

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

ONE HEALTH AND CITES:
REDUCING HUMAN AND ANIMAL HEALTH RISKS FROM WILDLIFE TRADE

1. This document has been submitted by Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, The Gambia, Liberia, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal. *

Background

2. According to the World Health Organisation, as of April 2022 the COVID-19 pandemic is estimated to have infected more than 500 million people with 6 million lives lost. The cost to the global economy is estimated to be in the tens of trillions of dollars. Overwhelming scientific opinion considers that the SARS-CoV-2 virus originated in wild animals¹.
3. According to the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), the majority (70%) of emerging diseases (e.g. Ebola, Zika, Nipah encephalitis), and almost all known pandemics (e.g. influenza, HIV/AIDS, COVID-19), are zoonoses – i.e. they are caused by microbes of animal origin. These microbes 'spill over' due to close contact between wildlife, livestock, and people.
4. An estimated 1.7 million currently undiscovered viruses are thought to exist in mammalian and avian hosts. Of these, 631,000–827,000 could have the ability to infect humans. IPBES reports that the risk of pandemics is increasing rapidly, with more than five new diseases emerging in people every year.²
5. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and as outlined in [Notification 2021/031](#) of April 2021, the Standing Committee established an intersessional working group on the role of CITES in reducing the risk of future zoonotic disease emergence associated with international wildlife trade. The working group had the following Terms of Reference:

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;*

* *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.*

¹ [The animal origin of SARS-CoV-2 \(science.org\)](https://www.sciencemag.org/feature/data/2020/04/20200401a)

² [IPBES Workshop on Biodiversity and Pandemics Report_0.pdf](#)

- 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, 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.*
6. Following a number of online meetings and correspondence, the intersessional working group submitted its report and recommendations to the 74th meeting of the Standing Committee in [SC74 Doc.16](#). The intersessional working group's report was discussed by the Committee, which agreed to submit draft Decisions to the 19th Conference of the Parties ([see SC74 Sum 2](#)).

CITES' Role In Addressing Animal and Human Health

7. International trade has been widely recognized as an important contributory factor to the risk of zoonotic pathogen emergence and disease transmission.³ CITES, as the Multilateral Environmental Agreement that governs international trade in wild flora and fauna has a central role in addressing zoonotic disease transmission risks associated with wildlife trade. CITES Parties must ensure that international trade in wildlife as regulated by the Convention is conducted in a way that seeks to reduce the risk of pathogen emergence, amplification, mutation and spillover, in order to protect the health of animals and people.
8. According to the UNEP-WCMC & JNCC report 'Zoonotic potential of international trade in CITES-listed species'⁴, between 2009 and 2018, 29% of the 90 million live CITES animals traded (~26.5 million animals) belonged to a family associated with at least one disease of zoonotic origin. For meat of CITES-listed species, between 2009 and 2018, 23.5 million kg (27% of all meat traded by weight over this period) was derived from taxa belonging to a family associated with at least one disease of zoonotic origin.
9. The One Health approach, widely adopted by Governments and their agencies globally, is a collaborative, multisectoral and transdisciplinary approach⁵. To be successful, it requires all stakeholders to contribute and collaborate in accordance with their areas of expertise. CITES' expertise in the international trade in wild fauna and flora will provide a vital contribution to the mitigation of zoonotic pathogen emergence and spread.
10. The One Health definition developed by the One Health High Level Expert Panel (OHHLEP) states: "**One Health** is an integrated, unifying approach that aims to sustainably balance and optimize the health of people, animals and ecosystems. It recognizes the health of humans, domestic and wild animals, plants, and the wider environment (including ecosystems) are closely linked and inter-dependent. The approach mobilizes multiple sectors, disciplines and communities at varying levels of society to work together to foster well-being and tackle threats to health and ecosystems, while addressing the collective need for clean water, energy and air, safe and nutritious food, taking action on climate change, and contributing to sustainable development.⁶"
11. As part of the Collaborative Partnership on Sustainable Wildlife Management, CITES has already recognized that: "An inclusive 'One Health approach' that integrates "ecosystem health" dimension through ecological thinking and sound science, is fundamental. This entails thorough consideration of the full range of

³ [CITES and the Zoonotic Disease Content in International Wildlife Trade - PMC \(nih.gov\)](#)

⁴ [Zoonotic potential of international trade in CITES-listed species \(jncc.gov.uk\)](#)

⁵ [One Health Basics | One Health | CDC](#)

⁶ [Tripartite and UNEP support OHHLEP's definition of "One Health" \(who.int\)](#)

biodiversity-health linkages and all proximate and underlying risk factors of zoonotic disease emergence and transmission.”⁷.

