

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

Interpretation and implementation matters

General compliance and enforcement

ANNUAL ILLEGAL TRADE REPORTS

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.

Background

2. In paragraph 3 of Resolution Conf. 11.17 (Rev. CoP18) on *National reports*, the Conference of the Parties urges Parties to submit an annual illegal trade report (AITR) to the Secretariat by 31 October each year, covering actions in the preceding year. This should be done using the report format distributed by the Secretariat, as may be amended by the Secretariat from time to time with the concurrence of the Standing Committee. The first AITRs from Parties were due on 31 October 2017, covering data from 2016. Paragraph 4 in Resolution Conf. 11.17 (Rev. CoP18) states that, unless otherwise specified by the reporting Party, data collected in the AITR and included in the CITES Illegal Trade Database should be made available to Parties for research and analysis of wildlife and forest crime as it affects them, and to the members of the International Consortium on Combatting Wildlife Crime (ICWC) for ICWC global research and analysis studies on wildlife and forest crime.
3. In paragraph 16 of Resolution Conf. 11.3 (Rev. CoP18) on *Compliance and enforcement*, the Conference of the Parties directs the Secretariat to, subject to available resources:
  - a) *analyse, in collaboration with ICWC partners, the annual reports on illegal wildlife trade;*
  - b) *share with Parties information relating to the analysis to support further enforcement activities; and*
  - c) *submit a report at each meeting of the Standing Committee and the Conference of Parties based on the analysis and other relevant information available through ICWC partners;*
4. At its 18th meeting (CoP18, Geneva, 2019), the Conference of the Parties adopted Decisions 18.75 and 18.76 on *Annual illegal trade reports*, as follows:

***Directed to the Secretariat***

**18.75** *The Secretariat shall, subject to the availability of external funds, contract the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to establish, host and maintain a database for the storage and management of illegal trade data collected through annual illegal trade reports, meeting the requirements Annex 1 to document CoP18 Doc. 36 on Storage and management of illegal trade data collected through the Parties' annual illegal trade reports.*

***Directed to Parties***

**18.76** *Parties are urged, in compliance with Resolution Conf. 11.17 (Rev. CoP18) on National reports, to submit an annual illegal trade report by 31 October 2020 and 31 October 2021 covering actions in the preceding years and in accordance with the report format distributed by the Secretariat.*

#### Implementation of Decision 18.75

5. Decision 18.75 was implemented thanks to funding from Monaco and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the ICCWC Strategic Programme<sup>1</sup>, as well as from Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China and Switzerland to the Secretariat. In November 2020, the Secretariat contracted the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to establish, host and maintain the CITES Illegal Trade Database. The Secretariat worked closely with UNODC to ensure that the requirements in Annex 1 to [document CoP18 Doc. 36 on Storage and management of illegal trade data collected through the Parties annual illegal trade reports](#) are fully met. The Secretariat is pleased to inform Parties that the database has now been established. Up to June 2022, over 100,000 seizure records reported by Parties through their AITRs have been recorded in the CITES Illegal Trade Database.
6. At the time of writing, UNODC is developing the data dissemination platform for the CITES Illegal Trade Database. This platform will enable Parties and ICCWC partner organizations to directly access data recorded in the database in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 4 of Resolution Conf. 11.17 (Rev. CoP18). Standardized access will be provided to authorized users nominated by Parties and ICCWC partners through the data dissemination platform. These users will be verified by the Secretariat before access is granted. Access to the data will help inform research, analyses, the decision-making of Parties, and the development of appropriate law enforcement responses to wildlife crime. Development of the dissemination platform is expected to be completed by September 2022. The Secretariat is planning a side event in the margins of the present meeting to present the database and dissemination platform functionalities to Parties.
7. The CITES Illegal Trade Database is already proving to be a valuable asset. During the intersessional period, data from the database was used by the Secretariat to inform the content of various documents prepared for the 74th meeting of the Standing Committee such as those on eels, great apes, jaguars, pangolins, queen conch, saiga antelope, Tibetan antelope and others. It was also used to inform work related to the task forces on big cats and CITES-listed tree species. There is also significant interest in the database from Parties with several Parties requesting access during the intersessional period. The Secretariat will process these access requests as soon as the data dissemination platform is available. The Secretariat believes that, as more data is recorded in it, the CITES Illegal Trade Database will become over time a powerful tool for Parties to draw upon in their responses to wildlife crime, providing accurate and verified data to guide decision-making and law enforcement responses.
8. The maintenance of the CITES Illegal Trade Database is currently subject to external funding, and the cost estimate for maintaining the database during the next intersessional period is presented in Annex 4 to the present document. Should the database be discontinued during periods when such funding is not available, it might not be practical or feasible to re-establish the capacity required when funding again becomes available. Also, if not operational for certain periods of time, significant data gaps could occur. This could undermine the effort and investment required from Parties to gather the data from different national authorities and compile the AITRs. Further, it could negatively affect the long-term support to the UN Sustainable Development Goals indicator '*Proportion of traded wildlife that was poached or trafficked*' (Target 15.7), for which CITES and UNODC are the custodian agencies. The Secretariat therefore reiterates the importance of sustainable funding to maintain the CITES Illegal Trade Database. To continue this work, the Secretariat proposes draft decision 19.BB in Annex 2 to the present document.
9. As Decision 18.75 has been implemented, the Secretariat proposes its deletion as stated in paragraph 24 below.

