



ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SECRETARIAT

2018

Article XII of the text of the Convention requires the CITES Secretariat to prepare annual reports to the Parties on its work and on the implementation of the Convention. This document, which covers the year 2018, is the 41st annual report of the Secretariat.

CITES – A snapshot view

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) is a treaty created to ensure that international trade in wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival. It entered into force on 1 July 1975 and is currently one of the largest multilateral environmental agreements in existence, with a membership of 183 countries. CITES works through a system of import and export permits, and accords varying degrees of protection to more than 35,000 species. Its Secretariat is part of the United Nations Environment Programme.

CITES Strategic Vision: 2008-2020

In 2013, the Conference of the Parties to CITES, its supreme decision-making body, adopted Resolution Conf. 16.3 on the [CITES Strategic Vision: 2008-2020](#). This Resolution contains three goals that the Conference has identified as the key components of the Strategic Vision:

- Goal 1: Ensure compliance with and implementation and enforcement of the Convention.
- Goal 2: Secure the necessary financial resources and means for the operation and implementation of the Convention.
- Goal 3: Contribute to significantly reducing the rate of biodiversity loss and to achieving relevant globally-agreed goals and targets by ensuring that CITES and other multilateral instruments and processes are coherent and mutually supportive.

The goals aim at consolidating the existing strengths of CITES, ensuring the implementation of the mandate of the Convention, and further improving the relationship with relevant multilateral environmental agreements and related conventions, agreements and associations.

CITES Secretariat

The CITES Secretariat is administered by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and is located in the International Environment House in Geneva, Switzerland.

The Secretariat plays a coordinating, advisory and servicing role in the working of the Convention, with its functions being prescribed in the Convention text and various resolutions adopted by Conferences of the Parties. It provides assistance to Parties in the fields of legislation, enforcement, science, financing, technology and training; it arranges and services meetings of its technical committees and other workshops; it undertakes scientific and technical studies; it makes recommendations regarding the implementation of the Convention; it centralizes and distributes knowledge and information relevant to the Parties; it maintains all the reference texts essential to the implementation of the Convention (the list of protected species, the Resolutions and Decisions adopted by the Conference of the Parties, etc.); and it raises external funds to implement activities decided by the Parties.

In 2010, the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has given the Secretary-General of CITES [delegated authority](#) on administrative and financial matters, which aims to ensure the provision of secretariat services to CITES or the Convention and to delegate the appropriate authority and responsibility to the Secretary-General within an accountability context.

In 2011, the Executive Director of UNEP and the Standing Committee of CITES signed a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) to further clarify the relationship between UNEP and CITES. The memorandum covered issues such as the programmatic relationship between both entities, financial matters and budgets, administrative support and programme support costs, and performance evaluation and management review.

Human resources

The Secretariat for the period 2017-2019 is comprised of 21 posts funded from the core trust fund (CTL), 3 posts funded from the Programme Support Cost (PSC) and 9 project posts from the external trust fund (QTL). The majority of the CITES Secretariat staff is based in Geneva. The Secretariat also has two project professional staff and two support staff members, based in the UNEP headquarters in Gigiri (Nairobi), Kenya, for the implementation of the [Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants \(MIKE\) programme](#).

The regular staff and project staff of the Secretariat consists of 22 Professional staff and 11 General Support staff, which includes individuals representing 19 nationalities coming from the regions of Africa (Kenya, Morocco and South Africa), Asia (China, India, Japan, the Philippines and Sri Lanka), Europe (Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Russia, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom), Central and South America and the Caribbean (Argentina, Chile and Colombia), North America (Mexico) and Oceania (Australia).

Secretary-General [Mr. John Scanlon](#) left the Secretariat on 8 April 2018. Mr. David Morgan acted as Officer-in-Charge until [Ms. Ivonne Higuero](#) assumed the post of Secretary-General on 1 December 2018. Ms. Higuero is an environmental economist with a career spanning 26 years in international organizations in the area of sustainable development. Ivonne has experience working at the global, regional and national levels, and engaging with stakeholders across the public and private sectors. During her 24 years with the UN, Ivonne has held varied roles managing and overseeing the implementation of programmes of work, managing financial and human resources, and the provision of secretariat services to intergovernmental bodies. With the adoption of Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals, Ivonne was responsible for ensuring the alignment of programmes of work to support countries in meeting their international commitments also through cross-sectoral cooperation.

Under the Secretary-General, the Secretariat is organized based on the following [organizational chart](#):

- Administrative Services
- Corporate Services
 - Governing Bodies and Meeting Services
 - Knowledge Management and Outreach Services
- Implementation Services
 - Scientific Services
 - Legal Affairs and Compliance

Secretary-General support

The Administrative Services Team provides support to the Secretary-General on administrative and human resources matters and on financial management. It gives guidance on UN rules and regulations related to administration, including issues on recruitment, staff administration, internship, and any other personnel management issues. It also provides guidance on UN financial rules and regulations related to the Trust Fund management, bank account, travel, procurement, hospitality and other financial matters.

Corporate Services is comprised of two teams: Governing Bodies and Meeting Services and Knowledge Management and Outreach Services. These two teams provide support to the Convention on organization of meetings, matters related to information technology, e.g. trade monitoring database, e-permitting, knowledge management, liaison with major groups, fundraising and outreach.

