

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

Regional reports

ASIA

1. This document has been prepared by Amir Hamidy and Saeko Terada as member and alternate member, respectively, of the CITES Animals Committee for Asia. This report is compilation from some reports of activity in the region and covers the period from June 2020 to May 2023.

General information

2. Animal Committee (AC) members for Asia: Amir Hamidy (Indonesia) and Ashgar Mobaraki (Iran). Alternate members: Arvin C. Diesmos (Philippines) and Saeko Terada (Japan).
3. Amir Hamidy was elected as a member at the 19th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP19) held in Panama City (Panama) on 14 - 25 November 2022, following the end of the service of Giyanto (Indonesia).
4. Number of Parties in Asian Region: 38.
5. Parties contributed information to this report: Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea and Singapore

Overview of major developments

6. There are no significant issues to report in general. Since we could not have enough communications with Parties because of the pandemic, some developments during this period will be included in the next regional report provided at the AC33.

Activities of regional representatives

7. Amir Hamidy, Arvin C. Diesmos and Saeko Terada attended the CoP19 held in November 2022.

Regional cooperation and priorities

8. Regarding with ASEAN, following meetings for regional cooperation was held.
  - 17th AWG CITES WE which is ASEAN meeting in CITES implementation and law enforcement was held by Philippines in collaboration with Singapore online in 25th May 2022. Philippines highlighted some key outcomes from the Meeting, such as the development of the ASEAN Strategy for Preventing Zoonotic Disease Transmission from Wildlife Trade and the agreement to develop a Policy Brief on Prevention of Zoonotic Diseases from Illegal Wildlife Trade through a One Health Approach.

- 18th AWG CITES WE which is ASEAN meeting in CITES implementation and law enforcement was held by Singapore in collaboration with Thailand in Singapore in 30th–31st May 2023. The Meeting was participated by all ASEAN Member States (AMS) and the ASEAN Secretariat. The representatives from SEAFDEC, ASEAN-USAID PROSPECT, TRAFFIC Southeast Asia, ASEAN Center for Biodiversity (ACB), World Wildlife Fund (WWF), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), UNODC, WOAAH and EIA were participated during the opened session. The points highlighted in the meeting were:
  - 1) The Meeting noted updates from Indonesia on the reports of the 75<sup>th</sup> and 76<sup>th</sup> CITES Standing Committee Meetings was held in Panama City, Panama on 13 November 2022. Indonesia informed the outcomes of the 75<sup>th</sup> Meeting, among other, the Doc. 7.2 Application of Article XIII in the Lao People's Democratic Republic. On the 76<sup>th</sup> SC Meeting, Indonesia informed that the 77<sup>th</sup> SC Meeting will take place in Geneva on 6-10 November 2023 and some intersessional working groups were established such as WG Zoonotic Diseases and WG Captive Breeding.
  - 2) The Meeting noted presentation from Thailand highlighting several activities under the Wildlife Enforcement Initiatives. Some of the updates are the development of a policy brief on Prevention of Zoonotic Diseases from Illegal Wildlife Trade through a One Health Approach as one of the key deliverables for ASEAN Cooperation in forestry 2023, Validation Workshop on Agarwood Report and draft report on Agarwood-producing species, also the Counter Wildlife Trafficking Partnership Forum II.
  - 3) The Meeting noted Indonesia's country report in which some highlights are on the new initiatives to combat the illegal wildlife trade such as Forest Ranger Learning Center, also on the implementation of money laundering approach in wildlife crime cases investigation. Indonesia further informed results of wildlife trade operation through the online and offline platforms. The Meeting noted that Indonesia identified human-wildlife conflict and emergence of animal abuse video are among others the challenges faced on the wildlife enforcement. Additionally, Indonesia underlined the need for initiatives to prevent zoonotic disease transmission from Wildlife Trade through engagement and collaboration within the government bodies and with partners.
  - 4) Lao PDR updated the Meeting on the progress of wildlife enforcement with an overview on the national legislations, organization structures and implemented activities to combat the illegal wildlife trade in 2022 to April 2023. Some presented activities are, among others, field inspection, inspection through online trading, and releasing back the wildlife confiscation. The Meeting also noted activities from Lao PDR to strengthen cooperation in national and international levels as well as collaboration with neighboring countries. On the challenges and future plans, one of the highlights is regarding the online trading and capacity building to respond to the online crime.
  - 5) The Meeting noted Malaysia's country report highlighting on new initiatives, among others, development of Elephant DNA fingerprinting system and establishment of Wildlife Cybercrime Lab in Sarawak. Malaysia also informed on the successful listing of White-rumped shama (WRS) into Appendix II and collaboration with Singapore to list WRS and up list Straw-headed bulbul into Appendix I. The Meeting noted information on the sharing benefits mechanism for local communities in illegal wildlife trade by Malaysia and enforcement activities and wildlife seizures. Malaysia provided recommendations to the Meeting, such as sharing experience of managing confiscated specimens and establishing a real time intelligence sharing mechanism.
  - 6) The Meeting noted presentation from Singapore on WOAAH sib-regional and regional wildlife health networks: Southeast Asia and Asia-Pacific .The South-East Asia Sub-Regional Wildlife Health Network is aiming to provide a platform to facilitate effective sharing of information and advocacy to promote wildlife health agenda in South-East Asia. The Meeting noted 2023 network plans including the SEA Wildlife Network workshop in 2<sup>nd</sup> half of 2023 regarding the laboratory capacity building and information sharing and to support the regional Asia-Pacific Wildlife Health Network. The Meeting was also informed on the establishment of the Asia and Pacific Regional Wildlife Health Network which aims to provide platform to facilitate effective sharing of information, expertise and advocacy to promoted the wildlife health agenda in the Region.
  - 7) WWF Asia Pacific Counter Illegal Wildlife Trade Hub presented the priorities and progress of activities in the region related to financial crime, maritime transport, cybercrime, one health and donor coordination. WWF also presented the project of Targeting Regional Investigations for Policing Opportunities and Development (TRIPOD) on 2021-2023 between Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines. The Meeting also noted information on the Marine Turtle Legislative Review in the Asia-Pacific.
  - 8) The Meeting noted that the 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the AWG CITES and Wildlife Enforcement will be held physically in 2024, in Thailand. The exact date and venue of the Meeting will be informed to all AMS in due course by the Thailand through ASEAN Secretariat.

