

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



Nineteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties
Panama City (Panama), 14 – 25 November 2022

Strategic matters

WORLD WILDLIFE TRADE REPORT

1. This document has been submitted by South Africa*.

Background

2. CITES provides a global legal framework for the regulation of international trade in over 38,000 species of wild animals and plants, vast majority of which are plants. Whilst wildlife trade can provide socio-economic incentives to local communities and indigenous peoples to conserve species, if the trade is conducted at an unsustainable level, it can pose a threat to the survival of the species in the wild. The Convention aims to ensure that any international trade in specimens of CITES-listed species authorized by its 184 Parties is legal, sustainable and traceable.
3. The Convention allows commercial international trade in over 97% of the species that are included in its Appendices, namely the species in Appendix II and III as well as the species in Appendix I that are bred in captivity for animals or artificially propagated for plants, provided that all relevant rules are respected. A significant percentage of the trade now involves specimens from operations of captive breeding or artificial propagation as opposed to sourcing from the wild.
4. As recognized in paragraph 203 of the outcome document of UN Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012, *the future we want*, CITES is “an international agreement that stands at the intersection between trade, the environment and development”. Through the mechanisms it puts in place to support legal, sustainable and traceable wildlife trade, CITES plays an important role in supporting sustainable development. Parties to CITES are increasingly moving towards improved management of natural resources with mounting recognition of the multiple services and benefits provided to humans by species and the ecosystems.
5. The many and varied benefits provided by trade in wildlife has been recognised by CITES Parties, including through Resolution Conf. 8.3 (Rev. CoP13) which recognizes “that commercial trade may be beneficial to the conservation of species and ecosystems, and to the development of local people when carried out at levels that are not detrimental to the survival of the species in question.” In many cases, the benefits generated by trade have provided incentives for species and habitat protection and broader biodiversity conservation.
6. In order to decide if the trade is detrimental to the populations in the wild, it is critical to better understand the temporal and spatial trade patterns and the factors that have influenced them, such as supply, demand, policy formulation and other interactions, across scales from detailed single species or genera, to macroscopic perspectives.

* *The geographical designations employed in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the CITES Secretariat (or the United Nations Environment Programme) concerning the legal status of any country, territory, or area, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The responsibility for the contents of the document rests exclusively with its author.*

7. The CITES Trade Database managed by UNEP-WCMC on behalf of the CITES Secretariat is the primary repository for data on the legal wildlife trade and is derived from annual reports compiled by CITES Parties. The CITES Trade Database currently contains over 23 million trade records representing reported trade in CITES-listed species for nearly 50 years, growing by approximately one million new trade records per year in recent past. Such data provide the basis for monitoring the implementation of the Convention and are used to inform many key CITES processes such as the Review of Significant Trade, quota management, assessment of compliance and reviewing the appropriateness of species listed in the appendices.
8. Whilst analyses of legal CITES trade based on such data exist, they often have an emphasis on regulatory measures by primarily focusing on the volumes of trade to ensure that trade is conducted at sustainable levels. A good example is the Review of Significant Trade process which is designed to identify Appendix-II listed species that may be subject to unsustainable levels of international trade, and to identify problems and solutions concerning effective implementation of relevant provisions of the Convention.
9. On the other hand, large-scale temporal and spatial patterns in wildlife trade remain poorly documented and understood. What is even more lagged behind is the understanding of the values and socio-economic benefits of legal trade in CITES species as well as the correlation between legal and illegal trade. While there have been multiple estimations of the value of illegal trade from various organizations, information on the value of global legal trade in CITES-listed species is sporadic and largely speculative.
10. Past reports on the scale and patterns of trade in CITES-listed species are few and far between. The following are among the more recent examples that are available:
 - [CITES Trade: recent trends in international trade in Appendix II-listed species \(1996-2010\)](#) submitted to CoP16 as an information document in relation to the agenda item on capacity building;
 - [Unveiling the patterns and trends in 40 years of global trade in CITES-listed wildlife](#), a report submitted to AC30 and PC24 as an information document
 - [EU WILDLIFE TRADE 2017 - Analysis of the European Union annual reports to CITES 2017](#), a report initiated by the European Commission
11. For the purpose of this document, wildlife includes both animals and plants, and wildlife trade is any commercial and non-commercial international transaction regulated under the CITES provisions and involving specimens of CITES-listed species.

