

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



Seventy-seventh meeting of the Standing Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 6–10 November 2023

Strategic matters

COOPERATION WITH MULTILATERAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS AND OTHER
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.
2. At its 19th meeting (CoP19; Panama City, 2022), the Conference of the Parties adopted the following Decisions on *Cooperation with multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and other international organizations*:

Directed to Parties

17.55 (Rev. CoP19) *Parties are encouraged to strengthen synergies among biodiversity multilateral environmental agreements at the national level by, among others, improving coordination and cooperation between national focal points and strengthening capacity-building activities.*

Directed to the Standing Committee, with support of the Secretariat

17.56 (Rev. CoP19) *The Standing Committee shall, with support of the Secretariat, explore options consistent with the CITES Strategic Vision to strengthen cooperation, collaboration and synergies at all relevant levels between CITES and the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, taking into account the outcomes of the Second Consultation Workshop of Biodiversity-related Conventions on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (Bern II), as well as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals. This should involve the members of the Liaison Group of Biodiversity-related Conventions, and, as appropriate, engagement with other relevant organizations and processes, including processes under the Rio Conventions. The Standing Committee shall report on the implementation of this Decision at the 20th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.*

Directed to the Secretariat

19.20 *Subject to external funding, the Secretariat shall, prepare for consideration by the Standing Committee a partnership strategy for the Parties, the Permanent Committees and the Secretariat to identify priorities for collaboration that specifically enhance the implementation of the Convention, as well as its effectiveness and efficiency, through strategic partnerships.*

Directed to the Standing Committee

19.21 *The Standing Committee shall review the draft partnership strategy developed by the Secretariat under Decision 19.20 and make recommendations for consideration at the 20th meeting of the Conference of Parties.*

Background

3. In its document to the 74th meeting of the Standing Committee (see document [SC74 Doc. 23](#)), the Secretariat provided an overview of existing Resolutions and Decisions specifically addressing cooperation and partnerships. It also provided an overview of existing formal cooperation agreements (memoranda of understanding etc.) that the Secretariat has established over the years, which is also available [online](#). Where possible the Secretariat matched the formal agreements with the specific Resolutions and Decisions, noting that typically the adoption of a Resolution would indicate that the cooperation extended beyond the Secretariat and engaged the Parties and sometimes the Permanent Committees as well.
4. The Secretariat further noted that the need for a clear partnership strategy that would give the rationale for why and how CITES cooperates with others emerged from this overview. In this context, 'CITES' would include its Parties, Permanent Committees and the Secretariat. The strategic alignment of the above-mentioned formal cooperation agreements and participation in coordination mechanisms with *inter alia* the *CITES Strategic Vision: 2021 – 2030* should be considered as part of a process to develop a partnership strategy. The strategy should also clarify the role that the Parties, the Permanent Committees and the Secretariat play in using agreements and platforms to further enhance the implementation of the Convention. The Standing Committee agreed with the Secretariat's recommendation to develop a partnership strategy; the Committee proposed the two Decisions on the partnership strategy that were subsequently adopted by the Conference at its 19th meeting.

Implementation of Decisions 19.20 and 19.21

5. For the development of the strategy, the Secretariat proposes the following working definition of 'partnerships':

A CITES partnership is an arrangement between two or more entities that share objectives aimed at enhancing the effective implementation and enforcement of the Convention.

6. The working definition will be further refined through the development of the draft Partnership strategy but is useful for its development. Some partnerships arrangements would be the result of a strategic and focused effort of the partners to strengthen and formalize their relationship, such as the MoU between the Secretariats. Other arrangements emerge from the need to collaborate to address a specific issue.
7. The starting point of the CITES partnership strategy would be the *CITES Strategic Vision: 2021-2030* as set out in the Annex to Resolution Conf. 18.3 and in particular Goal 5 and its three objectives:

GOAL 5 DELIVERY OF THE CITES STRATEGIC VISION IS IMPROVED THROUGH COLLABORATION

Objective 5.1 Parties and the Secretariat support and enhance existing cooperative partnerships in order to achieve their identified objectives.

Objective 5.2 Parties encourage the formation of new, innovative and mutually sustainable alliances between CITES and relevant international partners, where appropriate to advance CITES' objective and mainstream conservation and of sustainable use of biodiversity.

Objective 5.3 Cooperation between CITES and international financial mechanisms and other related institutions is enhanced in order to support activities that contribute to CITES implementation and enforcement.

8. The review of the existing partnerships and relevant Resolutions contained in document SC74 Doc. 23 can be further developed and refined in line with these objectives. The Secretariat proposes to further develop the mapping of existing partnerships and partners at the national level of Parties (to the extent possible), the Committees and the Secretariat.