#### Implementation of Decision 18.76

10. In support of the implementation of Decision 18.76, the Secretariat issued Notification to the Parties No. [2021/052](#) of 24 August 2021, reminding Parties to submit their AITRs to the Secretariat in accordance with paragraph 3 in Resolution Conf. 11.17 (Rev. CoP18). It also issued Notification to the Parties [No. 2021/044](#) of 6 July 2021, to make available to Parties the updated version of the [Guidelines for the preparation and submission of the CITES annual illegal trade report](#), as revised by the Standing Committee at its 73rd meeting (SC73, online, 2021).

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<sup>1</sup> See document CoP19 Doc. 17.5 on the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime for more details.

11. Further, during the intersessional period, the Secretariat provided guidance to Parties on the illegal trade reporting requirements at several online events<sup>2</sup>. The Secretariat also worked with UNODC to reach out to Parties in Latin America with the aim to improve the submission rate of AITRs from that region.
12. As of 15 June 2022, the Secretariat received 84 AITRs for 2019 from 81 Parties, including 3 reports from dependent territories, of which 60 reports were submitted by the 31 October deadline. For 2020, the Secretariat, received 101 AITRs from 83 Parties, including 18 reports from dependent territories, of which 79 reports were submitted by the deadline. The Secretariat thanks Parties for the reports submitted. More detailed information on the status of submission of AITRs by Parties can be found on the CITES Secretariat [Annual illegal trade report](#) webpage.
13. Parties are strongly encouraged to submit their AITRs to the Secretariat, as required under paragraph 3 in Resolution Conf. 11.17 (Rev. CoP18) on *National Reports* to address existing data gaps. This will reduce reporting bias and improve data coverage of seizure records to provide a more accurate and complete picture of illegal trade dynamics and the global illegal trade in specimens of CITES-listed species. Parties that indicate in their AITR that their data may not be used for global research and analysis studies on wildlife and forest crime, also contributes to data gaps. It further diminishes the value of the efforts made by authorities to gather and compile the data. In view of this, the Secretariat proposes draft decision 19.AA, as presented in Annex 2 to the present document.
14. The Secretariat takes this opportunity to remind Parties of the provisions in paragraph 8. a) of [Resolution Conf. 18.6](#) on *Designation and role of Management Authorities*, and their important role in coordinating the preparation of the AITR. The gathering of illegal trade data from different national authorities for preparation of the AITR could be addressed through the coordination and communication mechanism referred to in paragraph 11 of Resolution Conf. 18.6.
15. The Secretariat believes that further capacity building is needed, particularly in regions with low AITR submission rates. To support Parties in improving overall submission rates, and to improve the quality of data submitted by encouraging more standardized reporting from Parties in accordance with the *Guidelines for the preparation and submission of the CITES annual illegal trade report*, the Secretariat proposes draft decision 19.BB, paragraph b), as presented in Annex 2 to the present document.
16. In view of the above, Decision 18.76 is proposed to be deleted.

#### Implementation of Resolution Conf. 11.3 (Rev. CoP18), paragraph 16

17. Data from the CITES Illegal Trade Database informed the content of various documents prepared for the Standing Committee. Thanks to funding from the United States of America, the Secretariat worked with UNODC to prepare a report for the present meeting, in accordance with paragraph 16 of Resolution Conf. 11.3 (Rev. CoP18).
18. The executive summary of the report entitled *Analysis of CITES Annual Illegal Trade Reports: 2016 to 2020 seizure data*, is available in English, French and Spanish and presented in Annex 3 to the present document. The full report is available in English only [here](#).<sup>3</sup> The report provides an assessment of the AITRs and data submitted by Parties up to 14 November 2021 for the 2016 to 2020 reporting period. It includes information on AITR coverage; a quantitative analysis of the basic characteristics of seizure data reported over the five-year period; a quality assessment of AITRs to help identify positive aspects and existing challenges associated with the seizure data; and highlights some options that could assist in further improving the quality of data reported by Parties. It also provides information on the development of the CITES Illegal Trade Database.
19. The report highlights that a total of 356 AITRs were submitted to the Secretariat in the 2016 to 2020 reporting period, in broadly consistent numbers each year. AITR data coverage varied regionally, with Europe having the highest average AITR reporting coverage (70%), followed by North America (60%), Asia (43%), Oceania (25%), Africa (24%), and Central and South America and the Caribbean (15%).

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<sup>2</sup> ROAVIS online meeting on 8 July 2020, AFRICA-TWIX Webinar on 26 March 2021, SADC-TWIX Webinar on 11 May 2021, CITES online regional workshop on physical inspection of timber shipments from 25 to 29 October 2021, and online meeting of the ASEAN Working Group on CITES and Wildlife Enforcement on 25 May 2022.

