

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

Role of CITES in reducing risk of future zoonotic disease emergence
associated with international wildlife trade

REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE

1. This document has been submitted by the Standing Committee.*

Introduction

2. As part of its functions detailed in Annex 1 of Resolution Conf. 18.2 on *Establishment of committees*, the Standing Committee is charged with advising on emerging operational or policy issues identified by Parties or the Secretariat until direction on the matter is provided by the Conference of the Parties. In January 2021, Canada raised the role of CITES in reducing risk of future zoonotic disease emergence associated with international wildlife trade with the Standing Committee. In their proposal, Canada noted that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has shone a spotlight on the trade in wildlife and the associated risks to human health and the global economy. It has underscored the connection between biodiversity loss and pandemics. Further, the COVID-19 pandemic suggests that governments should review lessons learnt and, where appropriate, strengthen the global ability to prevent, detect, and respond to zoonotic diseases. Actions to reduce the future risk of pandemics may, for example, require strengthening of the global governance system and greater cooperation between nations and international bodies. In the context of this international discourse, the role CITES may have in supporting efforts to reduce the risk of zoonotic disease transmission has been raised. It is appropriate for CITES Parties and representatives, through the Standing Committee, to consider the views and recommendations being proposed and consider what advice it might provide to the Conference of the Parties.
3. As outlined in [Notification No. 2021/031](#), the Standing Committee subsequently decided to establish an intersessional working group on the role of CITES in reducing risk of future zoonotic disease emergence associated with international wildlife trade, chaired by Canada, with a mandate as follows:

Taking into account relevant materials, including the outcomes of the workshop of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) on biodiversity and pandemics, the working group shall review the nexus between international wildlife trade and zoonotic diseases as follows:

- a) *provide a summary of views on the current contribution of CITES, if any, to identifying and mitigating zoonotic disease risk.*
- b) *taking into consideration the context and scope of the Convention, identify opportunities, as well as constraints on how, if anything, CITES could further support an integrated approach to animal,*

* *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.*

human and environmental health, and contribute to global efforts to reduce the risk of future zoonotic disease emergence associated with wildlife trade; and

c) *report its conclusions to the 74th meeting of the Standing Committee.*

In undertaking its work, the working group could include consideration of:

- current evidence and information gaps regarding the links between international wildlife trade and zoonosis risk, including areas where advice might be sought from the Animals Committee;*
- existing Resolutions and Decisions and whether additional guidance to CITES Parties is needed; and*
- the strengthening of existing cooperative relationships, or development of new relationships, between CITES and other intergovernmental organizations, including those involved in animal or public health, trade, food and transport.*

4. The 74th meeting of the Standing Committee (SC74, Lyon, March 2022), considered a detailed report (document [SC74 Doc. 16](#)) prepared by the intersessional working group.
5. The working group considered existing reports, journal articles and assessments of the link between zoonotic disease emergence and trade prepared by various experts in wildlife and health, including documents prepared by IPBES as well as the Tripartite Plus (WHO/FAO/OIE/UNEP), recognizing much more has been published on the subject. Virtual meetings and email discussions took place and in preparing recommendations to SC74, the intersessional working group considered that possible actions should:
 - be legally viable;
 - be able to demonstrate success on the ground;
 - fall within the CITES mandate and align with the aim of the Convention;
 - aim to avoid duplication of existing efforts or initiatives;
 - be commensurate to the result (“worth the effort”); and
 - be practical and feasible, and avoid duplication with other efforts.
6. At SC74, the Standing Committee agreed to submit the draft decisions contained in Annex 1 to the present document for adoption by the 19th meeting of the Conference of Parties (CoP19). In relation to the draft decisions, the following explanations were considered by the Standing Committee:
 - a) proposed Decision 19.AA directs the Secretariat to issue a notification requesting Parties provide information on and experiences with existing measures they have taken to mitigate the risk of pathogen spillover from international wildlife trade. This information would be provided to the Animals Committee and Standing Committee to inform their advice regarding the development of a joint program of work with the OIE as proposed in Decisions 19.DD and 19.FF. This information could additionally provide useful example and lessons learned for the benefit of all Parties.
 - b) Proposed Decisions 19.BB, 19.DD and 19.FF suggest working with the OIE under the auspices of the existing cooperation agreement. The working group expressed considerable support for working with existing bodies and leveraging existing relationships, notably with the OIE. There was also a concern from some regarding urgency to act. As such, in this proposed suite of Decisions, the COP would direct the Secretariat to work immediately with the OIE to develop and implement relevant collaborative actions through a joint program of work. Recognizing that there is existing cooperation with OIE, the Secretariat would additionally be invited to report on its current areas of collaboration and evaluate whether updates to the cooperation agreement would be useful to support a joint program of work. The Secretariat would be directed to work in close consultation with the Animals and Standing Committee Chairs, who through their respective members, would support and provide direction to the Secretariat on building a work program. Based on the discussions in the working group, this collaborative effort could firstly focus on ways to provide practical guidance for the appropriate housing, care and handling of CITES-listed live animals in international trade in order to mitigate the risk of pathogen spillover and

