

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



Thirty-second meeting of the Animals Committee  
Geneva (Switzerland), 19-23 June 2023

Species conservation and trade

Aquatic species

MARINE ORNAMENTAL FISHES

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.
2. At its 19th meeting (CoP19; Panama City, 2022), the Conference of the Parties adopted Decisions 19.237 and 19.238 on *Marine ornamental fishes* as follows:

***Directed to the Secretariat***

**19.237** *The Secretariat shall:*

- a) *convene a technical workshop to consider the conservation priorities and management needs related to the trade in non-CITES listed marine ornamental fishes worldwide, with a particular focus on data from importing and exporting countries;*
- b) *invite the Animals Committee, representatives from range States, exporting, and importing countries, fishery stakeholders, industry representatives and relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to participate in this workshop; and*
- c) *submit findings and recommendations of this workshop to the Animals Committee.*

***Directed to the Animals Committee***

**19.238** *The Animals Committee shall:*

- a) *agree a terms of reference for the technical workshop; and*
- b) *consider the results of the workshop referred to in Decision 19.237 and make recommendations to the 20th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.*

Background

3. At CoP19, the Secretariat reported in document [CoP19 Doc. 80](#) that it had secured funding from the European Union, Switzerland and the United States of America to compile workshop documents on marine ornamental fishes' biology, conservation status, trade and management, and applicable trade regulations. These draft studies were made available to the Parties at CoP19 in information document [CoP19 Inf. 99](#) and its [Annex](#). These documents will be used in support of the technical expert workshop on marine ornamental fishes referred to in paragraph a) of Decision 19.237.

#### Implementation of Decision 19.237

4. Having secured additional funding from Switzerland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, an in-person technical workshop will be convened by the Secretariat in the last quarter of 2023 to consider the management and conservation of marine ornamental fishes involved in international trade. The Secretariat is in discussion with a potential host country and hopes to provide confirmation on the exact dates and venue at this meeting of the Animals Committee. The workshop should have around 80 participants including Members of the Animals Committee, representatives from range, exporting, transit and consumer States, as well as fishery stakeholders, industry representatives and relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. The objective of the workshop should be to determine if and which marine ornamental fish taxa are negatively impacted by international trade and make recommendations to ensure the conservation of those taxa. The results of the workshop will be presented for consideration by the Animals Committee at its 33rd meeting (AC33, 2024).

#### Implementation of Decision 19.238

5. Paragraph a) of Decision 19.238 directs the Animals Committee to agree a terms of reference for the technical workshop referred to in paragraph a) of Decision 19.237. In consultation with the Chair of the Animals Committee, draft terms of reference and *modus operandi* were developed and circulated to the Members of the Committee for review. Based on comments that were received from Mexico and the United States of America, on behalf of the North American region, an updated draft of the terms of reference is presented in the Annex to this document.

#### Recommendations

6. The Animals Committee is invited to consider and agree to the terms of reference and *modus operandi* for the technical workshop on marine ornamental fishes presented in the Annex to this document.

**Updated draft terms of reference and modus operandi for the technical workshop on marine ornamental fishes (Decision 19.237)**

**TERMS OF REFERENCE**

**Workshop scope and activities**

1. The technical workshop will, *inter alia*:
  - a) focus on international trade in live specimens of non-CITES listed marine ornamental fishes, with a particular focus on data from importing and exporting countries, specifically on coral reef fishes (fish which live amongst or in close relation to coral reefs that are found in the tropical and subtropical Western Atlantic and Indo-Pacific oceans, typically occurring between 30°N and 30°S latitudes), and on those species (including sharks and rays) that are caught and traded for display in public or private aquariums;
  - b) share information about the nature and scale of the international trade in specimens of non-CITES listed marine ornamental fishes and identify knowledge gaps;
  - c) consider the limitations of existing data;
  - d) provide a platform for the exchange of information relating to international trade in marine ornamental fishes and its potential impact on species conservation;
  - e) identify and consider examples of best practices to manage trade in marine ornamental fishes in a sustainable way, including trade originating from captive-bred sources;
  - f) consider the biology, conservation priorities and management needs related to the trade in non-CITES listed marine ornamental fishes worldwide;
  - g) consider the potential benefits of sustainable harvest on species conservation and livelihoods; and
  - h) make recommendations to ensure the conservation of marine ornamental fishes taxa that may be negatively impacted by international trade.

**Outcomes**

2. The workshop will generate the following outcomes:
  - a) identification of non-CITES listed marine ornamental fish species in international trade;
  - b) an understanding of the scale and dynamics of this trade, including the degree to which data are available at a national or population scale; and evidence of captive breeding;
  - c) identification of potential options for monitoring of species trade volumes;
  - d) a better understanding of the biology, conservation status and intrinsic vulnerability to extinction for all non-CITES marine ornamental fish species identified as being in international trade;
  - e) prioritisation for further research into the potential impact of international trade on species considered to be at higher risk of extinction as a result of international trade;
  - f) improved management measures and best practices to ensure the conservation of the marine ornamental fish species identified; and
  - g) improved regulations for international trade in non-CITES listed live coral reef fishes and their enforcement.