12. The West African region is fully committed to ensuring that its people are protected from the risk of zoonotic disease transmission, a commitment which is inherently linked to wildlife trade, as demonstrated by the Vision of the West Africa Strategy on Combating Wildlife Crime (WASCWC) which is as follows: “*Wildlife crime and other related threats including also the spread of zoonotic diseases are significantly reduced in ECOWAS member States to improve the conservation of biodiversity for the welfare and the socio-economic development of populations.*” WASCWC Core Objective 3, Action 1 also highlights the importance of addressing zoonotic disease transmission as follows: “*Develop and implement initiatives to raise the awareness of senior managers about the importance of CITES, wildlife law enforcement and the need to support all authorities with necessary training and tools to tackle wildlife crime as well as the spread of zoonotic diseases.*”
13. The proponents are concerned that the Decisions recommended by the Standing Committee at its 74th meeting do not adequately reflect the urgency with which CITES must address pathogen emergence and zoonotic disease transmission. The global community has suffered massive human and economic costs as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The draft Resolution and Decisions contained in Annexes 1 and 2 of this document provide an opportunity for CITES to initiate measures, as a matter of extreme urgency, to prevent the risk of future pandemics as a result of zoonotic pathogen emergence and disease transmission.

Recommendation

14. The Conference of the Parties is invited to
 - a) recognize the urgency with which CITES must address pathogen emergence and zoonotic disease transmission and the central role of CITES in this regard;
 - b) adopt the draft resolution presented in Annex 1 of this document; and
 - c) adopt the draft decisions presented in Annex 2 of this document.

COMMENTS OF THE SECRETARIAT

- A. For reasons explained in its comments on document CoP19 Doc. 23.1, the Secretariat believes that it is premature to adopt a resolution on reducing human and animal health risks from international wildlife trade and the associated ‘CITES One Health Expert Panel’ proposed in the draft decisions in Annex 2 to the present document. Nevertheless, the Secretariat considers that the draft of such a resolution and associated decisions in the present document is an important contribution to the debate which could be considered by the Standing Committee in implementing the decisions proposed in document CoP19 Doc. 23.1.
- B. If the meeting of the Conference of the Parties decides to adopt the resolution and decisions in the present document, the Secretariat provides an estimate of the likely resource implications below. It is difficult to precisely estimate these as the *modus operandi* of the proposed CITES One Health Expert Panel is not yet determined.

⁷ [CPW COVID-19 statement final launch 16 Oct.pdf \(cites.org\)](#)

RESOLUTION CONF. 19.XX ON *ONE HEALTH AND CITES:*
REDUCING HUMAN AND ANIMAL HEALTH RISKS FROM INTERNATIONAL WILDLIFE TRADE

RECOGNIZING that emerging diseases of zoonotic origin pose a threat to human and animal health and to global, national and local economies;

RECALLING that an estimated 75% of new and emerging infectious diseases in humans can be transmitted from animals to people;

FURTHER RECALLING estimates from the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystems Services (IPBES) that 1.7 million currently undiscovered viruses are thought to exist in mammalian and avian hosts, of which between 631,000 and 827,000 could have the ability to infect humans;

RECALLING the devastating and ongoing economic, social and environmental consequences of COVID-19, which is likely to have emerged from pathogens from wild animals, and previous pandemics which have their origins in wild animal pathogens;

RECOGNIZING that trade in live wild animals presents opportunities and pathways for pathogens to spread between animals and to spill over to humans, creating the potential for the emergence and transmission of diseases of zoonotic origin;

FURTHER RECOGNIZING that the conditions under which live animals are collected, bred, prepared and shipped can contribute to their conveyance of pathogens, exposure to pathogens, pathogen mutation, and expression of disease, and reduce their ability to resist infection as a result of stress-induced, diminished immune response;

RECALLING that the CITES treaty (Articles III, IV, V, and VIII) requires that living specimens are so prepared and shipped as to minimise the risk of injury, damage to health or cruel treatment;