disease transmission, building on the lessons learned from the responses to the notification proposed in Decision 19.AA.

- c) Some of the activities that might be found in the joint program of work could include:
- i) Reviewing, and providing advice to improve draft OIE guidelines for identifying and mitigating the risk of pathogen transmission along the international wildlife trade supply chain, including sharing with and seeking the input of the CITES Committees, through their Chairs, to ensure international wildlife trade expertise is fully integrated into the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Reducing the Risk of Disease Spillover in Wildlife Markets and along the Wildlife Supply Chain;
 - ii) Collaboratively identify and collate available data on disease and pathogen spillover risk associations with species, conduct an analysis of trade to identify species, origins (e.g. wild, captive bred) and activities that present the most likely risk of zoonotic disease transmission and pathogen spillover along the international trade supply chain, and propose risk criteria to evaluate the relative risk of pathogen spillover from CITES-listed animal species or products in trade;
 - iii) Identifying other ways that CITES wildlife trade experts (notably national CITES Authorities as well as the Animals and Standing Committees) could participate in OIE's efforts to develop guidance for regulating the wildlife supply chain;
 - iv) Identifying or creating OIE-relevant technical support (subject to the availability of funding) for provision to Parties in order to enhance their capacity to ensure appropriate conditions for international trade of live animals, such as through training in handling wildlife or guidance on appropriate biosecurity precautions;
 - v) Considering opportunities to expedite CITES permitting and improve the rapid exchange of emergency diagnostic specimens in support of detection, prevention and response to zoonotic disease transmission;
 - vi) Sharing with CITES Authorities relevant practical guidance developed on identifying trade situations with a high risk of pathogen spillover as well as measures that can be adopted to mitigate against pathogen spillover or disease transmission and prevent damage to health during transport with CITES Authorities, including informing Parties of where to access the latest information;
 - vii) Identifying how to best leverage the existing CITES Trade Database, the annual illegal trade database, and processes (such as permitting and traceability systems) in supporting global pathogen surveillance, including consideration of what information collected along the CITES trade chain could constructively contribute to efforts on pathogen surveillance;
 - viii) Undertaking joint training, and strengthening exchanges and collaboration between national CITES and OIE entities;
 - ix) Working together to integrate wildlife health and wildlife trade expertise into all relevant One Health efforts underway and in development by OIE in partnership with WHO, FAO, and UNEP (the Tripartite Plus)
- d) Proposed Decisions 19.CC, 19.EE and 19.GG recognize that there may be additional opportunities under existing cooperative arrangements or activities. Given constraints on resources, and a desire to ensure there is no duplication of effort, collaborative efforts with existing partners are an effective way of addressing multi-dimensional issues such as the role of international wildlife trade in zoonotic disease transmission. The working group identified new opportunities for collaboration, such as work being undertaken by partners within the International Consortium on Combatting Wildlife Crime (ICCWC). Some working group members also recognized the importance of collaborating with members of the Tripartite Plus, notably WHO and FAO. As there was little time to review existing Resolutions, formal agreements or current activities to see how further collaboration could most effectively be considered, the working group Chair proposes requesting the Secretariat provide advice on cooperation opportunities to the Animals and Standing Committees, in line with existing Resolutions, Decisions or agreements.
- e) Finally, for the longer term, proposed Decision 19.HH and Decision 19.II suggest considering the need to develop a Resolution to outline CITES' contribution to advancing a 'One Health' approach, including