## Meetings and workshops

9. A number of meetings and workshops on CITES-related issues were held physically or virtually for capacity building and regional cooperation, including the ASEAN meetings mentioned above.

## Others

10. Following information was reported from parties in Asia.

### *Indonesia*

- Indonesia participates on the 74<sup>th</sup> and 75<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Standing Committee in Panama City, Panama, 13 and 25 November 2022.
- Indonesia has already submit the Non-Detriment Findings (NDFs) for terrestrial species *Gekko gecko*, Long Tailed Macaque (*Macaca fascicularis*), and for marine species: Mako sharks (*Sphyrna spp*), Wedgefish (family *Rhinidae*, *Rhyncobatus spp* and *Rhina amcylostoma*) and the all NDFs shows the positive category.
- Submission of 2021 CITES annual report and CITES annual illegal trade report. The annual report recorded the CITES permits, quantities, species, origin and types of the specimens traded. The illegal annual report recorded the seizures of CITES specimens.
- Law enforcement efforts against wildlife crimes committed by Indonesia through cyber patrols of illegal online wildlife trade and law enforcement operations.
- The results of cyber patrols in 2022 identified 1,262 protected wildlife trade content, which were then followed up with content deletion, intelligence operations and enforcement operations.
- Law enforcement operations that have been carried out from 2015 to the first semester of 2023 have included 463 operations and 387 cases that have been proceed to court. Some of the results of operations include illegal trade in Sumatran Tiger bones and skins in Aceh and Riau, Elephant ivory in Jambi, Pangolin scales in Medan, Banjarmasin and Pontianak.
- Several initiatives on wildlife crime law enforcement include the implementation of the anti-money laundering approach, enhancing cyber patrol and wildlife identification mobile applications.
- One of the challenges on wildlife crime law enforcement is the emergence of new modes of crime, namely animal abuse/torturing video content. In 2022, the perpetrators of producing and trading animal abuse video content were arrested in Tasikmalaya, West Java.

### *Japan*

- Fisheries Agency of Japan provided financial support to the project by the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC). Under the project, scientific analysis of catch and DNA data was conducted to explore methodologies of estimating stock status of catadromous eels in Southeast Asia; training workshops for species identification were held and the collection of catch data was assisted for sharks and rays with an aim to strengthen the fisheries resource management by Member countries; furthermore, meetings were held to facilitate common understanding among ASEAN countries and Japan on the global discussion and trend regarding sustainable use of marine living resources at international fora such as CITES and FAO.