Objective, scope and rationale of the proposed report

12. This document proposes the elaboration of a World Wildlife Trade Report between each intersessional period of the Conference of the Parties. The aim of the proposed report is to review and analyse a range of aspects of international trade in CITES-listed species, from trends, patterns and scale to conservation impacts, socio-economic benefits and the correlation between legal and illegal trade. While the few previous reports focused on topics such as the trends and patterns of the trade, this proposed report is intended to cover a much wider range of issues on a global scale. Such review and analysis expects to enhance the knowledge on trade in CITES-listed species in order to better inform national and international wildlife trade policies and more factual perception and characterization of trade in CITES-listed species. The report aims also to demonstrate how sustainable, legal and traceable wildlife trade can be a tool for conserving species and healthy ecosystems, enhancing rural livelihoods, local and national economies and human wellbeing. The proposed report is intended for a broad audience including the CITES community, policy makers and the general public.
13. The CITES Trade Database, built on data extracted from the annual reports submitted by Parties, will be the readily available primary source of data for the review and analysis of the scale, pattern, and trends of the trade as well as noteworthy changes over time. Efforts will be made to identify the multiplicity of factors that lead to the changes, such as ecological dynamics, regulatory decisions affecting supply, fashions of consumer demand and other socio-economic factors. Such assessment of how broad spatial and temporal patterns change over time for different taxonomic groups, including routes, trading partners, top traded species will be useful for the understanding of the characteristics of wildlife trade and support decision making.
14. This proposed report requires to explore user-friendly modalities to collect additional data, most notably declared pricing information (monetary or financial values) of the trade transactions authorized under CITES,

as well as socio-economic information, data that reveal the conservation impact of regulated trade, and the correlation between legal and illegal trade. Such information is critical for a thorough analysis of all aspects of the trade in order to better inform policy making.

15. The understanding of the scale of trade in CITES-listed species will be incomplete without information on the monetary value. For instance, the [report on EU trade in CITES-listed species in 2017](#) reveals that snowdrops dominate imports in terms of number of individuals and equivalent, and python skins belong to the least significant group. However, when calculated by value, American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*) alone accounts for 83% of the monetary value (EUR 1,246 million) of EU's imports. Similarly, stony corals stand out in global trade in CITES-listed animal species by number of individual animals. But it is going to be a very different picture when we look at the trade by monetary values.
16. The challenge is that accurately quantifying the monetary value of CITES trade requires representative and up-to-date price information. Ideally, price data should also be available at sufficient taxonomic resolution to reliably estimate the monetary value of the trade for a given species-unit combination. While comprehensive datasets reporting the economic value of international trade flows do exist (e.g., UN Comtrade), trade is rarely reported at the granular level that would be required for CITES purposes – i.e. at the species or genus level. This limits the usefulness of such datasets in estimating the value of international wildlife trade. Likewise, the database of UNCTAD BioTrade Initiative uses value of trade as a key parameter, but it does not have species level price data either.
17. However, the Management Authorities of some Parties are starting to collect price data for each transaction when their legal frameworks allow/empower them to do it. For instance, the report on *EU Wildlife Trade 2017 - Analysis of the European Union annual reports to CITES 2017* is not only able to demonstrate patterns and trends of trade but also the economic values of the trade in various species based on the price data submitted by the CITES Management Authority of the United States for animal species as explained in the report.
18. It is important to note that the monetary value of wildlife products within one Party may not reflect their value across entire global chains from producer to consumer markets. Further, in several reports, the price data for specimens of plants are gathered from consumer websites, which may mean that the value of the trade in timber species is under-estimated. Price volatility, or the degree to which the price of a given commodity fluctuates over time, is also likely to vary across markets characterised by different supply and demand pressures. An important step towards addressing these limitations will be to expand the range of Parties that regularly provide this information. Parties can therefore be encouraged to provide the price data mentioned above on voluntary basis using a standard format.
19. It is noted that some Parties may wish to keep the source and other details of price information confidential when such data are used, and the sharing of such data may be subject to legal or other restrictions in certain Parties. This is why a step-by-step approach is proposed to allow Parties to explore the feasibility of sharing such data for the purpose of the preparation of the report. Efforts must be made to ensure the confidentiality of the source and other details if this is the wish of the Parties concerned. Also, the price information presented in the report should not be tied to individual data points.
20. Whilst well-regulated legal trade contributes to the livelihoods of rural communities as well as local and national economies, illegal trade, on the contrary, undermines legal global wildlife trade, jeopardizes livelihoods and biodiversity, and deprives governments of revenue. The proposed analysis is intended to give some focus on Appendix II species in trade and to explore the possible conjunction between legal and illegal trade in certain specimens of CITES-listed species with a view to identify the driving factors of illegal trade and the trends and patterns of illegal trade as compared to legal trade in a given time frame. Based on such reviews and analysis, recommendations can be proposed for possible interventions and strategies to disincentivize illegal trade by improving regulatory measures, the incentives of legal trade, and traceability and trade monitoring mechanism to ensure that the wildlife trade is legal, traceable and sustainable.
21. As noted in the Secretariat's [report to SC70](#), during the period 2007-2016, 62% of all reported commercial trade in live CITES animal species involved specimens declared as not from wild source. For mammals, 95% of live commercial trade was in specimens from these sources. The percentage of trade in animal specimens declared as not from wild source is increasing every year. The World Wildlife Trade Report is intended to provide an opportunity to analyze the cause and impact of the trends including the shift from wild-sourced to captive-bred and artificially propagated specimens.
22. One key component of the socio-economic benefits of regulated trade in CITES species is its contribution to the livelihoods of the communities that live along with wildlife. Some 50 case studies on CITES and livelihoods collected from around the world as well as the best practices learned in the process will lay a