the role of maintaining healthy ecosystems. It could also encourage actions and measures by Parties that would monitor and reduce the risk of pathogen spillover along the international wildlife trade supply chain for CITES-listed species, as well as encourage domestic collaboration among national wildlife and human health authorities to minimize and mitigate the risk of pathogen spillover or disease transmission. Such a resolution could provide clear instructions to the CITES Committees or Secretariat as appropriate to collaborate and provide CITES expertise to relevant agencies, such as OIE, WHO, UNEP, FAO etc., in order to avoid duplication or conflicting efforts. This could extend to directing relevant CITES Committees or the Secretariat to monitor and report on, as appropriate, member state negotiations on the development of an international instrument on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response (similar to Decision 17.181 on reporting on the development of an international legally binding instrument under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, or Resolution Conf. 18.4 on Cooperation with the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services). The Resolution could include relevant Annexes to support Parties in strengthening the international wildlife trade dimensions of a 'One Health' approach.

7. At SC74, the Standing Committee also agreed to a suggestion from its working group to propose amendments to Resolution Conf. 10.21 (Rev. CoP16) on *Transport of live specimens*, contained in Annex 2 to the present document, to recommend working with IATA to review the IATA Live Animals Regulations in order to incorporate new animal and human health risk mitigation measures and strengthen existing measures, as appropriate, as well as to include relevant provisions in its guidelines for the non-air transport of live wild animals and plants.
8. The proposed amendments to Resolution Conf. 10.21 (Rev. CoP16) furthermore build on the existing provisions in the Resolution directing the Standing Committee and the Secretariat, in consultation with the Animals and Plants Committees and IATA, to regularly review, revise and approve amendments to the *CITES guidelines for the non-air transport of live wild animals and plants* among other activities. SC74 agreed to propose to CoP19 that the Committees and the Secretariat could be instructed to recommend appropriate updates to the existing guidelines to include evidence-based measures to mitigate risks to animal and human health. In doing so, the Committees could take into consideration expert guidelines developed on mitigating pathogen spillover risk and preventing damage to health, including the results of any collaborative work with the OIE. For example, by developing guidance on issues such as reducing the risk of pathogen spillover through appropriate care, housing and handling of live animals in international trade and transport, as well as guidance on the identification and care of sick specimens. Incorporation of guidelines, developed as part of a joint programme of work with the OIE, may help Parties ensure the appropriate international transport of live animals.

Recommendations:

9. The Conference of the Parties is invited to:
 - a) adopt the draft decisions contained in Annex 1 to the present document; and
 - a) adopt the amendments to Resolution Conf. 10.21 (Rev. CoP16) on *Transport of live specimens* contained in Annex 2 to the present document.