ACKNOWLEDGING the strategic alignment among the World Health Organisation (WHO), the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), known as the Quadripartite Alliance on One Health, aimed at sharing responsibilities and coordinating global activities to address health risks at the animal-human-ecosystem interface;

ALSO ACKNOWLEDGING the operational definition of One Health developed by the One Health High Level Expert Panel (OHHLEP) and endorsed in December 2021 by the FAO, OIE, UNEP, and FAO;

FURTHER ACKNOWLEDGING the Guidance issued in April 2021 by the WHO, OIE, and UNEP, which *inter alia* calls on national competent authorities to suspend the trade in live caught wild animals of mammalian species for food or breeding purposes and close sections of food markets selling live caught wild animals of mammalian species as an emergency measure, and which, although focussed on the trade in mammals for consumption as food, emphasises the relevance of its Guidance to other utilizations of wild animals;

AWARE of the Global Early Warning System For Health Threats and Emerging Risks at the Human-Animal-Ecosystems Interface (GLEWS+), which aims to inform prevention and control measures, through the rapid detection and risk assessment of health threats and events of potential concern at the human-animal-ecosystems interface.

NOTING the existing Cooperation Agreements between the CITES Secretariat and the OIE, the International Air Transport Association (IATA), and the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD);

RECALLING the cooperation between CITES and other biodiversity-related conventions, as recognised in Resolution Conf. 10.4 (Rev. CoP14) on *Cooperation and synergy with the Convention on Biological Diversity*, Resolution Conf. 13.3 on *Cooperation and synergy with the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)*, Resolution Conf. 16.4 on *Cooperation of CITES with other biodiversity-related conventions*, Resolution Conf. 18.4 on *Cooperation with the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on*

Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, and Resolution Conf. 18.5 on Cooperation and Synergy with the World Heritage Convention";

CONVINCED that CITES should play a central role to significantly reduce the risk of future human and animal infectious disease epidemics and pandemics of zoonotic origin, derived from trade in wild animals.

THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION

1. RECOMMENDS that:

- a) Parties, when implementing this Resolution, endorse the World Health Organization's definition of the term "zoonoses" as "*any disease or infection that is naturally transmissible from vertebrate animals to humans.*"⁸
- b) Parties take into consideration the One Health approach in implementation of the Convention:
 - i) to ensure live animals are being traded in accordance with Articles III, IV, V and VII which require that living specimens are so prepared and shipped as to minimise the risk of injury, damage to health or cruel treatment;
 - ii) in regulating, registering, or otherwise administering captive-breeding, farming, and ranching facilities in accordance with CITES Resolution Conf. 12.10 (Rev. CoP15) on Registration of operations that breed Appendix-I animal species in captivity for commercial purposes, CITES Resolution Conf. 10.16 (Rev.), Specimens of animal species bred in captivity, and CITES Resolution Conf. 11.16 (Rev. CoP15), Ranching and trade in ranched specimens of species transferred from Appendix I to Appendix II;
- c) Parties develop and strengthen synergies with appropriate national and international animal and public health authorities, taking account of relevant definitions, standards and guidance from the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and other international bodies as appropriate;
- d) building on such synergies, Management Authorities, in consultation with Scientific Authorities and other bodies concerned:
 - i) develop a *One Health CITES Action Plan* to reduce the risk of zoonotic disease transmission during taking, breeding/ranching/farming, transport, sale (including at markets), inspection, shipment and transshipment of CITES listed species and specimens, using Guidance and references found in the One Health section of the CITES website;
 - ii) undertake appropriate risk analyses with respect to animal, human and environmental health when considering applications for trade permits and certificates; and
 - iii) ensure that all individuals tasked with compliance and enforcement of CITES are regularly trained in safe animal handling and use of personal protective equipment (PPE);
- e) Parties take into consideration the risk of pathogen emergence and zoonotic disease transmission when implementing Resolution Conf 9.7 (Rev CoP15) on *Transit and transshipment*, Resolution Conf 11.3 (Rev CoP18) on *Compliance and enforcement*, Resolution Conf 10.21 (Rev CoP16) on *Transport of live specimens* and other Resolutions as appropriate;
- f) Parties undertake broad public awareness campaigns to ensure widespread understanding of the risks of pathogen emergence and zoonotic disease transmission; and
- g) The Chair of the Animals Committee and the CITES Secretariat work with the Convention on Migratory Species and other biodiversity-related conventions to ensure the risk of pathogen emergence and

⁸ <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/zoonoses>

disease transmission from wild animal capture, breeding/farming/ranching, transit, shipment, and transshipment are addressed in international deliberations; and

2. ENCOURAGES all Parties, donors, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders, as a matter of urgency, to support the implementation of this Resolution through the provision of financial and technical support to Parties where necessary.

