

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

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

Summary record of the first plenary session

14 November 2022: 09h40 - 13h20

Secretariat: I. Higuero  
JC Vasquez

UNEP: S. Leighton-Kone

Rapporteurs: A. Caromel  
F. Davis  
J. Gray  
M. Jenkins  
R. Mackenzie  
J. Mark  
S. Rouse

**Opening of the meeting**

**The Minister of Environment of Panama, His Excellency Mr. Milciades Concepción**, welcomed participants, stating that Panama was proud to be hosting the current meeting, the first CITES CoP to be held in the Americas for over twenty years. He underscored his country's commitment to the principles of conservation and sustainable use, emphasizing the importance in particular of marine conservation and calling on Parties to support Panama's call for a universal Law on the Rights of Nature.

**The Acting Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, Ms. Sonja Leighton-Kone**, highlighted the destructive consequences of overexploitation on biodiversity and humankind. She stated that the benefits from global trade can help meet fundamental human needs and provide valuable incentives for conserving habitats and ecosystems, but also observed that good governance and strong rule of law are required to ensure these benefits are equitably delivered and not undermined by illegal trade. She drew attention to the essential work being done at the meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Egypt and the hopes for a new global framework for biodiversity from the upcoming meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Montreal.

**The Secretary-General of CITES, Ms. Ivonne Higuero**, welcomed participants to the "CoP of the Americas", and expressed gratitude to the Panamanian government for their efforts and commitment in having taken on hosting duties. She lauded the efforts made by Parties in the effective implementation of the Convention but cautioned that more work was needed to address unsustainable use and wildlife crime and to tackle the interlinked crises facing the planet. She noted that, with CITES turning 50, it was a time for reflection on its past and its future and on how well it had achieved its original goals. She emphasized the importance of partnerships

for further strengthening the Convention's scientific foundation and for achieving the targets and goals of the post 2020 global biodiversity framework. Noting that the world was becoming more and more polarized, she encouraged Parties to continue to listen to each other and to work together to find solutions, as they had for the past fifty years.

**The Vice president of the Republic of Panama, His Excellency Mr. José Gabriel Carrizo**, expressed his pleasure that Panama had been given the opportunity to host the current meeting, which would be making crucial decisions for the future of the planet. He highlighted that the steps taken by Panama to ensure sustainable development and climate protection, including protection of nearly 80% of its forest cover as well as its mangroves and oceans, had resulted in Panama being one of only three carbon negative countries in the world. He stressed the need for linkages among international conventions, as well as binding agreements and integrated funding for these to be effective. He also emphasized the importance of ensuring that strategic alliances were inclusive, involving actors at all levels, and stated that Panama would be championing this at the conference. He welcomed everyone to the country and formally declared open the 19th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

### **Administrative and financial matters**

#### **1. Election of Chair, Alternate Chair and Vice-Chairs of the meeting and of Chairs of Committees I and II**

The Chair of the Standing Committee, as interim Chair of the meeting, announced that the Committee had nominated H.E. Mr. Milciades Concepción (Panama) as Chair of the meeting, Ms. Shirley Binder (Panama) as Alternate Chair, and Ms. Patience Gandiwa (Zimbabwe) and Ms. Anna Wong (Singapore) as Vice-Chairs. She informed Parties that Mr. Vincent Fleming (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) and Ms. Rhedyn Ollerenshaw (Australia) had been nominated as Chairs of Committees I and II, respectively, and that Ms. Hayat Mesbah (Morocco) had been nominated as Chair of the Credentials Committee. These nominations were accepted by acclamation.

H.E. Mr. Milciades Concepción thanked Parties for his nomination and wished the meeting success.

#### **2. Adoption of the agenda**

The Secretariat introduced document CoP19 Doc. 2.

The agenda in document CoP19 Doc. 2 was adopted.

#### **3. Adoption of the working programme**

The Secretariat introduced document CoP19 Doc. 3 (Rev. 1), drawing attention to the revisions to the working programme and the scheduled evening sessions.