<sup>3</sup> The report is also available under the heading *Analysis on the [Annual Illegal trade report](#) webpage maintained by the Secretariat.*

20. The report affirms the importance of CITES annual illegal trade data, highlighting that analysis of this data can provide valuable insights into the dynamics, trends, and evolution of illegal trade over time. The report further highlights that information gained from seizure data analyses can be used for various purposes, such as to inform and monitor national strategies, capacity-building and training programmes, the development of effective risk management strategies and law enforcement responses to illegal wildlife trade. However, due to diverse geographical coverage, quantitative analysis of seizure data needs to be conducted with caution. The report further states that CITES annual illegal trade data, similar to data on other forms of illicit activities, is inherently biased by enforcement effort, reporting effort and detection rates. However, it emphasizes that while the data may not be perfect, annual illegal trade data from Parties provides the best source of accurate and verified data on wildlife crime available to inform decision-making. At the very least it can help guide Parties on where to allocate resources and alert Parties to illegal wildlife trade issues. The report notes that this could be particularly important in the context of high value wildlife resources and the potential associated loss of revenue and biodiversity for a country as a result of illegal trade.
21. Important to note are the matters highlighted in the report that hindered the processing of some data reported in AITRs. This included not reporting species names accurately; the use of unclear date formats; capturing data in merged cells; capturing quantities in various different formats; not using national identification numbers to separate seizures from each other; and omitting key information regarding some seizures. An assessment of each column variable in the standard template of the AITR determined how much information was collected and reported by Parties (i.e., percentage of information availability). The report states that six variables (date of seizure, description of specimen, quantity, unit, location of incident, and detecting agency) had more than 90% information availability. Another four variables (reason for seizure, mode of transport, alleged country of origin, and alleged final destination) had between 60% and 75% information availability. Two variables (Parties of transit and estimated value) had less than 20% information availability. This shows that the reporting of seizure data varies amongst Parties and that there is room for improvement regarding standardization of seizure data reporting. Use of the [Guidelines for the preparation and submission of the CITES annual illegal trade report](#) and the standard reporting template would greatly assist in resolving these matters, and the importance of following the guidance cannot be overemphasized. Considering this, the Secretariat proposes to amend paragraph 3 in Resolution Conf. 11.17 (Rev. CoP18) on *National reports* as set out in Annex 1 to the present document.
22. The Secretariat will consider the suggestions in the report regarding fields in the reporting template for which standardization may be beneficial, such as for example detecting agency, method of detection, reason for seizure, mode of transport, national reference number, location of incident, and method of concealment. As appropriate, it will propose changes to the *Guidelines for the preparation and submission of the CITES annual illegal trade report* for consideration by the Standing Committee.
23. The analysis in the report is based on 90,513 seizure records for CITES-listed species that were recorded in the database by 14 November 2021. Regarding types of specimens seized, the report identifies 10 specimen types that were most frequently reported during the 2016 to 2020 reporting period (80% of all seizure records). These were non-living coral, live specimens, medicines, shells, meat, leather products (large and small), roots, ivory/tusks (all ivory codes), bodies and extracts. It is important to note that these specimen types are influenced by the Parties that report the most seizure records. For example, New Zealand, which does not have a personal and household effects exemption, reported 41% of all seizure records, meaning the analysis of specimen types is influenced by New Zealand data and could change if more Parties report seizure data. The analysis shows that reported seizures involved a wide range of taxonomic groups: flowering plants (24%), corals (23%), reptiles (18%), mammals (13%), marine and freshwater molluscs (8%), birds (7%), ray finned fishes (3%), conchs (2%) and another 14 classes (2%). And that 54% of all seizure records reported indicated the species name (1,715 different species reported), while 77% of all seizure records reported included genera information (917 different genera reported). According to the report, 48 % of all seizure records belonged to just 20 genera: *Tridacna* spp., *Pocillopora* spp., *Panax* spp., *Saussurea* spp., *Dalbergia* spp., *Crocodylus* spp., *Acropora* spp., *Loxodonta* spp., *Dendrobium* spp., *Alligator* spp., *Favites* spp., *Python* spp., *Strombus* spp., *Aloe* spp., *Porites* spp., *Testudo* spp., *Manis* spp., *Leptoria* spp., *Favia* spp., and *Hippocampus* spp. The report concludes that there are many ways in which illegal trade data can be used, and these can vary substantially depending on the research objective (e.g., impact of illegal live trade on a specific species, economic value of seized products, scale of seizures, etc.). Each research objective therefore requires a different kind of analysis focusing on specific key variables, which can be used by Parties to make evidence-based decisions and policy interventions to combat illegal wildlife trade and mitigate its adverse impacts on wild species.

Recommendations:

24. The Conference of the Parties is invited to:

- a) adopt the amendment to Resolution Conf. 11.17 (Rev. CoP18) on *National reports* contained in Annex 1 to the present document;
- b) adopt draft decisions 19.AA and 19.BB contained in Annex 2 to the present document; and
- c) delete Decisions 18.75 and 18.76 on *Annual illegal trade reports*.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO  
RESOLUTION CONF. 11.17 (Rev. CoP18) ON NATIONAL REPORTS

*Proposed new language is presented in underline and deleted language is presented in ~~strike through~~*

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3. URGES all Parties to submit an annual illegal trade report by 31 October each year covering actions in the preceding year, ~~and in accordance with~~ using the report format distributed by the Secretariat, as may be amended by the Secretariat from time to time with the concurrence of the Standing Committee, ~~and following the *Guidelines for the preparation and submission of the CITES annual illegal trade report* made available by the Secretariat, in completing the report.~~

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DRAFT DECISION ON ANNUAL ILLEGAL TRADE REPORTS

**Directed to Parties**

**19.AA** Parties are urged to, in compliance with Resolution Conf. 11.17 (Rev. CoP18) on *National reports*, submit an annual illegal trade report to the Secretariat by 31 October each year. Parties that have not yet submitted their annual illegal trade reports covering the period 2016 to 2021 are encouraged to include this data in their annual illegal trade report due on 31 October 2023.