COMMENTS OF THE SECRETARIAT

- A. The Secretariat recommends that the Conference of the Parties adopt the draft decisions proposed, with some editorial amendments, mostly for brevity and clarity which are shown in paragraph G below.
- B. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought into sharp focus the global impact of zoonotic diseases. The IPBES Workshop Report on Biodiversity and Pandemics (2020) concluded that the virus that caused the pandemic (SARS-CoV-2) almost certainly originated in insectivorous bats *Rhinolophus* spp. and was then spread either by people and/or a secondary animal host. The transmission or spillover of pathogens from wildlife to people can occur directly through human activities such as hunting, farming and butchering of wildlife or indirectly from wildlife through livestock to people. Use of and trade in wildlife (both national and international trade) is clearly one means through which such pathogens can spread. CITES regulates the trade in almost 6,000 animal species, which includes certain taxa that have been shown to be susceptible to the spread of zoonotic pathogens. International trade in live specimens of these species is likely to pose the most significant risk and illegal trade, which is by definition uncontrolled and undocumented, is a particular concern.

- C. Article XIV.2 of the Convention states *inter alia* that the provisions of the Convention do not preclude Parties from taking any domestic measures pertaining to public health, but the Secretariat recommends that the Convention should collectively take a more proactive approach regarding zoonotic diseases. CITES can and should support intergovernmental bodies which have a role in public health and preventing zoonotic disease emergence to sustainably balance and optimize the health of people, animals and ecosystems.
- D. The Secretariat appreciates the thoughtful work of the Standing Committee and its intersessional working group on the role of CITES in reducing risk of future zoonotic disease emergence associated with the international wildlife trade. The Secretariat provides a clean version of the draft decisions re-numbered/lettered and including its proposed changes, in paragraph G below.
- E. Of the more substantive changes proposed, the Secretariat is concerned about the increasing trend in resolutions and decisions to instruct the Chairs of the Standing, Animals and Plants Committees to consult their Members over ongoing work by the Secretariat. Such ongoing consultation, which does not result in any formal decision by the Committee, creates extra work for the Chairs who, in the case of the Animals and Plants Committees, are volunteers. It is also normally only conducted in just one of the working languages of the Convention. The Secretariat suggests that unless the ongoing work in question is particularly sensitive, it be allowed to complete its work and the Committee in question provide input and take formal decisions when presented with the results.
- F. The Secretariat also suggests an additional draft decision shown as Decision 19.II below. In March 2022, the Tripartite Group (FAO-WOAH-WHO) collaborating to coordinate global activities to address health risks at the animal-human-ecosystems interfaces became the Quadripartite Collaboration for One Health with the addition of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to its membership. The Secretariat proposes adding a draft decision to call on UNEP to share information from the assessments carried out under the Quadripartite Collaboration for One Health with the Secretariat so it can keep Parties informed of developments.
- G. Proposed amendments:

(Proposed new text is underlined, proposed deletions are indicated in ~~strike through~~)

Directed to the Secretariat

- 19.AA The Secretariat shall issue a Notification to the Parties, requesting Parties to report on any measures they have in place ~~identify and describe any new or existing domestic measures, or stricter domestic measures on in-transit shipments, imports and (re-) exports, on live wildlife trade or markets that contribute~~ to mitigate the risk of pathogen spillover from international wildlife trade; and make the results available on the CITES website as a compilation of responses that could be useful to other Parties, as well as to the Animals Committee and the Standing Committee for their information and consideration in undertaking Decisions 19.DD and 19.FF.
- 19.BB The Secretariat shall, in line with its ~~the~~ Cooperation Agreement with ~~between the CITES Secretariat and the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) OIE, work with WOAHOIE and its Wildlife Working Group, including through the new Ad Hoc Working Group on Reducing the Risk of Disease Spillover in Wildlife Markets and along the Wildlife Supply Chain, in order to,~~ *inter alia*, develop a joint programme of work to collaboratively help fill knowledge gaps and identify effective and practical solutions for reducing pathogen spillover risk in wildlife supply chains.
- ~~In undertaking this work, the Secretariat shall seek the views of the Animals and Standing Committee on the joint program of work, through their Chairs, and r~~Report on the progress with of the development and implementation of the joint programme of work to the Animals Committee, the Standing Committee and the 20th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.
- ~~The Secretariat shall also r~~Review its Cooperation Agreement with WOAH OIE to identify any necessary updates to reflect guidance provided by the Animals and Standing Committees.
- 19.CC The Secretariat shall prepare a report summarizing existing activities or formal agreements with other entities (such as, among others, FAO, WHO and ICCWC) as well as possible emerging opportunities, and identify opportunities for additional practical collaboration towards reducing the risk of pathogen spillover or zoonotic disease transmission in international wildlife trade supply chains for consideration by the Animals Committee and the Standing Committee.