### *Republic of Korea*

- As of February 23, ROK reflected the amendment of the appendices decided at COP19 in our national regulations. We also held a CITES MA Workshop on March 9 and 10 to share the results of COP19. The Korean Science Authority has been translating the coral identification guidelines into Korean in cooperation with the UK.

### *Singapore*

#### Legislative amendments

- The Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act ("the Act") is the principal legislation that supports the implementation and enforcement of CITES regulations in Singapore. Singapore embarked on a review of the Act to ensure that the Act remains effective in tackling illegal wildlife trade and the Bill was passed in the Parliament on 4 July 2022. Key enhanced provisions include stiffer penalties and

strengthen enforcement powers on CITES offences. For example, for Appendix I species, the new maximum fine and maximum imprisonment term for an individual is up to \$100,000 per specimen (not exceeding aggregate of \$500,000 or the market value of all specimens at the material time, whichever is higher) and six years. For Appendix II and II species, the new maximum fine and maximum imprisonment term is up to \$50,000 per specimen (not exceeding aggregate of \$500,000 or the market value of all specimens at the material time, whichever is higher) and four years. The fines and imprisonment terms are higher for corporate offenders than that for individuals.

#### Wildlife Forensics Collaboration

- Singapore's first Centre for Wildlife Forensics (CWF) opened on 27 August 2021. The Centre will strengthen Singapore's detection and diagnostic capabilities. The timber reference collection stored at the Xylarium leverages on our botanical expertise in Singapore Botanic Gardens to identify timber specimens. The Centre also utilises DNA analysis methods to provide greater resolution and deeper insights. Singapore also collaborated with Professor Samuel Wasser from the University of Washington and published a publication on Nature Human Behavior on the analysis of large ivory seizures made globally over the past decade, came from repeated poaching at the same location, and even from the same families and population of elephants. Such insights can help us better understand the patterns and networks of illegal wildlife trade.
- Singapore's Centre for Wildlife Forensics was also recognised and included in the CITES Directory for Wildlife Forensics since 2022. This recognition is a testament to Singapore's capabilities in wildlife forensic science, in supporting the implementation and enforcement of CITES. It also attests to the high standards of the Centre in conforming to ISO quality assurance standards for wildlife forensic testing.
- The National Parks Board (NParks), non-profit group Conservation International and Microsoft Singapore collaborated and launched a new mobile application in Jun 2022. It leveraged on artificial intelligence (AI) to help enforcement officers streamline their fight against illegally traded shark and ray fins coming through Singapore. Fin Finder is able to identify the shark or ray species in a matter of seconds when users upload a photo of a fin on the app. The app's algorithm does this by analysing the shape and patterns on the fin, similar to AI's capability to process facial recognition.

#### Joint Investigation with South Africa on Singapore's Rhinoceros Horn Seizure

- Singapore made its largest rhino horns seizure in October 2022, involving 20 pieces of rhino horns estimated to be worth around USD 830,000. A South African, who was travelling from South Africa to the Lao People's Democratic Republic through Singapore, was arrested and the rhinoceros horns were seized by NParks. The rhino horns were examined by Singapore's Centre for Wildlife Forensics, and samples of the seized rhino horns were sent for genetic profiling using the RhoDIS (Rhino DNA Index System) by the University of Pretoria to support further investigation. Singapore, with support from INTERPOL, also fielded officers for an Operational Support Team that was deployed to South Africa for further investigation and evidence analysis.

#### World Wildlife Day Celebration

- In celebration of World Wildlife Day 2023, Singapore held its second World Wildlife Day Regional Youth Symposium on 3rd to 5th March. This youth-led, in-person event brought together over 170 youths representing 15 countries, including all 10 ASEAN Member States, to share their aspirations and discuss how youths could play a part in nature and biodiversity conservation. Following the designated theme of 'Partnerships for Wildlife Conservation' set by the CITES Secretariat, the event featured various expert speakers, workshop partners, and over 40 passionate youth facilitators from the ASEAN region, all coming together to implement panel discussions, focus group discussions, as well as 6 different workshops going in-depth into wildlife conservation matters over 3 days. One popular workshop, for example, was conducted at Singapore's Centre for Wildlife Forensics, where youths were involved in role-plays, to detect, investigate, and enforce upon wildlife traffickers in simulated wildlife trafficking crime scenes and to conduct wildlife forensics analyses in the laboratory.