**Directed to the Secretariat**

**19.BB** Subject to the availability of external funds, the Secretariat shall:

- a) continue its work with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), ensuring that the CITES Illegal Trade Database and its data dissemination platform are maintained in accordance with the requirements agreed by the Conference of the Parties;
- b) engage in efforts to support improving overall submission rates of annual illegal trade reports by Parties in accordance with Resolution Conf. 11.17 (Rev. CoP18) on *National reports*, and to improve the quality of data submitted through better use of the *Guidelines for the preparation and submission of the CITES annual illegal trade report*;
- c) report on the implementation of Decisions 19.AA and 19.BB at the 20th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF  
*ANALYSIS OF CITES ANNUAL ILLEGAL TRADE REPORTS:  
2016 TO 2020 SEIZURE DATA*

The collection and sharing of wildlife seizure data is a valuable tool for CITES Parties. Analysis of illegal wildlife trade (IWT) data can provide valuable insights into the dynamics, trends, and evolution of IWT over time when other sources of information are limited or not available. A large share of illegal trade goes undetected as it is not possible to inspect every shipment, thus sharing and collecting wildlife seizure data from different points along the trade chain (i.e., different countries) can help to build a more complete picture of IWT dynamics as well as of national capacities to fight the illegal trade of protected species.

Parties and the international community at large can get a better understanding of IWT from sharing wildlife seizure data including the specimen types in trade, new/shifting smuggling routes, various concealment methods, modes of transport, the most effective detection methods, and changes in source, transit, or destination markets. Some Parties may be alerted to illegal exports of their wildlife resources that they were previously unaware about. This could be particularly important for valuable wildlife resources and the associated loss of revenue and biodiversity for a country. The analysis of seizure data is also important to monitor law enforcement activities and priorities in combating illegal trade; for example, the high frequency of seizures for selected species can be related to specific efforts by detecting agencies or, inversely, the lack of seizures for other species can be due to insufficient efforts or diverging priorities. Ultimately, the analysis of ITW seizure data can be used to inform and monitor national strategies, capacity building and training programs, and support the development of effective risk management

strategies and law enforcement responses to IWT.

In 2017, new reporting requirements came into effect requiring all CITES Parties to submit an annual illegal trade report (AITR) on all seizures involving CITES-listed species covering actions in the preceding year. While CITES AITRs are not subject to compliance procedures, they are mandatory and should be reported to the CITES Secretariat by 31 October of the following year (e.g., the 2016 AITR was due on 31 October 2017).

This report provides an assessment of CITES AITRs submitted to the CITES Secretariat for the 2016 to 2020 reporting period. It includes a brief summary of AITR coverage (as of 14 November 2021), a quantitative analysis on basic characteristics of CITES related seizure data reported by Parties over the five-year period, and a quality assessment of AITRs to help identify positive aspects and challenges related to seizure data reported by CITES Parties and the corresponding data collection process. The report also highlights some suggestions for further improving the quality of data reported and expanding the coverage of the CITES Illegal Trade Database. The CITES Illegal Trade Database contains seizure data from government authorities that has been submitted via formalized CITES reporting requirements (AITRs).

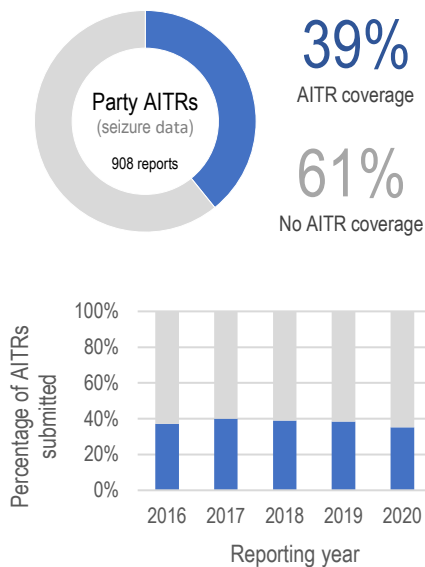
#### *AITR coverage*

The CITES Secretariat received a total of 356 Party AITRs (39%) for the 2016 to 2020 reporting period (as of 14 November 2021), in broadly consistent numbers each year. AITR data coverage varied regionally, with Europe having the highest AITR reporting coverage on average (70%), followed by North America



(60%), Asia (43%), Oceania (25%), Africa (24%), and Central and South America and the Caribbean (15%).

### Global coverage of CITES AITRs over a 5-year period (2016 to 2020)



Source: CITES annual illegal trade reports (AITRs)

This coverage may initially seem relatively low. However, many Parties affected by high volumes of IWT are well represented and it is important to note that the reporting requirements are relatively new. Parties are working to integrate these new requirements into their own wildlife management structures. Some Parties may face barriers in detecting illegal activity and/or have limited capacity and resources available to consolidate and compile wildlife seizure data, then prepare and submit AITRs. While data coverage for CITES Annual reports (legal trade data) is higher (77%) for the same period, the legal trade reporting requirement has existed for over 40 years giving Parties time to address reporting challenges.