Madagascar asked that agenda item 29.3 on *Malagasy ebonies, palisanders and rosewoods* be considered by Committee II later than 17 November 2022, as currently scheduled. Gabon asked that agenda items 21 and 22 be considered after agenda item 66 on *Elephants (Elephantidae spp.)* and in particular after agenda item 66.3 and 66.7 as these are most relevant to the amendments proposed to Resolution Conf. 10.10 (Rev. CoP18) in documents CoP19 Doc. 21 and CoP19 Doc. 22. The United States of America asked that agenda items 87.1 on *Proposed amendments to Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP17)* and 44 on *Identification materials* be moved from Committee II to Committee I.

With these amendments, the working programme in document CoP19 Doc.3 (Rev. 1) was adopted.

#### **4. Rules of procedure**

##### **4.1 Report of the Standing Committee**

The Chair of the Standing Committee introduced document CoP19 Doc. 4.1 and indicated that, while the Standing Committee had agreed by consensus to propose amendments to Rule 7.2a and Rule 25.5 of the Rules of Procedure, no consensus had been reached regarding the proposal to amend Rule 25.6.

The European Union noted the European Union and its Member States would participate in the meeting as usual (referring to meetings of the Conference of the Parties since CoP17). The United States of America, the European Union and its Member States and Israel supported the amendments to all three Rules of Procedure as set out in Annex 1 of document CoP19 Doc 4.1. The United States of America highlighted that the original intention of Rule 25.6 had been to provide a stepwise approach to allow more restrictive proposals to supersede less restrictive proposals that had already been agreed. However, it noted that in practice, this had resulted in more restrictive proposals not being considered after a decision on less restrictive proposals had already been made, as had been the case for freshwater turtle proposals proposed by Viet Nam at the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

Indonesia, Argentina, Brazil, China and the Democratic Republic of the Congo supported the proposed amendments to Rule 7.2a and Rule 25.5, but not the proposed amendment to Rule 25.6. Algeria, Botswana, Colombia, Japan, the Russian Federation and South Africa also did not support the proposed amendment to Rule 25.6. These Parties variously expressed concerns that trade restrictions should be imposed only when absolutely necessary, that restrictive listing proposals could be burdensome on highly biodiverse developing countries, and that the Convention should promote legal and sustainable use of biodiversity. Argentina further highlighted that a change to the Rules of Procedure at the beginning of the meeting could affect subsequent decision-making.

The European Union and its Member States suggested postponing discussion of the amendment to Rule 25.6 to allow adoption of Rules of Procedure for the present meeting.

After a pause for deliberations, the Chair, supported by Australia, Canada, Costa Rica, Israel, Mexico, and the United States of America, proposed that the amendments to Rule 7.2 and Rule 25.5 be adopted by consensus; that consideration of the proposed amendments to Rule 25.6 be deferred until later in the meeting; and that the existing text of Rule 25.6 be applied for the present meeting.

The Conference of the Parties adopted the draft amendments to Rule 7.2 and Rule 25.5 as follows:

***Rule 7 Plenary sessions, committees and working groups***

[...]

2. The Conference of the Parties shall establish the following sessional committees:

- a) the Credentials Committee, of not more than ~~five~~ six Representatives of different Parties, each representing a different Region, which shall report to the meeting;

***Rule 25 Procedure for deciding on proposals for amendment of Appendices I and II***

[...]

5. Any Representative may propose an amendment to a proposal for amendment of Appendix I or II to reduce its scope or to make it more precise. The Presiding Officer may permit the immediate discussion and consideration of such a proposed amendment even though it has not been circulated previously. If consensus cannot be reached, then the proposed amendment shall be put to a vote. If the proposed amendment is accepted, the amended proposal shall supersede the original proposal for amendment of Appendix I or II.

It was agreed to defer consideration of the proposed amendments to Rule 25.6 of the Rules of Procedure until a later stage of the meeting. Meanwhile the existing text of Rule 25.6 would apply.