Implementation Services is comprised of two teams: Scientific Services and Regulatory Services. These two teams provide assistance to the Parties on technical and policy issues which include review of significant trade, non-detriment findings, the national legislation project and enforcement matters.

Performance management

The Secretariat applies the UN Performance Management and Development System in its staff performance appraisal. This is done through an electronic application (e-performance system) that captures the main stages of the performance process (work plan, midpoint review and end-of-year performance appraisal).

Prior to the beginning of the performance cycle, and for the purposes of strengthening accountability in the Secretariat, senior managers meet with the Secretary-General and develop the action plan based on the implementation of goals in the Strategic Vision 2008-2020 and the Resolutions and Decisions adopted in the meetings of the Conference of the Parties. Priorities of each team are translated into work plans in the e-performance system. Work plans are developed in consultation with staff members concerned on an annual or biennial basis, depending on the needs of the team.

At the beginning of the performance cycle, the Chief of each team (First Reporting Officer) meets with the staff under their direct supervision to ensure that the objectives of the team are understood and individual work plans are prepared. First Reporting Officers work with staff members they supervise on the development of the staff member's individual work plan for the performance cycle.

During the course of the year, the First Reporting Officer and the staff member hold conversations and dialogue, formally and informally, and may have exchange of e-mails or other written communication on the progress of the performance goals set for the year. These conversations or written communications should address recognition for good performance and any shortcomings as they become apparent at any time during the cycle.

Within three months after the end of the performance appraisal cycle, the First Reporting Officer and the staff member meet to discuss the overall performance during the cycle.

CITES Financing

At its 17th meeting (Johannesburg, 2016), the Conference of the Parties decided that the budget for the triennium 2017-2019 should be met by the Parties through their contributions. Through the costed programme of work, the Secretariat reports on its core and non-core activities, which shows the method of implementation of the activities with the corresponding funding from the Trust Fund or external sources.

The costed programme of work for the CITES Secretariat for 2018 can be found [here](#).

The total Trust Fund expenditure for 2018, including the programme support costs, amounted to USD 5.43 million, out of the budget of USD 5.99 million.

CITES Trust Fund

The main administrative costs of the Secretariat, the meetings of the Conference of the Parties and of the permanent committees, and the CITES core activities are financed from the CITES Trust Fund.

The Trust Fund is funded by contributions from the Parties (member States) based on the United Nations scale of assessment, adjusted to take into account that not all members of the United Nations are party to the Convention. The Trust Fund budget for 2018 amounted to USD 5.99 million.

The paid contributions for 2018 amounted to USD 4.66 million. To date, the Secretariat employs a range of actions to ensure that Parties pay their contributions in a timely manner. The Secretariat sends requests to all Parties to pay their contributions before the beginning of the calendar year to which they apply. It also sends reminders at least three times a year to the Parties that have fallen into arrears with their contributions. The Secretariat also publishes and regularly updates information on the status of contributions to the CITES Trust Fund on the CITES website.

The status of Parties' contributions to the CITES Trust Fund as of 31 December 2018 can be found [here](#).

The CITES accounts form part of the UNEP financial statement and are administered by the United Nations Office in Nairobi (UNON). They are subject to a biennial audit by the External Board of Auditors of the United Nations. The UNEP audited accounts are certified correct and in accordance with the accounting policies and financial rules and regulations of the United Nations.

Administrative changes introduced by UNEP

This administrative reform initiative for the United Nations Secretariat called “Umoja” took place on 1 June 2015 for UNEP worldwide and is intended to provide a simplified and real-time approach to the Organization’s management of finances, resources and assets and required a complete re-working of the way the UN manages its administration in both business processes and systems.

It should be noted that this change had a major impact on the operation of the Secretariat and affected the implementation of the programme of work. It has also placed considerable additional strain on the staff of the Secretariat, especially its administrative staff. Since the launch of Umoja, the Secretariat has continued to work closely with UNEP, its MEA focal point on operational and administrative issues, and UNON to resolve outstanding issues related to cash availability, donor reporting, and pending payments.

Several administrative changes and policies were developed or introduced during the year, such as the UNEP framework on administrative and support services provided to Secretariats of MEAs and other entities and the deployment of new modules in Umoja extension 2 related to strategic planning, programme and project management, implementing partners’ management, budget formulation and planning tool and resource mobilization being phased out over a period of one year beginning in September 2018. In addition, the United Nations Secretariat is currently considering further improvements in its administrative processes to consolidate fragmented administrative structures provided throughout the UN system. In this regard, the introduction of the Global Service Delivery Module (see document [A/72/801](#)) aims to realign the UN Secretariat’s administrative structure to better distinguish strategic from operational activities, as well as strategic oversight from administrative service delivery. The new module was being reviewed by General Assembly during its 73rd session.

The Secretariat has continued its consultations with UNEP regarding the new UNEP Secretariat services to MEAs to ensure that they are in line with the existing Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the CITES Standing Committee and the Executive Director of UNEP.

CITES Parties in 2018

As of December 2018, 183 Parties had joined CITES. The complete list of CITES Parties can be found [here](#).