The analysis of AITR data thus provides useful information and important insights into CITES related IWT of CITES-listed species. At the same time, further improvements in data sharing and collection would help fulfill its potential to understand the global trafficking

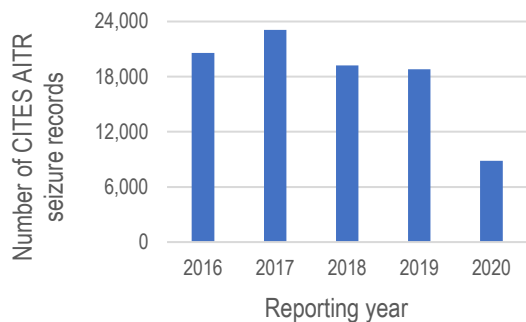
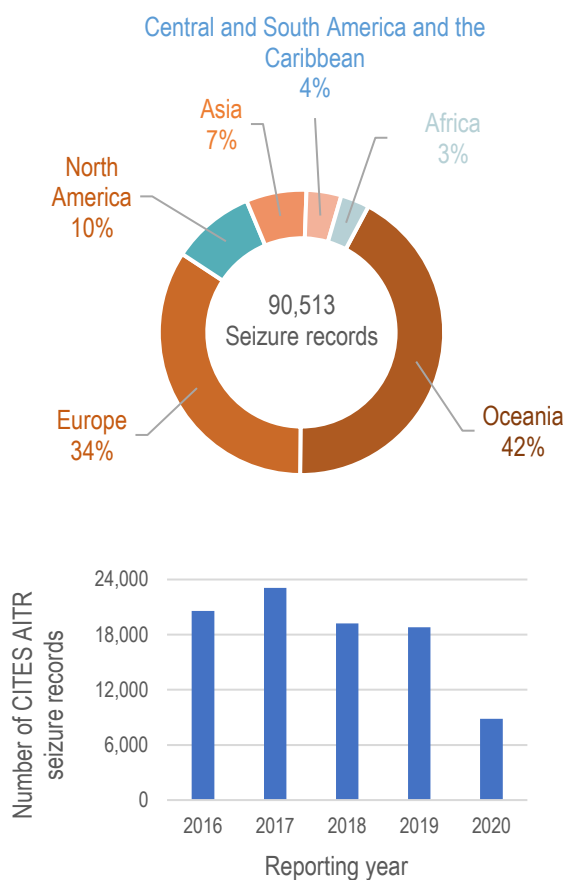
of specimens of CITES-listed species even better.

### Quantitative analysis of seizure records

Seizure data from CITES AITRs were analysed to highlight valuable and informative ways that data can be utilized for research purposes. This report analysed basic characteristics of IWT data: size/volume of a seizure record, types of specimens, taxon, origin/source and final destination of shipments, and other enforcement information (e.g., detecting agencies, mode of transport).

When submitting AITRs, Parties have the option to specify whether their data can be used in the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime ICCWC supported global research and analysis on wildlife and forest crime purposes. Almost all the Party AITRs submitted (97%) were used for ICCWC research (345 Party AITRs or 38% of AITRs coverage). Analysis of seizure data has been influenced by which Parties submitted AITRs and the quantity (and quality) of seizure records within their AITRs. For instance, New Zealand reported 41% of all seizure records in the CITES Illegal Trade Database, but they are a Party which implements stricter domestic measures governing the import of personal and household effects (CITES Notification to the Parties No. 2020/004). This means items like tourist souvenirs of CITES Appendix II specimens require permits to enter New Zealand or be seized upon entry.

## Global coverage of AITR seizure records over a 5-year period (2016 to 2020)

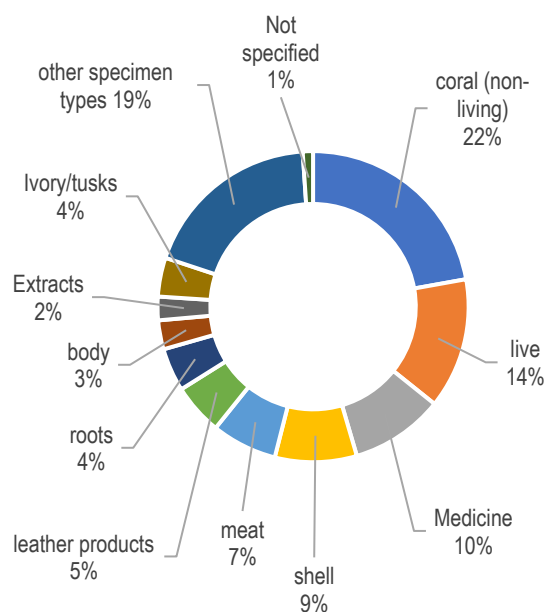


Source: CITES AITRs shared with ICCWC for research purposes.

Due to diverse geographical coverage, the quantitative analysis of seizure data needs to be conducted with caution, but it is still highly valuable information that can be used to guide decision making processes. A great deal of information can be pulled from the seizure data and tailored to the specific needs and research desire of Parties. There was substantial variability in the quantity (and quality) of seizure records reported by Parties within each submission, ranging from 1 to 9,431 records reported by a single Party in a single year. A total of 90,513 seizure records were reported over a 5-year period (2016 to 2020), with records ranging from a few items or a few kg/L up to 209,000 items or 1,238 tonnes in a single seizure record. Over three quarters of all seizure records were small scale (less than 5 kg or 5 items per record), but multiple seizure records could be related to one seizure event.