## Outputs

3. The workshop will generate the following outputs:

- a) recommendations to address the conservation priorities and management needs of non-CITES listed marine ornamental fishes; and
- b) strategies and proposed actions to ensure that international trade in marine ornamental fishes does not threaten their survival, to be presented to the Animals Committee in accordance with Decision 19.237, paragraph c), for its consideration.

A workshop report will be prepared by the Secretariat and circulated to participants for review before submission to the Animals Committee.

## *MODUS OPERANDI*

### **Prioritization of Parties and marine ornamental fishes taxa**

4. To make the workshop as practical and constructive as possible, the Secretariat will initiate a process of prioritization to identify Parties for participation in the workshop and to determine the marine ornamental species most affected by international trade for the workshop to focus on. The prioritization of Parties will be based primarily on the results of the thematic studies prepared under paragraph c) of Decision 18.296. These thematic studies were made available at CoP19 in information document [CoP19 Inf. 99](#) and its [Annex](#).
5. The studies referred to in paragraph 4 above gathered information on marine ornamental fish trade, conservation status, management and legislation from a survey that was circulated via a Notification to the Parties on 30 March 2021 (Notification to the Parties No. 2021/030). Further information on marine ornamental fish species was compiled from species databases (e.g. IUCN Red List, FishBase), trade databases (e.g. US imports in LEMIS, EU imports in TRACES, TRAFFIC Wildlife Trade Portal and GMAD), expert consultation, relevant management plans and legislation in key countries of export, and the wider published literature.
6. The workshop prioritization will also make use of additional available relevant material such as the recent IUCN Red list assessments, research carried out by [Species360](#), information document [CoP19 Inf. 68](#), reports from FAO and any verified information from other credible data sources such as academic field research concerning marine ornamental fishes.
7. The prioritization of Parties will include:
  - a) range States of non-CITES-listed marine ornamental species identified as being most significantly affected by international trade, based on available trade data;
  - b) Parties identified as key exporters of marine ornamental fishes; and
  - c) Parties identified as key importers of marine ornamental fishes;

The Secretariat will issue a Notification to the Parties concerning this prioritization and announce the workshop dates.

8. In accordance with Decision 19.237, the workshop will be convened by the Secretariat and include representatives from the Animals Committee, representatives from range States, exporting, transit and importing countries, fishery stakeholders, industry representatives and relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations.
9. To ensure that maximum benefit is derived from the workshop, Parties most affected by international trade in marine ornamental fishes and identified through the prioritization process described in paragraphs 4 to 8 above are encouraged to make every effort to participate in the expert workshop.
10. Subject to available funding, the Secretariat may be able to support the participation of at least one representative from eligible key Parties identified as affected by international trade in marine ornamental fishes who are not in the position to cover their costs. These Parties may wish to nominate additional representatives at their own expense. To ensure broad stakeholder participation, the representatives that

these Parties nominate should be from CITES authorities, wildlife and fishery agencies or be recognised experts on marine ornamental fish conservation or trade. The nominated representatives should have relevant expertise on the subject matter and be able to contribute to the activities and outputs of the technical workshop.

11. Other organizations and experts with relevant experience or knowledge, or that work actively on marine ornamental fish related matters will be identified and engaged. This could for example include organizations or individual experts that have shown a long-standing interest in marine ornamental fishes, civil society organizations, industry representatives and entities such as the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) Secretariat, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and the Ornamental Fish International (OFI). Subject to the availability of funds, the Secretariat may be able to support the participation of one representative from some of these entities, to be determined on a case-by-case basis.
12. Parties and organizations are encouraged to take into consideration gender diversity in the nomination of representatives.
13. To maximize transparency and participation, the Secretariat will endeavour to provide, if possible, means for interested Parties and stakeholders that are unable to attend the workshop in person to participate or view online.

#### **Meeting agenda**

14. The meeting agenda and summary of available documentation will be developed by the Secretariat in consultation with the Chair of the Animals Committee and the lead(s) identified in the AC workplan 2023-2025. Participants will be invited to submit any supplementary documentation in advance and documents will be made available 30 days in advance of the workshop.

#### **Format and conduct of the workshop**

15. Ideally, the technical workshop should take place in a face-to-face setting. This will however be influenced by identification of a host country and venue. The funding currently available is dependent on the workshop being held before the end of 2023. If a face-to-face meeting is not possible during this time, online meetings may have to be contemplated.