**4.2 Proposed amendment to Rule 26**

Zimbabwe introduced document CoP19 Doc. 4.2 proposing an amendment to Rule 26 (Right to vote) so that when deciding on proposals for the amendment of Appendices I and II, related resolutions and annotations, the Conference of the Parties would assign a number of votes to each Party proportionate

to the population size of the species under discussion. It suggested that the proposed amendment would take account of the key roles played by some Parties in the conservation of endangered species and the burdens faced by Parties with significant populations of such species.

Botswana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the United Republic of Tanzania supported the proposed amendments. South Africa noted that there was merit in the proposal and Indonesia expressed its readiness to engage in further discussion.

Argentina, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, the European Union and its Member States, Gabon, Gambia, Nigeria, the Republic of Korea, and the United States of America opposed the proposed amendment. Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Nigeria, the Republic of Korea and the United States of America suggested that such an amendment would run counter to the principle of 'one country, one vote' of the United Nations with the Gambia and the United States of America also stating that it was inconsistent with the Convention. Argentina, Côte d'Ivoire, the European Union and its Member States and Nigeria highlighted practical difficulties with the proposal as population data are often insufficient, and complex decisions on the allocation of votes would be required.

The Chair indicated that, there being no consensus on the proposed amendment, he did not propose to consider it further. South Africa raised a point of order, stating that agenda items 4.1 and 4.2 raised similar issues but appeared to have been addressed differently. The Chair, recognising that document CoP19 Doc 4.2 had not been previously discussed at a meeting of the Standing Committee, indicated that he was willing to allow further discussion on the proposal. Niger and Senegal opposed the amendment and did not support reopening the debate. The Chair suggested further informal discussions on document CoP19 Doc. 4.2 and proposed that a decision be deferred to later in the meeting.

## 5. Credentials Committee

### 5.1 Establishment of the Credentials Committee

The Secretariat reported that the following had been nominated as members of the Credentials Committee: Ms. Hayat Mesbah (Morocco) – Chair; Ms. Priya Bhanu (United States of America); Ms. Vanessa Etika (Tonga); and Ms. Charlotta van Troil (Finland). Nominations had yet to be made by Asia and Central and South America and the Caribbean. The Secretariat asked that nominations be made by these regions following the regional meetings so that the Credentials Committee could start its work.\*

The nominations to the Credentials Committee were accepted.

## 6. Admission of observers

The Secretariat introduced document CoP19 Doc. 6, which contains the list of all bodies and agencies that had informed the Secretariat by 15 September 2022 of their desire to be represented at the 19th meeting of the Conference of the Parties. The Secretariat further noted that the following observers had expressed an interest in attending the meeting after the deadline: Convention on Biological Diversity, European Parliament, Gulf Cooperation Council, Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission, CAMPFIRE Association, Japan Leather and Leather Goods Industries Association, Prevenir USAID, Thai Crocodile Farm Association, International Association of Violin and Bow Makers and LUSH Ltd. The Secretariat sought formal acceptance of the observers listed in the Annex to document CoP19 Doc. 6 and those listed orally. The European Union stated that the representatives of the European Parliament were not observers but part of the delegation of the European Union. The Secretariat confirmed that this would be corrected. The Secretariat noted that it would consult the Standing Committee for guidance on the application of Rule 4.2 of the Rules of Procedure, mindful of Article 11, paragraph 7 of the Convention.

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\* The Secretariat notes that, after the regional meetings, Mr. Wei Ji (China) and Ms. Rosa Barrios (Peru) were nominated to represent their region.

The list of observers, as updated by the Secretariat and not including the European Parliament, was approved.

### **Strategic matters**

9. Committee reports and recommendations

Consideration of this agenda item was postponed until the next meeting of the plenary scheduled for 24 November 2022.

18. United Nations World Wildlife Day

Consideration of this agenda item was postponed until the next meeting of the plenary scheduled for 24 November 2022.

The meeting was adjourned at 13h20.