Ten specimen types were most frequently reported during the 2016 to 2020 reporting period (80% of all seizure records). These ten specimen types were non-living coral, live specimens, medicines, shells, meat, leather products (large and small), roots, ivory/tusks (all ivory codes), bodies and extracts. Some specimen types were not reported as frequently but were nonetheless significant in terms of scale (e.g., high number of items per seizure record or kilograms per seizure record). The 10 largest seizure records reported in units “no.,” “kg,” and “m<sup>3</sup>” were meat, derivatives, cosmetics, feathers, live, bodies, wood products, logs/timber, sawn wood, chips, and unknown specimen types involving tree species.

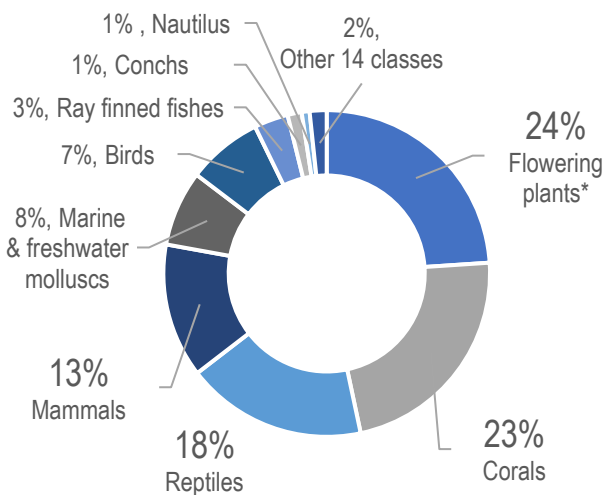
## Top 10 specimen types in AITR seizure data, 2016 to 2020



Source: CITES AITRs shared with ICCWC for research purposes.

Seizure records were represented by a wide range of taxonomic groups: flowering plants (24%), corals (23%), reptiles (18%), mammals (13%), marine and freshwater molluscs (8%), birds (7%), ray finned fishes (3%), conchs (2%) and another 14 classes (2%).

Taxonomic groups represented in AITR seizure data, 2016 to 2020



Just over half (54%) of all seizure records reported indicated the species name (1,715 different species reported), while 77% of all seizure records reported genera information (917 different genera reported). Almost half of all seizure records reported (48%) belonged to just 20 genera: *Tridacna* spp., *Pocillopora* spp., *Panax* spp., *Saussurea* spp., *Dalbergia* spp., *Crocodylus* spp., *Acropora* spp., *Loxodonta* spp., *Dendrobium* spp., *Alligator* spp., *Favites* spp., *Python* spp., *Strombus* spp., *Aloe* spp., *Porites* spp., *Testudo* spp., *Manis* spp., *Leptoria* spp., *Favia* spp., and *Hippocampus* spp. Some genera were not reported as frequently but were nonetheless significant in terms of scale (e.g., high number of items per seizure record or kilograms per seizure record). The 10 largest seizure records reported in units “no.”, “kg”, and “m<sup>3</sup>” were ramin, sea cucumber, orchid, peafowl, eels, sturgeon, leeches, cacti, rosewood, kosso, sharks, mahogany, and ash.

Approximately 71% of all seizure records provided the alleged country of origin. Ten

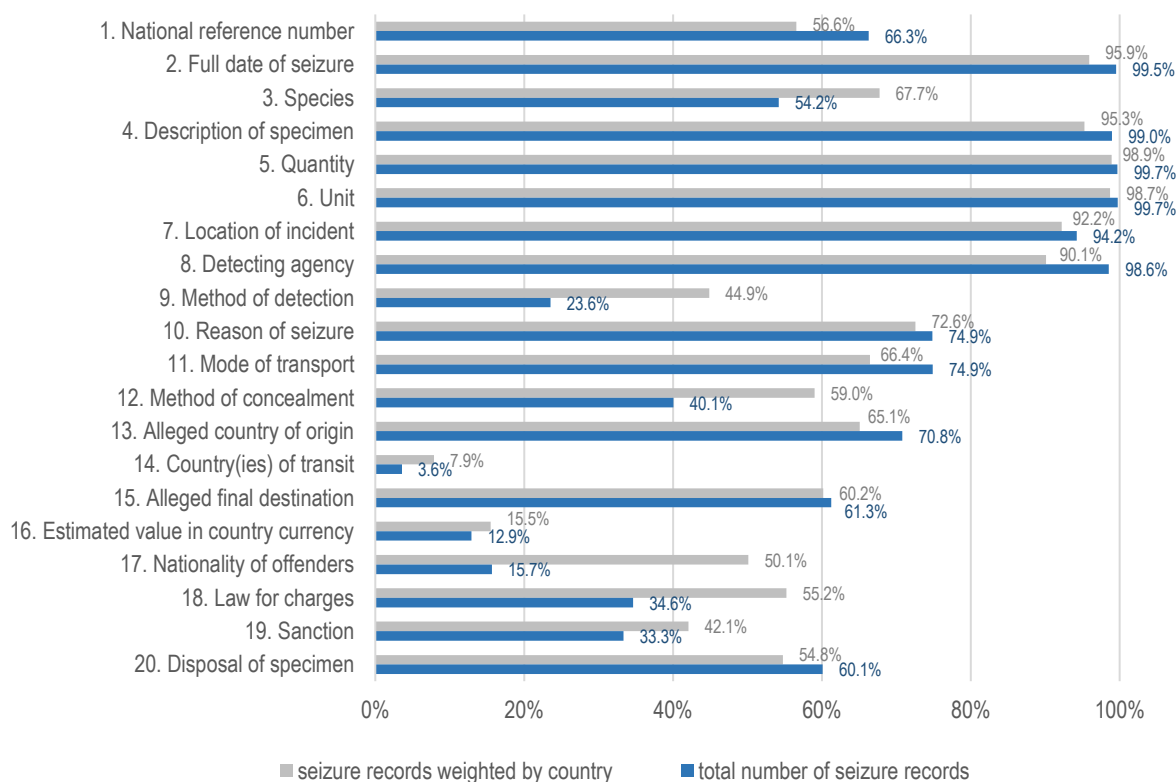
Parties accounted for 65% of the known origin: China including Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR), Macao SAR and Taiwan Province of China, Australia, non-Party Cook Islands, Fiji, the United State of America (USA), Thailand, Indonesia, Tonga, Vanuatu, and Samoa. Approximately 61% of all seizure records provided the alleged final destination. Ten Parties accounted for 86% of the known final destinations: New Zealand, Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK), France, China including Hong Kong SAR, Australia, Japan, Spain, and Czech Republic. 56% of all seizure records (50,480 records) reported both the alleged country of origin and the alleged final destination.