Regarding strategic partnerships at the national level for the effective implementation of the Convention

9. Decision 17.55 (Rev. CoP19) encourages Parties *to strengthen synergies among biodiversity multilateral environmental agreements at the national level by, among others, improving coordination and cooperation*. Objective 5.1 further encourages Parties to support and enhance existing partnerships to achieve identified objectives. For the effective implementation at the national level, CITES Authorities partner with scientific institutions, sector ministries and agencies (including fisheries and forestry), as well as enforcement

agencies, such as rangers, customs, police and the public prosecutors' office. CITES Management Authorities may also enter into partnership agreements with development partners, such as various UN agencies [Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)], World Bank (including the Global Environment Facility) and bilateral donor agencies as well as national and international non-governmental organizations, such as Born Free, Wildlife Conservation Society, TRAFFIC and others.

10. These national level strategic partnerships are relevant for the *Strategic Vision* and should therefore be considered in the draft CITES partnership strategy.

Regarding partnerships at the level of the Permanent Committees

11. The CITES Permanent Committees rely on partners and partnerships arrangements to perform their functions. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is a partner of the Standing Committee as it provides for the administration, including financial operation of the CITES Secretariat to enable it to serve the Parties and the Committees. Additionally, the work under contract with the Secretariat by the World Conservation Monitoring Centre of UNEP (UNEP-WCMC) on the CITES Trade Database and the CITES Checklist is essential for the monitoring of the implementation of the Convention that is done by the Committees through various processes. This is core work and UNEP-WCMC is a core partner of CITES, including its Committees. Other key partners of CITES include the 'inter-governmental bodies' that provide scientific data related to the proposals for amendments of the CITES Appendices in accordance with the Convention and relevant Resolutions.

Regarding partnerships at the level of the CITES Secretariat

12. In addition to these key partners that are essential for some of the core CITES activities, including the Permanent Committees (and ultimately the CoP), the CITES Secretariat relies on partners to undertake core activities stipulated by the Convention and the Resolutions as well as activities mandated by the CoP Decisions. As noted in C74 Doc. 23, the CITES Secretariat partners with a very wide range of organizations, including UN agencies, other intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, academia and private sector organizations through various types of instruments, including memoranda, contracts, project cooperation agreements etc. To get understanding of the current partners and partnership arrangements of the CITES Secretariat, the Secretariat is considering undertaking a broad mapping of the current partnerships.
13. Such a mapping could be structured in different categories depending on a wide set of parameters:
 - a) the type of partner: United Nations entity, intergovernmental organization, non-governmental organization, private sector organization;
 - b) the type of collaboration: broad, covering a range of topics/projects or project specific
 - c) the type of arrangement: *ad hoc* or more long-term
 - d) the main areas of collaboration: species conservation and trade, trade regulation and transport, illegal trade and law enforcement, livelihoods, animal health and welfare, etc.
14. Based on an analysis of this broad mapping, the Secretariat would prepare a draft partnership strategy that would include the following elements:
 - a) Objectives and purpose of the strategy;
 - b) Strategic context and rationale for CITES partnerships;
 - c) Analysis of the current situation
 - d) Strengthening synergies and partnerships at the national level;
 - e) Role of the Parties, the Conference of the Parties and its Permanent Committees and the CITES Secretariat;
 - f) Priority areas and criteria for strategic partnerships of CITES;
 - g) Monitoring and evaluation;
 - h) Conclusion and next steps
15. The intention would be to solicit inputs and comments from Parties and from the Permanent Committees in the process of developing the draft strategy. The Secretariat is currently in the process of drafting the terms of reference for the development of the partnership strategy, including process and timeline, and expects to

initiate this work shortly with the financial support from Switzerland. Resources permitting, the Secretariat may hold one or more rounds of consultations as the work progresses.

16. The Secretariat aims to present a draft partnership strategy for review by the Standing Committee at its 78th meeting.

Implementation of Decision 17.56 (Rev. CoP19)

17. The Secretariat continues to support the Standing Committee in exploring options for cooperation with other Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEAs) and international organizations. In this regard, the Secretariat has identified the following upcoming new opportunities that it would like to bring to the attention of the Committee:
 - a) 28th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC CoP28), Dubai, UAE, 30 November – 12 December 2023;
 - b) Bern III Conference on synergies, Bern, week of 20-26 January 2024 (to be confirmed); and
 - c) Sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA6), Nairobi 21 February – 1 March 2024

28th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC CoP28)

18. The United Nations Environment Programme is planning for the first time to organize a joint UNEP Pavilion in collaboration with the Secretariats of interested MEAs during the 28th meeting of the UNFCCC scheduled to be held in United Arab Emirates from 30 November until 12 December 2023. In the past, CITES has not had the resources to engage very actively in UNFCCC processes and meetings. However, at the time of writing, the CITES Secretariat is considering the offer of UNEP to engage in a joint UNEP/MEA Pavilion at CoP28, subject to available resources. The objective would be to showcase the interlinkages between conservation and sustainable management of forests and tree species and climate change mitigation and adaptation to the audience of the Climate CoP, expected at around 30,000 participants. The Secretariat will provide an oral update of this initiative at the present meeting of the Standing Committee.