Directed to the Animals Committee

- 19.DD The Animals Committee shall review the report of the Secretariat ~~under on its implementation of~~ Decision 19.BB ~~bis~~ and make recommendations to the Standing Committee, including on proposed effective and practical solutions for reducing pathogen spillover risk in wildlife supply chains ~~priorities for the joint program of work and~~ taking into the consideration the responses to the Notification prepared under Decision 19.AA.
- 19.EE The Animals Committee shall review the report of the Secretariat under Decision 19.CC and make recommendations to the Standing Committee on opportunities for practical collaboration under the direction of existing Resolutions, Decisions or agreements.

Directed to the Standing Committee

- 19.FF The Standing Committee shall review the report of the Secretariat ~~under on the implementation of~~ Decision 19.BB ~~bis~~, taking into account the recommendations of the Animals Committee, ~~and make its own recommendations,~~ including on proposed effective and practical solutions for reducing pathogen spillover risk in wildlife supply chains ~~priorities for the joint program of work and~~ taking into consideration the responses to the Notification prepared under Decision 19.AA and provide guidance to the Secretariat.
- 19.GG The Standing Committee shall review the report of the Secretariat under Decision 19.CC taking into account the recommendations of the Animals Committee, and make recommendations on opportunities for practical collaboration under the direction of existing Resolutions, Decisions or agreements and provide guidance to the Secretariat.

Directed to the Standing Committee

- 19.HH The Standing Committee shall, taking into account proposals in document CoP19 Doc. 23.1 and in consultation with the Animals and Plants Committees, consider the need for and development of a Resolution on actions CITES Parties and others could take to advance a 'One Health' approach as it pertains to international wildlife trade, and provide its recommendations, which may be in the form of a new draft Resolution, to the 20th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

Directed to the United Nations Environment Programme

- 19.II The Conference of the Parties invites the United Nations Environment Programme to share information from the assessments carried out under the Quadripartite Collaboration for One Health with the Parties, via the Secretariat.

DRAFT DECISIONS ON THE ROLE OF CITES IN REDUCING RISK OF FUTURE ZOOLOGICAL DISEASE
EMERGENCE ASSOCIATED WITH INTERNATIONAL WILDLIFE TRADE

Directed to the Secretariat

- 19.AA** The Secretariat shall issue a Notification to the Parties, requesting Parties to identify and describe any new or existing domestic measures, or stricter domestic measures on in-transit shipments, imports and (re-) exports, on live wildlife trade or markets that contribute to mitigate the risk of pathogen spillover from international wildlife trade; and make the results available on the CITES website as a compilation of responses that could be useful to other Parties, as well as to the Animals Committee and the Standing Committee for their information and consideration in undertaking Decisions 19.DD and 19.FF.
- 19.BB** The Secretariat shall, in line with the cooperation agreement between the CITES Secretariat and the OIE, work with the OIE and its Wildlife Working Group, including through the new *Ad Hoc Working Group on Reducing the Risk of Disease Spillover in Wildlife Markets and along the Wildlife Supply Chain*, in order to, *inter alia*, develop a joint program of work to collaboratively help fill knowledge gaps and identify effective and practical solutions for reducing pathogen spillover risk in wildlife supply chains. In undertaking this work, the Secretariat shall seek the views of the Animals and Standing Committee on the joint program of work, through their Chairs, and report on the progress of the development and implementation of the joint program of work to the Animals Committee, the Standing Committee and the 20th meeting of the Conference of the Parties. The Secretariat shall also review its Cooperation Agreement with OIE to identify any necessary updates to reflect guidance provided by the Animals and Standing Committees.
- 19.CC** The Secretariat shall prepare a report summarizing existing activities or formal agreements with other entities (such as, among others, FAO, WHO and ICCWC) as well as possible emerging opportunities, and identify opportunities for additional practical collaboration towards reducing the risk of pathogen spillover or zoonotic disease transmission in international wildlife trade supply chains for consideration by the Animals Committee and the Standing Committee.

