

CITES a success story- the Swiss view

Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen

Seeing you all here assembled to celebrate the 35th Anniversary of CITES makes me proud as a Swiss citizen, as CITES and Switzerland have always been closely linked. As Ambassador Martinelli has just reiterated, Switzerland plays multiple roles in CITES. As a contracting Party, the implementation of CITES has always been a high priority to Switzerland and to the Veterinary Office in particular.

As my agency became the Management Authority, it was responsible for drafting the necessary legislation to implement CITES in Switzerland. And this was back in 1975 and I am proud to state that we became the first country to have implemented the Convention by 1st of July 1975. And this was just right in time: On the 2nd of July, the first attempt to import illegally live animals listed on the CITES Appendices was made which resulted in the confiscation of two *Heloderma* lizards. Since then 35 years have passed, with the Convention growing from a membership of a few countries to today 175 member states and thus making it a global Convention.

In the Preamble of the Convention overarching goals such as the following are enshrined :

Wild fauna and flora in their many beautiful and varied forms are an irreplaceable part of the natural systems of the earth which must be protected for this and the generations to come.

The Convention in its 35 years of existence can look back to many successes in trying to live up to these goals. Trade in many species of animals and plants has become sustainable and the threat to extinction of species has been mitigated. Examples such as Crocodilians, Vicugnas or certain medicinal

plants should be enough to remind us what has been achieved by CITES and its member states.

These achievements were only possible because Parties agreed to common goals and ways on how to achieve them. The staff of the Management Authorities and many guards of national parks have put these decisions to work – sometimes at a very costly prize while even risking or giving their life to the cause. Those colleagues all deserve our special tribute.

The role of the CITES Secretariat in its work of implementing and making the Convention work cannot be valued high enough. With the expertise, the constant leadership as well as the high competence of its staff, the Secretariat has helped the Parties in these achievements and moved the Convention forward. It has functioned as a center of excellence for all parties to CITES and will, also under the new leadership of the Secretary General John Scanlon, certainly continue to do so.

Switzerland is very proud to host a biodiversity-related Convention that is able to deliver concrete conservation results. We hope that the international community will build on its successes for many more years to come to contribute to alleviating poverty and stopping the decline in global biodiversity.

In the name of the Management Authority of Switzerland, I would like to congratulate CITES to its 35th birthday. I am confident that the whole CITES community will continue its work as good and as efficient as it has done so for the last 35 years.