sound basis for an initial analysis of the socio-economic benefits of wildlife trade. The review can be expanded to the contribution of legal and sustainable wildlife trade to local and national economies and the achievement to UN Sustainable Development Goals.

23. As a joint initiative of an alliance of partners including UNEP, WTO, UNCTAD, IUCN, IIED, TRAFFIC and the CITES Secretariat, a pilot edition of World Wildlife Trade Report has been prepared with funding provided by UNEP and China. This report draws upon data from the CITES Trade Database and other data that are currently available. The report will be shared as an information document of CoP19. The pilot edition of World Wildlife Trade Report will serve as basis to discuss the structure and information that such reports can deliver, and to identify the limitations and challenges of such undertakings without additional data directly from Parties.
24. The preparation of future World Wildlife Trade Reports can be coordinated by the CITES Secretariat in collaboration with the alliance of partner organizations with additional data and information provided by Parties on voluntary basis. It is likely to be a multidisciplinary undertaking which entails data collection, management, analysis, and the actual preparation of the report. It is a long overdue for presenting a full picture of trade in CITES-listed species. It is anticipated that the costs for preparation of such reports will be covered by extrabudgetary contributions from Parties and other donor organizations.

Recommendations:

25. The Conference of the Parties is invited to:
 - a) agree to the proposal on the preparation of World Wildlife Trade Report;
 - b) adopt the draft decisions contained in Annex 1 to the present document.

COMMENTS OF THE SECRETARIAT

- A. The Secretariat welcomes this initiative and recommends the adoption by the Conference of the Parties of the draft decisions in Annex 1 to the present document.
- B. The Secretariat is of the view that the proposed World Wildlife Trade Report has the potential to fill an important information gap about the value of trade in specimens of CITES-listed species authorized under the Convention. While wildlife clearly has more value to human beings beyond its monetary value, raising awareness of the economics of the wildlife trade should encourage more investment in its conservation, especially by the private sector, to ensure sustainability. This exercise may also help to document the CITES contributions to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the *CITES Strategic Vision: 2021-2030*.
- C. The Secretariat notes that the pilot edition of the World Wildlife Trade Report is being shared as an information document of CoP19. This edition was prepared by a global alliance of partners, including the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Trade Organization (WTO), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Environment Programme – World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) and TRAFFIC. This pilot edition shows very useful information on different aspects of the legal trade and the methodological and data requirements to produce such reports in the future.
- D. The Secretariat is ready to provide full support to a Standing Committee working group, if one is to be established, in its endeavour to develop a user-friendly methodology to collect data for the preparation of the report in a manner that does not represent a burden or a new reporting obligation for the Parties.
- E. While the Secretariat recognizes the critical importance of price data in demonstrating the monetary values of regulated trade in CITES-listed species, it appreciates also the sensitivity and the need to align with the national regulations of the Parties on this matter. In this regard, the Secretariat notes that the pilot World Wildlife Trade Report shows how price data are intended to be used. It is important to ensure that price data are only used to demonstrate the overall monetary value of the trade and is never tied to an individual transaction. Also, the price data will be maintained by a trustworthy long term partner organization that can