Directed to the Animals Committee

- 19.DD** The Animals Committee shall review the report of the Secretariat on its implementation of Decision 19.BB and make recommendations to the Standing Committee, including on priorities for the joint program of work and taking into the consideration the responses to the Notification prepared under Decision 19.AA.
- 19.EE** The Animals Committee shall review the report of the Secretariat under Decision 19.CC and make recommendations to the Standing Committee on opportunities for practical collaboration under the direction of existing Resolutions, Decisions or agreements.

Directed to the Standing Committee

- 19.FF** The Standing Committee shall review the report of the Secretariat on the implementation of Decision 19.BB, taking into account the recommendations of the Animals Committee, and make its own recommendations, including on priorities for the joint program of work and taking into consideration the responses to the Notification prepared under Decision 19.AA.
- 19.GG** The Standing Committee shall review the report of the Secretariat under Decision 19.CC taking into account the recommendations of the Animals Committee, and make recommendations on opportunities for practical collaboration under the direction of existing Resolutions, Decisions or agreements.

Directed to the Standing Committee

- 19.HH** The Standing Committee shall, in consultation with the Animals and Plants Committees, consider the development of a Resolution on actions CITES Parties and others could take to advance a 'One Health' approach as it pertains to international wildlife trade, and provide its recommendations, which may be in the form of a new draft Resolution, to the 20th meeting of the Conference of the Parties. In developing

any resolution, the Standing Committee may consider, *inter alia*, encouraging Parties to undertake actions that would improve monitoring and reduce the risk of pathogen spillover along international wildlife trade supply chains; encouraging or enhancing collaboration with national wildlife and human health authorities to minimize and mitigate the risk of disease transmission; providing instructions to the CITES Committees or Secretariat to collaborate with relevant agencies and instruments to strengthen the consideration of wildlife health and international wildlife trade in a 'One Health' approach; and contributing their expertise in discussions on the development of an international instrument on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response.

Directed to the Animals and Plants Committee

- 19.//** The Animals and Plants Committee shall consider scientific elements that could be included in a possible Resolution on actions CITES Parties and others could take to advance a 'One Health' approach as it pertains to international wildlife trade, and provide its recommendations to the Standing Committee.

DRAFT AMENDMENTS TO RESOLUTION CONF. 10.21 (REV. COP16) ON
TRANSPORT OF LIVE SPECIMENS

New text shown underlined.

2. RECOMMENDS that:

[...]

e) the Standing Committee and the Secretariat, in consultation with the Animals and Plants Committees and IATA, regularly review, revise and approve amendments to the CITES guidelines for the non-air transport of live animals and plants, including recommending, in consultation with the World Organization for Animal Health, the World Health Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, any appropriate updates to include evidence-based measures to mitigate risks to animal and human health posed by international trade in CITES-listed species;

3. DIRECTS the Standing Committee and the Animals and Plants Committees, in consultation with the Secretariat:

[...]

insert a new subparagraph c), renumbering subsequent subparagraphs:

c) to review and recommend any appropriate updates to the *IATA Live Animals Regulations* to incorporate evidence-based measures to mitigate risks to animal and human health posed by international trade in CITES-listed species;

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 Secretariat believes that the Standing Animals and Plants Committees could accommodate the envisaged activities as part of their regular programme of work.