Almost all the seizure records (99%) in the AITRs specified a detecting agency. After standardisation and cleaning the contributions of agency types were: Border agencies (31%), Customs (29%), others (10%), wildlife agencies (10%), multiple agencies/joint operations (9%), police (5%), and CITES MA (5%).

Almost three quarters of all seizure records (74%) in the AITRs specified the mode of transport: Air (57%), mail (9%), road (4%), maritime (4%), Rail and other (<1%).

This analysis shows that there are many ways in which IWT data can be used, and these can vary substantially depending on the research objective (e.g., impact of illegal live trade on a specific species, economic value of seized

## Information availability (%)



products leaving X country, scale of seizures, etc.). Each research objective therefore requires a different kind of analyses focusing on specific key variables. Parties can use this information to make evidence-based decisions and policy interventions to combat IWT and mitigate its adverse impacts on wild species.

### *Quality assessment of submitted annual illegal trade reports*

CITES AITRs are required to be reported to the CITES Secretariat by 31 October of the following year (e.g., 2016 AITR was due on 31 October 2017). In terms of timeliness of submitted AITRS, 65% of them were submitted on or before the CITES deadline, with another 15% submitted 1 month late, 7% submitted between 1 to 6 months late, 6% submitted between 6 months to 1 year late, 6% submitted more than 1 year late.

All CITES AITRs shared with ICCWC for research purposes were assessed for completeness (e.g. 345 Party AITRs submitted by 91 Parties for the 2016 to 2020 reporting period). Each column variable from the AITR standard template was

assessed to determine how much information was collected and reported (i.e. percentage of information availability). Only 6 variables (date of seizure, description of specimen, quantity, unit, location of incident, and detecting agency) had more than 90% information availability. Another 4 variables (reason for seizure, mode of transport, alleged country of origin, and alleged final destination) had between 60% and 75% information availability. One variable (disposal of specimen) was between 55% and 60% information availability regardless of approach, and two variables (Parties of transit and estimated value) had less than 20% information availability.

The CITES Illegal Trade Database contains seizure data from government authorities that has been submitted via formalized CITES reporting requirements (AITRs). However, there may be data gaps in AITRs submitted by CITES Parties that can be identified by looking at wildlife seizure data from other sources. To this purpose, an analysis has been conducted by comparing the CITES Illegal Trade Database with a complementary database (the World

WISE, created by UNODC) that contains wildlife seizure data from additional sources such as government agencies, the World Customs Organizations (WCO), the European Union Trade in Wildlife Information eXchange (EU-TWIX), TRAFFIC, and the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA), amongst others.

Approximately 91,000 seizure records were reported in the CITES Illegal Trade Database for the 2016 to 2020 reporting period. At the same time, for the specific combinations of Parties and years for which an AITR was received, around 7,500 seizure records were reported in the World WISE Database from various non-AITR-sources. A comparison of these sets of seizure records with a Machine Learning approach that allows to link records from different sources to the same seizure event, indicated that around 5,000 seizure events included in the World WISE Database were not reported via AITRs.

While CITES AITRs are the primary source of IWT data, this analysis shows that some seizure records may not be reported, possibly due to challenges in coordination at the national level across all relevant actors in seizing illegal wildlife trade.

The large majority (89%) of Parties that submitted information through AITRs used the requested columns of the AITR template and thus adhered to the overall structure of the AITR template. Relatively high rates of adherence to the AITR template were associated with Oceania (100%), Europe (97%), Africa (92%), and Asia (87%), whereas lower rates of adherence to the AITR template were associated with Central and South America and the Caribbean (62%) and North America (44%).

The most common and relevant quality issues identified in AITR reporting that hindered the processing and analysis of AITRs included: lack of adherence to standardised codes, inappropriate reporting of species names, inappropriate date format, use of merged cells, multiple types of quantities, lack of national

identification codes, and key information missing. This shows that the reporting of seizure data varies amongst Parties and result in an overall lack of standardization in seizure information.

