

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



Seventy-eighth meeting of the Standing Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 3-8 February 2025

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.*

Implementation of Decisions 19.20 and 19.21 – CITES partnership strategy (draft)

3. As called for in Decision 19.20, the Secretariat has developed a draft Partnership Strategy in collaboration with The Partnering Initiative, a non-governmental organization with experience in the development of partnership strategies for international organizations, including UN agencies. To inform the draft Partnership Strategy, the Secretariat undertook a mapping of ongoing partnerships to identify thematic areas covered; gaps where CITES needs to engage more intentionally; and (new) types of partnerships that should be explored further. The mapping was based on the list of partnerships contained in document [SC74 Doc. 23](#).
4. The draft strategy was shared with Parties and stakeholders for comments in Notification to the Parties No. 2024/108 of 30 September 2024. The Secretariat received comments and feedback from ten Parties, i.e. the representative for Oceania (Mr. Wrigley) of the Plants Committee, Benin, Brazil (Management Authority and Scientific Authority), China, Germany, Mexico, Niger, Senegal, Togo and the United States of America, as well as a number of observer organizations. The full list of names of observer organizations and the comments submitted by Parties and observer organizations are made available as an information document. The Secretariat appreciates the time taken by Parties and observer organizations in reviewing the draft strategy and providing substantive and thoughtful comments.
5. The Secretariat has reflected the comments to the extent possible in the revised strategy, which is available for review by the Standing Committee in the Annex to the present document. The comments that could not be fully reflected in this version have been noted with the following clarifications:
 - a) A core principle and criterion for the establishment of partnerships should be their contribution to the objectives, mandate and mission of CITES. Partnerships must aim at creating added value and synergies in the achievement of the objectives of CITES and its [Strategic Vision 2021-2030](#). In this respect, partnerships should be also considered in areas, which may not be *stricto sensu* under the core mandate of CITES, but could facilitate enabling the effective implementation of the Convention, i.e. on digitalization and technology, communication and knowledge management, zoonotic diseases, etc.
 - b) The draft Partnership Strategy does not address operational aspects of cooperation, as it focuses on a higher strategic level. It is intended to provide a strategic framework to guide the Secretariat and the Committees on the type and scope of partnerships the Secretariat should engage in (including on behalf of the Committees), in support of the implementation of the Convention. The draft Partnership Strategy therefore aims at outlining a systematic approach to partnerships by setting out principles and approaches to support a more strategic and intentional selection and establishment of partnerships. Its implementation will not undermine any existing partnerships. The draft Partnership Strategy aims to address cooperation and multi-stakeholder partnerships, which do not involve any financial transactions or commitments.
 - c) The draft Partnership Strategy does not intend to introduce a new *modus operandi*, and therefore the processes applied by the Secretariat will continue. Parties and the Committees will continue being engaged as before.
 - d) The operationalization of partnerships applied by the Secretariat will continue to be in accordance with the UN rules and regulations and aligned with the recently adopted Partnership Policy of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) (June 2024), as contained in an information document to the present meeting, especially regarding the partner validation and due diligence procedures, partnership assessment, engagement documentation etc., as well as the UNEP Strategy for Private Sector Engagement.
 - e) Further to the Partnership Strategy, additional instruments and tools may need to be developed in future to support its operationalization. These may comprise a more detailed Partnership Plan, standard operating procedures, key performance indicators etc., as well as mechanisms to support the evaluation of both existing and new partnerships.
 - f) Decision 19.20 refers to strategic partnerships without limiting the scope of the strategy to specific types of partners. In this respect, the draft Partnership Strategy is not limited only to Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and international organizations but covers a broader range of potential partners.
 - g) The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is the main type of legal instrument used in the UN system for cooperation partnerships. MoUs aim at providing a framework of commitments through which a UN

entity and a partner confirm that they share a common understanding, define strategic alliances, and agree/define areas of common interest, spheres of cooperation and mutual operational engagements. MoUs have been used in the past by the Secretariat and will continue being used in the same way as the main instrument for cooperation partnerships, when this is considered relevant.

