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Trade in stony corals

AWARE that stony corals (in the orders Helioporacea, Milleporina, Scleractinia, Stolonifera, and Stylasterina) are in international trade as intact specimens for aquaria and as curios;

RECOGNIZING that coral rock, fragments, sand and other coral products are also traded;

NOTING the unique nature of corals, namely that their skeletons are persistent, that they may become mineralized in time and that they are the foundation of reefs, and that, following erosion, fragments of coral may form part of mineral and sedimentary deposits;

NOTING also that coral rock may act as an important substrate for the attachment of live corals and that the removal of rock may have a detrimental impact on reef ecosystems;

AWARE, however, that coral rock cannot be readily identified other than to the order Scleractinia and that accordingly non-detriment findings under Article IV, paragraph 2 (a), of the Convention cannot be readily applied;

NOTING that Article IV, paragraph 3, requires the monitoring of exports of specimens of each species in Appendix II, in order to assess whether the species is being maintained at a level consistent with its role in the ecosystem;

NOTING that assessments under Article IV, paragraph 3, of the impacts of harvesting corals on the ecosystems from which they are derived cannot be adequately made by monitoring exports alone;

ACCEPTING that coral fragments and coral sand cannot be readily recognized;

RECOGNIZING also that it is frequently difficult to identify live or dead corals to the species level owing to the lack of a standard nomenclature and the lack of comprehensive and accessible identification guides for the non-specialist;

RECOGNIZING that stony corals that are fossilized are not subject to the provisions of the Convention;

NOTING that it has been difficult to apply and enforce the provisions of the Convention to trade in corals;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION

1. ADOPTS the working definitions of coral sand, coral fragments, coral rock, live coral and dead coral provided in the Annex to this Resolution;
2. RECOMMENDS that Parties give much greater emphasis to the implementation of Article IV, paragraph 3, when permitting the export of corals and that they adopt the principles and practice of an ecosystem approach, rather than relying on the monitoring of exports alone; and
3. URGES:
 - a) interested Parties and other bodies from range and consumer States to collaborate and provide support, coordinated by the Secretariat, to produce as a priority accessible and practical guides to recognizing corals and coral rock in trade and to make these widely available to Parties through appropriate media; and
 - b) Parties to seek synergy with other multilateral environmental agreements and initiatives to work for the conservation and sustainable use of coral reef ecosystems.

* Amended at the 12th, 14th and 15th meetings of the Conference of the Parties.

Coral sand – material consisting entirely or in part of finely crushed fragments of dead coral no larger than 2 mm in diameter and which may also contain, amongst other things, the remains of Foraminifera, mollusc and crustacean shell, and coralline algae. Not identifiable to the level of genus.

Coral fragments (including gravel and rubble) – unconsolidated fragments of broken finger-like dead coral and other material between 2 and 30 mm measured in any direction, which is not identifiable to the level of genus.

Coral rock¹ (also live rock and substrate) – hard consolidated material, >3 cm in diameter, formed of fragments of dead coral and which may also contain cemented sand, coralline algae and other sedimentary rocks. 'Live rock' is the term given to pieces of coral rock to which are attached live specimens of invertebrate species and coralline algae not included in the CITES Appendices and which are transported moist, but not in water, in crates. 'Substrate' is the term given to pieces of coral rock to which are attached invertebrates (of species not included in the CITES Appendices) and which are transported in water like live corals. Coral rock is not identifiable to the level of genus but is recognizable to the level of order. The definition excludes specimens defined as dead coral.

Dead coral – pieces of coral that are dead when exported, but that may have been alive when collected, and in which the structure of corallites (the skeleton of the individual polyp) is still intact; specimens are therefore identifiable to the level of species or genus.

Live coral – pieces of live coral transported in water and that are identifiable to the level of species or genus.

¹ Rock that does not contain any corals or in which the corals are fossilized is not subject to the provisions of the Convention.