truly ensure confidentiality. The Secretariat itself will not request access to price data reported by Parties, either.

- F. Concerning the regularity of the preparation of such reports, the Secretariat agrees that a report between each intersessional period is a reasonable interval since many elements of the trade that represent noteworthy changes can be expected in such a time frame, including the scale, routes and other patterns of the trade within the time frame of three years as well as conservation impacts and socio-economic factors.

DRAFT DECISIONS ON *WORLD WILDLIFE TRADE REPORT*

Directed to the Parties

19.AA Parties are invited to, on voluntary basis:

- a) explore the possibility of including price data of CITES specimens in trade in their annual or implementation reports, where feasible and allowed by their national legislation.
- b) collate and compile information on conservation impact and socio-economic benefits of trade in CITES-listed species, using a standard template and include them in their implementation reports.

Directed to the Standing Committee

19.BB The Standing Committee shall:

- a) establish an intersessional working group to develop a user-friendly methodology to collect and standard template to submit price data of CITES specimens in trade and other information mentioned in Decision 19.AA based on a study commissioned by the Secretariat and the pilot World Wildlife Trade Report submitted as an information document to CoP19;
- b) when establishing the intersessional working group, endeavour to achieve regional balance of Parties and observers, and give special consideration to participation of representatives of private sector and relevant research institutions; and
- c) make recommendations on the elaboration of a World Wildlife Trade Report and any possible amendments to the guidelines for the submission of annual and implementation reports to the 20th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

Directed to the Secretariat

19.CC Subject to the availability of external financial resources, the Secretariat shall:

- a) commission a study on user-friendly methodologies to collect and standard template to submit price data of CITES specimens in trade and other information mentioned in Decision 19.AA to review and analyze the various aspects of international trade in CITES-listed species, including trends, patterns and scale of the trade, conservation impacts, socio-economic benefits and the possible correlations between legal and illegal trade;
- b) Present the findings of the study referred to the intersessional Working Group of the Standing Committee together with any recommendations it may consider relevant;
- c) issue a Notification to the Parties to seek inputs from Parties on the availability of price data of CITES specimens in trade and other socio-economic information pursuant to Decision 19.AA; and
- d) In coordination with alliance of partners including the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Environment Programme – World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC), the World Trade Organization (WTO), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), the World Resources Institute (WRI), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) and TRAFFIC, prepare a World Wildlife Trade Report following the methodology recommended by the Standing Committee and submit it for consideration by the Conference of the Parties at its 20th meeting.

TENTATIVE BUDGET AND SOURCE OF FUNDING
FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF DRAFT RESOLUTIONS OR DECISIONS

According to Resolution Conf. 4.6 (Rev. CoP18) on *Submission of draft resolutions, draft decisions and other documents for meetings of the Conference of the Parties*, the Conference of the Parties decided that any draft resolutions or decisions submitted for consideration at a meeting of the Conference of the Parties that have budgetary and workload implications for the Secretariat or permanent committees must contain or be accompanied by a budget for the work involved and an indication of the source of funding. The Secretariat proposes the following tentative budget and source of funding.

The coordination of the development of the World Wildlife Trade Report can be covered by the Secretariat in its regular work.

The direct costs for the Secretariat's inputs in implementing Decision 19.CC are described below.

Direct costs:

The development of the World Wildlife Trade Report is estimated to cost USD 90,000 through consultancy work to be undertaken by various partner organizations.