

Conf. 11.9 (Rev. CoP18)* Conservation of and trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles

AWARE that the global international trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles involves millions of specimens each year;

RECOGNIZING that many tortoise and freshwater turtle species are found in trade, and that a number of species are already included in Appendix I or II;

OBSERVING that the collection of tortoises and freshwater turtles is carried out through an extensive informal network of trappers, hunters and middlemen, and that collection efforts and trade volumes are considerable;

CONSIDERING that, in addition, wild populations of tortoises and freshwater turtles are generally vulnerable to overexploitation, because of biological characteristics such as late maturity, limited annual reproductive output, and high juvenile mortality, as well as habitat degradation and loss;

NOTING that there are two significant types of trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles: a high-volume trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles and parts thereof for consumption both as food and in traditional medicine; and a species-focused trade for pets;

AWARE that certain species of tortoises and freshwater turtles are bred in high numbers in and outside range States, *inter alia* to supply the demand for food and medicines, and that the conservation risks and benefits of large-scale commercial breeding of tortoises and freshwater turtles are not well known;

NOTING that the shipment of live tortoises and freshwater turtles is often not conducted in accordance with the provisions of Articles III, IV and V of the Convention, and in particular that transport of live tortoises and freshwater turtles by air is often not conducted in accordance with IATA regulations;

ACKNOWLEDGING that unregulated or unsustainable trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles poses a significant threat to wild populations, and that international cooperation is needed to address these threats urgently; and

RECALLING the recommendations developed by participants of the CITES Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles Task Force meeting in Singapore, in 2017, as adopted by the Standing Committee and made available through Notification to Parties No. 2018/030 of 26 March 2018;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION

1. URGES:

a) all Parties to:

- i) collaborate on all aspects of conservation and management of, trade in, and implementation of the Convention for, tortoises and freshwater turtles;
- ii) assess current efforts to manage native tortoise and freshwater turtle populations, and to improve those efforts as necessary, for example by establishing quotas that take into consideration the particular biology of tortoises and freshwater turtles; and
- iii) develop and implement research programmes to identify the species involved in trade, to monitor and assess the impact of trade on wild populations, and to evaluate the conservation risks and benefits of large-scale commercial breeding of tortoises and freshwater turtles;

- b) range States of tortoises and freshwater turtles to consider developing management strategies concerning CITES-listed tortoises and freshwater turtles, including regional action plans for the conservation of tortoises and freshwater turtles, in collaboration with the

* Amended at the 12th, 13th and 18th meetings of the Conference of the Parties, and corrected by the Secretariat following the 15th meeting.

Secretariat, industry representatives, interested governmental and non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders as appropriate;

c) all Parties:

- i) whose national legislation is not sufficient to control effectively the unsustainable harvest of and trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles, to enact legislation to protect and manage these species appropriately;
- ii) especially range States and exporting and importing States of tortoises and freshwater turtles, to enhance and increase enforcement and prosecution efforts with regard to existing legislation as a matter of urgency; and
- iii) to enhance cooperation concerning control of trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles, amongst wildlife-law enforcement agencies at national and international levels, and between enforcement agencies and national CITES authorities, including by, when possible making use of INTERPOL's National Environmental Security Seminars (NESS) to promote inter-agency coordination and, as appropriate, cooperating through regional wildlife enforcement networks to facilitate collaborative action at international level;

d) all Parties affected by illegal trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles to:

- i) undertake risk profiling, and to provide capacity-building interventions and detection equipment to enforcement officers at ports, to enable better targeting of known modes of transport used for trafficking in tortoises and freshwater turtles;
- ii) scale up efforts to prevent, detect and address the illegal shipment of tortoises and freshwater turtles specimens through postal and courier services;
- iii) where necessary facilitate the compilation, dissemination and translation into local languages, of information on tortoises and freshwater turtles, for use by enforcement officers, drawing on existing identification and enforcement guides, and focusing on identification, local names, distribution and illustrations;
- iv) where necessary, develop supplementary identification guidance, tailored to the specific needs of the Party concerned, containing basic information on the characteristics used for tortoise and freshwater turtle identification, to support the accurate application of existing identification material; and
- v) scale up efforts to address key locations in domestic markets associated with illegal international trade in these specimens;

e) all Parties to:

- i) empower the general public by raising awareness about existing tools available to report illegal trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles and other wildlife crimes, for example mobile phone applications, hotline numbers, toll-free phone numbers, social media, and others;
- ii) encourage the general public to act as the eyes and ears of law enforcement through awareness raising initiatives and materials targeting for example public transport, roadside stops and restaurants, airports and other transport hubs, with a particular focus on illegal trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles;
- iii) increase public awareness of the threats posed to tortoises and freshwater turtles from unsustainable harvest and illegal trade, including by, engaging online communities such as auction platforms and closed discussion groups, and as appropriate creating and implementing awareness tools that can engage target audiences and cultures, in particular young adults, through social and other digital media; and
- iv) encourage non-governmental organizations to develop, produce and distribute posters and other educational and informative materials on this subject;

f) all Parties and organizations to explore ways to enhance the participation of collectors, traders, exporters, importers and consumers in the conservation of and sustainable trade in tortoises and freshwater turtle species;

- g) all Parties to develop plans of action, in compliance with Resolution Conf. 17.8 (Rev. CoP19)¹, that can be executed without delay in the event that live specimens of tortoises and freshwater turtles are confiscated;
 - h) all Parties to ensure that all shipments of live tortoises and freshwater turtles are transported in compliance with relevant IATA guidelines; and
 - i) all Parties to facilitate the development of partnerships between interested non-governmental organizations or other bodies to develop and operate rescue centres for seized or confiscated tortoises and freshwater turtles, in cooperation with range States and relevant government agencies;
2. DIRECTS the Secretariat to provide assistance with securing financial resources from Parties, United Nations specialized agencies, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, trade associations, industry and others as appropriate, for range States in need of and requesting financial support to develop and implement management and enforcement strategies and action plans concerning CITES-listed tortoises and freshwater turtles in accordance with this Resolution; and
3. ENCOURAGES donors to increase funding initiatives to combat illegal trafficking in tortoises and freshwater turtles.

¹ Corrected by the Secretariat following the 15th, 17th and 19th meetings of the Conference of the Parties: originally referred to Resolution Conf. 10.7, replaced by Resolution Conf. 17.8.