DRAFT DECISION ON ONE HEALTH AND CITES: REDUCING HUMAN AND ANIMAL HEALTH RISKS
FROM INTERNATIONAL WILDLIFE TRADE

Directed to the Secretariat

19.AA The Secretariat shall, in collaboration with the Animals Committee:

- a) seek expert guidance from the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Health Organization (WHO) and other relevant international health organizations with regard to the establishment of a CITES One Health Expert Panel, to support Parties with the implementation of Resolution Conf 19.XX;
- b) make recommendations to the 77th meeting of the Standing Committee regarding:
 - i) Terms of Reference for a CITES One Health Expert Panel and;
 - ii) nominations for membership of the Expert Panel.
- c) create a dedicated One Health CITES website, containing references and guidance for Parties, sourced from relevant organizations including OIE, FAO, UNEP and WHO, to support the creation of One Health CITES Action Plans and risk assessments (in accordance with Resolution Conf 19.XX).

Directed to the Standing Committee

19.BB The Standing Committee shall,

- a) no later than its 78th meeting, adopt Terms of Reference for and appoint a CITES One Health Expert Panel, to provide guidance to Parties in the development of their One Health Action Plans and risk assessments (in accordance with Resolution Conf 19.XX).
- b) make recommendations to the 20th Conference of the Parties on the development of further resources to support Parties with the implementation of Resolution Conf 19.XX as necessary.

Directed to the Secretariat

19.CC The Secretariat shall support the Standing Committee in the implementation of Decision 19.BB including through the provision of technical expertise, translation and interpretation as appropriate.

**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.

Implementation of the draft resolution presented in Annex 1 would have workload implications for the Secretariat as follows:

- Work time in the distribution of Notifications reminding Parties to submit One Health Action Plans. This can be included as a core part of the Secretariat's work and accommodated within its regular work programme.

Implementation of draft Decisions presented in Annex 2 would require some time from the Secretariat and Committees as follows:

- Work time in the consultation with health organizations and in the drafting of Terms of Reference for the CITES One Health Expert Panel. This can be included as a core part of the Secretariat's work and accommodated within its regular work programme.
- Providing administrative and translation support to the CITES One Health Expert Panel as necessary will require additional funding.
- Establishment of a section of the CITES website devoted to One Health CITES will require additional funding.

The Secretariat proposes the following tentative budget and source of funding:

Decision	Activity	Indicative costs (USD) (excludes Programme Support Costs)	Source of funding
Draft resolution	Travel of Chair of the Animals Committee and Secretariat staff to international deliberations	40,000	Trust Fund
Draft decision 19.AA	Creation of a dedicated One Health CITES website	Set up costs of 20,000 USD could be envisaged if the proposed website is in addition to the CITES website.	External funding
Draft decision 19.BB	Activities of a CITES One Health Expert Panel	Depends on the Terms of Reference and <i>modus operandi</i> determined by the Standing Committee	If an official body of the Convention, it may be more appropriate for support to be provided through the Trust Fund.
Draft decision 19.CC	Provision of technical expertise, translation	Depends on the Terms of Reference and	If an official body of the Convention, it may be

	and interpretation for the CITES One Health Expert Panel	<i>modus operandi</i> determined by the Standing Committee	more appropriate for support to be provided through the Trust Fund.
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The proposed CITES One Health Expert Panel would presumably need to be serviced by the Secretariat which would potentially represent a significant new activity, but much would depend on the Terms of Reference and *modus operandi* of the Panel to be determined by the Standing Committee. The Secretariat believes that the activities envisaged in the draft decisions in Annex 2 to the present document could be accommodated in the regular work of the Standing Committee, Animals Committee and Secretariat, although it could be significant new task for the latter.