All such inconsistencies require a significant amount of time to clean and standardize (where possible) before they can be processed and uploaded. If seizure records contain variables with non-standardized or poor-quality information, then they risk being unusable. Several reporting variables could not be comprehensively analysed for this report due to poor standardization, even though they contained detailed and valuable information that could benefit Parties.

The variables for which standardization would be highly beneficial included: detecting agency, method of detection, reason for seizure, mode of transport, national reference number, location of incident, and method of concealment. While some variables provided pre-selected options, Parties might benefit from further clarity which would help ensure the variables are used to their fullest potential. Several other variables that did not have pre-selected options could benefit from standardisation. Another variable that might be worth considering is point of seizure which could help identify where on the trade chain a seizure occurred (e.g., on export, on import, in transit, or within country).

Reporting of AITRs in a timely manner is important. The data must first be cleaned before it can be processed and used for research and analysis purposes. Reports that follow the CITES guidelines and use the suggested template to report data are easier to clean, so they are often processed more quickly. Reports that do not follow the guidelines and/or template, often require more time to clean, are full of issues and in many cases need to be cleaned manually which requires a significant amount of time. The faster reports are submitted and cleaned, the

sooner it can be used for research and analysis purposes.

### *Main implications*

A higher AITR coverage would better reflect IWT dynamics and patterns, improve analysis, and ultimately provide a more accurate analysis of the global trafficking of CITES related species. To this end, Parties could consider including annual illegal trade reporting in regional plans that may be developed. This could encourage Parties in the region to actively pursue the implementation of paragraph 3 in CITES Resolution Conf. 11.17 (Rev.CoP18) on *National reports*.

In addition increased and further strengthened cooperation among national authorities can help ensure that the reported AITRs cover all CITES-related seizures made within their country's territory. This will facilitate that where multiple authorities are responsible for wildlife enforcement all data is captured and not just those from one or some of these authorities. This is crucial to ensure better coverage.

Training and capacity building programs for relevant agencies could be developed to improve the quality of data submitted in annual illegal trade reports. The CITES Secretariat in cooperation with UNODC can play an important role in supporting Parties to improve overall submission rates of annual illegal trade reports and engage in efforts to support better standardize submissions to improve the quality of data submitted in the annual illegal trade reports.

Several issues were identified that interfered with cleaning and analysing AITR data. The most notable issue was the lack of standardisation. Resolving or reducing these

issues would have positive impacts on the efficiency of processing AITRs and ensure all AITR data can be used for analysis. *Guidelines for the preparation and submission of the CITES annual illegal trade reports* and a standard template are both available on the CITES website to help support Parties in their compilation of their AITRs. Adherence to the guidelines and the standard template would greatly reduce the amount of time spent in processing AITR data, allowing data to be accessible for analysis (including access to Parties) in a timely and comprehensive manner. In addition, a number of key variables - such as species name or country of origin/destination - are not always provided. The development and implementation of a training plan for Parties on the use of the AITR template and other related measures that would help to improve standardisation and completeness of AITRs and reduce issues that interfere with data processing, which would ultimately ensure that all CITES related seizure data reported is useable for analysis purposes.

At present, it is not possible to analyse seizure incidents as the focus is on seizure records. To this purpose, a slight modification of the reporting template would make it easier to analyse seizure incidents and therefore generate information on smuggling methods and modus operandi of traffickers.

While the CITES annual illegal trade report requirement is relatively new, data from 39% of Party AITRs have already been submitted. With the above findings in mind, several opportunities and activities could be considered to raise awareness, improve knowledge and capacity, facilitate dialogue and cooperation, and exchange information and experiences to further improve the quantity and quality of seizure data in the CITES Illegal Trade Database for future analyses of AITRs.

**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.

Implementation of draft decision 19.BB would be subject to the provision of external funds. Supervision of the work will require some time from the Secretariat but should be a core part of the Secretariat's work and accommodated within its regular work programme.

<b>Decision</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Indicative annual costs (USD)</b>	<b>Source of funding</b>
Decision 19. BB paragraph a)	Extension of the current contract with UNODC to host and maintain the CITES Illegal Trade Database for the storage, management and dissemination of illegal trade data collected through annual illegal trade reports, ensuring that it continues to meet all requirement set by the Conference of the Parties. (see budget breakdown below)	236 034	Extrabudgetary
Decision 19.BB paragraph b)	2 - 4 online workshops in regions with low submission rate of annual illegal trade reports.	20,000 - 40,000	Extrabudgetary

***Budget breakdown for decision 19.BB paragraph a) provided by UNODC***

<b>Class</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Total annual budget USD</b>
Staff and other personnel costs	Statistician (P3) Statistical expert to maintain supervision of the process, ensure quality control and strengthen outreach	44 175
	Information System Assistant (G6)	27 801
	Statistical Assistant (G5) for overall data management	111 204
Contractual Services	Support cost to UNEP-WCMC for nomenclature reference and data standards	9 500
	IT infrastructure (server, SQL database, cloud services, PowerBI for data dissemination)	7 200
Operating and Other Direct Costs	Workstation costs, other indirect costs	4 000
Equipment	Equipment for staff	2 000
Travel	Coordination with CITES Secretariat	3 000
<b><i>Project Net Total</i></b>		<b>208 880</b>
Project support costs (13%)		27 154
<b>Project total</b>		<b>236 034</b>