Bern III Conference on synergies, Bern, week of 20-26 January 2024 (to be confirmed)

19. In collaboration with Switzerland and with funding provided by Switzerland, the European Union and others, UNEP will be organizing the Bern III Conference on synergies in January 2024. This conference will build on the outcomes of Bern I (Bern, June 2019) and Bern II (online, January-February 2021) and focus on strengthening synergies for the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) with inputs from relevant MEAs and international organizations. Approximately 200 participants from Parties to MEAs and other relevant Conventions, MEA Secretariats, development partners and other international organizations will be invited to participate in the conference. Online participation and interpretation are being considered by the organizers. A preparatory workshop was organized in late June 2023 with experts from Parties and Secretariats of a number of selected MEAs, including the CITES Secretariat and one Member of the CITES Standing Committee. The workshop provided advice to UNEP on the agenda, inputs needed for the conference, expected outcomes and outputs of the Bern III conference as well as on possible invitees.
20. It is the understanding of the CITES Secretariat that preparations of the Bern III Conference will be well underway by the time of the present meeting and an oral update will be provided by the Secretariat.
21. In this context, the Secretariat would like to draw the attention to document SC77 Doc. 16 on the *CITES Strategic Vision* and its Annex 1 containing the Mapping of the *CITES Strategic Vision 2021-2030* objectives against the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and against the KM-GBF, which will be part of the input to the Bern III conference. The Secretariat further draws the Committee's attention to the proposed amendments to Resolution Conf. 16.4 on *Cooperation of CITES with other biodiversity-related conventions* that include language to ensure the long-term contribution of CITES to the KM-GBF and its monitoring framework.

Sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-6)

22. The sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly will take place from 21 February to 1 March 2024. For the first time, UNEA will feature a supplementary agenda item on *Cooperation with Multilateral*

Environmental Agreements (MEAs). It is recalled that UNEA-5 had recommended strengthening the contributions from and participation of MEAs in the Assembly, which led to the proposal for the "Cooperation with MEAs" supplementary agenda item in UNEA-6. Overall, the goal is to enhance collaboration and synergies between UNEP and MEAs to tackle the triple planetary crises (climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution) effectively and inclusively.

23. More specifically, the aim expressed by the UNEA bureau is to promote coherence between UNEA resolutions and MEA decisions while respecting MEAs' autonomy and enhance environmental governance and implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The supplementary item will be formally adopted at the beginning of UNEA-6. The discussion of the agenda item is expected to take place on 28 February 2024 in two MEA high-level dialogues. Formal consideration of the agenda item would resume on 1st March 2024 in the afternoon, with a presentation of summaries from the two dialogues by the moderators. The Assembly would be invited to take note of the outcomes, to be included in the proceedings report of UNEA-6, and then close the item. The high-level dialogues that will form part of the five-day UNEA-6 session will be interpreted and webcast.
24. The themes proposed for the two high-level dialogues are the following:
 - a) Strengthening the science-policy interface for effective environmental commitments; and
 - b) Strengthening cooperation between UNEA, UNEP and MEAs to enhance effective implementation, including on financial resources, transfer of technology and knowledge and capacity-building (to be confirmed).
25. Both of these themes are considered relevant for CITES as a science-based Convention with a strong focus on implementation at the national level. Goal 2 of the *CITES Strategic Vision 2021-2030* recognizes the need for Parties to generate and have access to the best available science and information to support decision-making, including risk assessments (including non-detriment findings), listing proposals and permitting procedures. Goal 3 acknowledges the necessity of supporting Parties to effectively implement the Convention.
26. The participation will be open to relevant MEA Secretariats, Rio Conventions, and regional conventions, as well as representatives from Member States, United Nations entities, international organizations, and major groups and stakeholders. The outcome of the dialogues will be included in the proceedings report of UNEA-6 and may be presented at the respective MEAs' governing bodies.
27. At the time of writing, the CITES Secretariat has received no information or invitation to identify speakers for the two high-level dialogues on Cooperation with MEAs. However, the Secretariat encourages Standing Committee Members and other Parties to liaise with their UNEA focal points to ensure that the achievements of CITES are adequately presented and that the interests of the Convention are well represented at the two dialogues. The CITES Secretary-General is expected to take part in the meeting of UNEA-6, including in the supplementary agenda item.
28. At UNEA-6, UNEP is also proposing to organize an "MEA Pavilion." The aim would be to showcase cooperation between UNEP and MEAs, other UN entities and MEAs, as well as among the MEAs, on cross-cutting topics of interest which are relevant to the themes of UNEA-6. It will also provide space for individual MEAs to showcase their work, including through presentations and exhibitions. The Pavilion would be open to all UNEA participants for networking, knowledge-sharing and additional panel discussions and other events. In addition to UNEP and MEA Secretariats, the pavilion could also be used for MEA-related events organized by national entities/Member States, relevant organizations and Major Group and other stakeholders including scientists, business, civil society and youth groups.
29. At the time of writing, the CITES Secretariat has expressed an interest in participating in this initiative and will further update the Committee at the meeting.

