting rooms

Seating arrangements

Paragraph 2 of Rule 11 of the Rules of Procedure states that "seating limitations may require that no more than four delegates of any Party be present at plenary sessions and sessions of Committees I and II", and paragraph 4 of the same Rule states that "seating limitations may require that no more than two observers from any State not a Party, or from any body or agency, be present at plenary sessions and sessions of Committees I and II".

Depending on the meeting room capacity, the above-mentioned limits per Party and per observer may not have been applied at past meetings of the Conference of the Parties.

At CoP16, however, it is possible that these limits could be applied. In this case, States and organizations whose representatives exceed the above-mentioned numbers in any one session will have to decide which persons will represent them in each session. Furthermore, it is recommended that the Conference of the Parties waive the application of Rule 11, paragraphs 2 and 4, for the sessions of Committee II, so that seating at tables may be limited to no more than two delegates at the place of each Party, the remainder being available for observers and for additional delegates; and that it request bodies and agencies that are represented at the meeting to limit their participation in each session of Committee II to a single observer in the auditorium unless it is clear that there are places available after the session has begun (see CoP15 Doc. 3).

Delegates should bear in mind that the seating arrangement in the area designated for them will be fixed and that there will be no flexibility.

Paragraph 3 of Rule 11 states that "observers shall be seated in one or more designated areas within the meeting room" and that "they may enter an area designated for delegations only when invited to do so by a delegate." The areas closest to the podium are reserved for Party delegates.

Participants are asked to cooperate with the organizer regarding the seating arrangement.

Audio-visual presentations

Proponents of documents or proposals to amend the Appendices may introduce their agenda item with the use of PowerPoint slides. An electronic copy of the presentation must be provided to the Secretariat 24 hours before the agenda item is to be presented. The presentation should not exceed ten minutes duration.

5 – Outside the meeting rooms

Distribution of documents

The rules regarding distribution of informative documents in the proposed Rules of Procedure are a little different from those for previous meetings (Rule 28). Participants do not need approval for the distribution of such documents, although they should clearly identify the delegation or organization presenting them.

All official meeting documents, such as summary records of sessions and draft resolutions from working groups, as well as the daily journal produced by the Secretariat, and informative documents provided by observers and Parties will be distributed through the pigeon holes. Each registered delegation will have one pigeon hole. Participants are recommended to check what new documents are available at the document distribution area every morning and afternoon.

The representative of any State or intergovernmental organizations may request the Secretariat to distribute informative documents through this channel (Rule 28.3). In this case the State or organization should provide a sufficient number of copies. Documents submitted by Parties and by the Secretariat relating to specific items on the agenda of the meeting shall be numbered by the Secretariat and included in its list of official documents. Organizations that are not registered as observers may not distribute documents at the meeting.

However, if any participant finds any document distributed through the pigeon holes offensive, he/she may make a formal complaint to the Bureau. The Rules of Procedure for CoP14 give the Bureau the right to decide on the appropriate action. In a case of the utmost gravity, it may recommend to the Conference to withdraw the right of admission to the meeting of the offending organization or to make a formal complaint to any State concerned.

The procedure for making complaints and resolving conflicts is indicated below.

Complaints

Differences in views and philosophy are natural. They only become problematic when one person refuses to accept the rights of another to hold different views and consequently attacks them, either verbally or physically.

With the reduced control on the checking of information materials, some participants might be concerned that there will be an increase in incidents where individuals, countries or organizations are slandered or otherwise offended.

It is therefore important to stress that, while informative documents are not reviewed by the Secretariat before they are distributed, anyone who produces such a document still remains responsible for the content. The Rules therefore provide a procedure for dealing with complaints about documents.

Any participant who has a grievance should always try first to resolve the problem with the other party concerned. If this fails, the complaint should be submitted to the Secretary-General, who will try to resolve the problem with the parties concerned and, if this fails, report to the Bureau, which should decide on appropriate action.

Communication

Good communication between the various Parties and organizations represented at a CITES meeting is one of the keys to its success. Ushers are present in the two main meetings rooms to facilitate this.

When one delegate needs to contact another during one of the meeting sessions, or when an observer needs to get a message to a delegate of a Party, he/she should ask one of the ushers in the meeting room to pass on a message.

The Secretariat will also deliver messages to other delegates and observers through the pigeon holes at the document distribution centre, provided that the name, signature and contact details of the person leaving the message are clearly displayed on the message (or on the envelope if there is one).

In addition, the delegations of all Parties that have approved the participation in the meeting of national organizations are encouraged to set aside time to meet regularly with the observers from these organizations during the meeting of the Conference of the Parties and to inform them of their availability.

6 – CoP "Do-s" and "Don't-s"

Even participants who are knowledgeable about the Rules of Procedure and extremely well-informed on topics to be discussed can become frustrated and disgruntled.

Meetings with over a thousand participants can always be challenging. There are very many views to be expressed. Everybody wants to have his/her say but there is not enough time. Participants can feel neglected and get frustrated when the Chair does not include them in the list of speakers.

Below are a few principles of good conduct – especially relevant for newcomers.

Participants should:

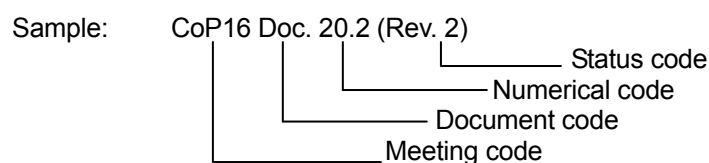
1. Always follow the Rules of Procedure (section 3 of this document will give you a basic understanding).
2. Wait for the Chair to invite them to speak (the Chair should try to allow time for contributions from both delegates and observers).
3. Make interventions brief, concise and to the point.
4. Liaise with other participants and, where appropriate, make joint interventions to avoid the same points being made repeatedly.
5. Bear in mind the principles and objectives on which the Convention is based.
6. Be patient.
7. Distribute documents by asking the Secretariat staff to place them in delegates' pigeon holes or placing them on tables designated for this purpose.
8. Expect to engage in an appropriate and polite manner with other participants. Instances of physical or verbal abuse should be reported to the Secretary-General.
9. Respect areas that are designated for delegates or for the Secretariat only.

Participants should not:

1. Interrupt, except to seek clarification (only Representatives of Parties may raise points of order).
2. Heckle other delegates or observers; they too have a right to express their opinion.
3. Attack other participants.
4. Use the meeting for demonstrations.
5. Seek to obtain information dishonestly during meetings of the Conference of the Parties.

7 – Numbering of documents

Document numbering system



1. Meeting code: The number simply indicates which meeting the document is produced for. For the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties, the number is 'CoP16'.

2. Document codes: The following document codes will be used.

Discussion documents

- Doc. Working documents
- Prop. Proposals to amend the Appendices

Documents resulting from the discussions in Committees

- Com. I Documents of Committee I
- Com. II Documents of Committee II

Summary reports

- Plen. Summary reports of plenary sessions
- Com. I Rep. Summary reports of Committee I
- Com. II Rep. Summary reports of Committee II

Other documents

- Inf. Information documents
- Cred. List of credentials
- Part. List of participants

3. Numerical code: For working documents, the numerical code relates to the agenda item. In the case of other documents, the numerical code will be a serial number.

4. Status code: There is a status code only if the document is a revised version of a document already published. Code (Rev. 1) is used for the first revision, (Rev. 2) for the second revision, etc.