Updates on other partnerships of CITES

30. This document cannot give a comprehensive account of all the collaboration with external partners that the Parties and the CITES Secretariat are engaged in. Many of the documents presented at the present meeting include information on such collaboration and partnerships. The Secretariat mentions below examples of partnerships it considers as strategically important and relevant for the present document.

UNESCO World Heritage Centre

31. At its 74th meeting, the Standing Committee reviewed the draft Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the UNESCO World Heritage Centre contained in document SC74 Doc. 24. The recommendations agreed by the Standing Committee were taken into consideration in the finalization of the MoU. On 26 June 2023, the Secretary-General of CITES and the Director of the World Heritage Centre signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) building on the longstanding cooperation on conservation of CITES-listed species in UNESCO World Heritage sites and aimed at intensifying efforts to implement the 1972 World Heritage Convention and CITES, including by promoting in-country cooperation among national stakeholders. The MoU is available on the CITES webpage: https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/disc/coop/UNESCOWHC_CITES_MOU_signed_26062023.pdf

Collaborative Partnership on Sustainable Wildlife Management (CPW)

32. The Collaborative Partnership on Sustainable Wildlife Management (CPW) is a voluntary partnership of 14 international organizations with substantive mandates and programmes to promote the sustainable use and conservation of wildlife resources established in March 2013. The CPW provides a platform for addressing wildlife management issues that require national and supra-national responses and also works to promote and increase cooperation and coordination on sustainable wildlife management issues among its members and partners. The Secretary-General of CITES was elected as the new chair of the CPW in 2022.
33. The CPW held a strategic meeting in Dublin in February 2023 to endorse a set of priorities and develop a work plan for joint actions of the CPW for the next 2-3 years. It is based on the priorities agreed reflecting the mandates and approved work programmes of the partners. The work plan will be finalized at the 15th meeting of the CPW to be held in Rome from 26 to 28 September 2023 and will be developed around the following five priorities:
- To support countries to ensure that the use of and trade in wildlife is legal, sustainable and safe;
 - To raise awareness of the links between sustainable use of wildlife, food security, livelihoods and well-being, culture and the integrity of landscapes;
 - To promote the prevention, management and reduction of human-wildlife conflict and enhance coexistence;
 - To embed the sustainable use and management of wildlife in the One Health agenda; and
 - To advocate for sustainable and inclusive wildlife economies.

Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF)

34. To enhance and raise awareness on CITES contributions to global forest-relevant mandates and forest policies and initiatives, the Secretariat attended the 18th session of the United Forum on Forests (UNFF18; 8-12 May 2023, New York). Bilateral engagements with members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) also allowed the Secretariat to identify new avenues of collaboration in matters relating to the timely implementation of CITES listings and decisions on tree species. The Secretariat has been in close communication with the CPF Chair (Food and Agriculture Organization) to coordinate CITES contributions in preparation for the upcoming Sustainable Development Goals Summit, which will take place from 18 to 19 September in New York (USA). For more details, see document SC77 Doc. 21 on *CITES and forests*.

World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH – formerly known as OIE)

35. The CITES Secretariat and the Secretariat of WOAH have agreed on a revised MoU as well as a work programme aimed at further developing the cooperation between the two organizations as well as between relevant institutions and agencies at the national level. The MoU and work plan are presented to the Standing Committee for comments and endorsement at the present meeting (see document SC77 Doc. 17.2).

Recommendations

36. The Standing Committee is invited to
- consider the process outlined for the development of the draft CITES partnership strategy and provide any inputs;
 - coordinate the participation of its Members at the Bern III Conference on synergies (January 2024) to ensure that the Convention and its interests are adequately represented at the conference; and

- c) encourage Parties participating in the UNEA-6 high-level dialogues to represent the achievements, needs and interests of CITES and its Parties.