Implementation of Decision 17.56 (Rev. CoP19)

6. The Secretariat continues to support the Standing Committee in exploring options for cooperation with other MEAs and international organizations. In this regard, the Secretariat has participated in following events and opportunities for cooperation, collaboration and synergies:
 - a) Bern III Conference on synergies, Bern, week of 20-26 January 2024;
 - b) 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS COP14), Samarkand, Uzbekistan, 2 – 17 February 2024;
 - c) Sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-6), Nairobi 21 February – 1 March 2024; and
 - d) 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP16), Cali, Colombia, 21 October – 1 November 2024.

Bern III Conference on synergies, Bern, 23-25 January 2024

7. In collaboration with the co-Chairs Mexico and Sweden and with funding provided by Switzerland, UNEP organized the Bern III Conference on synergies from 23 to 25 January 2024. The conference built on the outcomes of Bern I (Bern, June 2019) and Bern II (online, January-February 2021) and focused on strengthening synergies for the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) 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 participated in the conference. CITES was represented by Representatives or alternate Representatives of the Standing Committee from the following Parties: Cuba, Indonesia, Kenya and Zambia, as well as Mexico and the CITES Secretariat. The Party Representatives and the Secretariat contributed case studies and to the Bern Conference outcomes that identified key entry points for exploring synergies, drawing on its mandates, including through the KMGBF Framework Target 5. The Parties are invited to consider the practical outcomes in the Bern III Report, including the mapping paper of interlinkages with the KMGBF and other MEAs.

14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS COP14)

8. The Secretariat participated in CMS COP14 that took place from 12 – 17 February 2024 in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. A number of [decisions](#) were adopted by the Parties to CMS inviting the CMS Secretariat to cooperate and collaborate with the CITES Secretariat on the following:
 - a) Review mechanisms and National Legislation Programme (CMS Decision 14.29),
 - b) Application of Article III of the CMS regarding international trade in Appendix-I listed species (CMS Decision 14.30)
 - c) European eel (CMS Decision 14.109)
 - d) Conservation of African-Eurasian Vultures (CMS Decision 14.155)
 - e) Saker Falcon (*Falco cherrug*) Global Action Plan (CMS Decision 14.159)
 - f) Joint CITES-CMS African Carnivore Initiative (CMS Decisions 14.166)
 - g) CMS Jaguar Initiative (CMS Decision 14.173 – 14.178)
 - h) Illegal and unsustainable taking of wildlife (CMS Decision 14.185)

- i) Aquatic wild meat (CMS Decision 14.187 and 14.189)
9. The Parties to CMS adopted amendments to the CMS resolution on *Wildlife Health and Migratory Species* in which they welcomed the collaborative efforts of CITES and the World Organisation of Animal Health (WOAH) to address risks from zoonotic pathogens and request the CMS Secretariat to promote cooperation with the Quadripartite on One Health, the One Health High-Level Expert Panel and CITES.
10. The Parties to CMS furthermore adopted amendments to the CMS resolution on *Synergies and Partnerships [Resolution 11.10 (Rev. CoP14)]* and welcomed the joint work programme between the CMS and the CITES Secretariats. On 14 October 2024, the CITES-CMS Annual Coordination meeting took place through online means and the Secretariat's discussed progress made with the implementation of the [CMS-CITES Joint Work Programme 2021-2025](#). The programme of work will be reviewed, as needed, after the 20th meeting of the Conference of the Parties and the Secretariat will report to the Standing Committee as required in terms of Resolution Conf. 13.3 on *Cooperation and synergy with the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)*.

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

11. The sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly took place from 21 February to 1 March 2024. For the first time, UNEA featured a supplementary agenda item on *Cooperation with Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs)* in order to enhance collaboration and synergies between UNEP and MEAs to tackle the triple planetary crises (climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution) effectively and inclusively.
12. The discussion of the agenda item took place on 28 February 2024 in two MEA high-level dialogues on the following themes:
 - 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.
13. 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.
14. The CITES Secretary-General took part in the meeting of UNEA-6, including in the supplementary agenda item. The CITES Secretariat also participated in side events at the "MEA Pavilion" that showcased 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.
15. As an outcome of UNEA-6, Resolution 4 on *Promoting synergies, cooperation or collaboration for national implementation of multilateral environmental agreements and other relevant environmental instruments* was adopted (see [UNEP/EA/Res.4](#)). Another outcome of UNEA-6 is Resolution 6 on *Fostering national action to address global environmental challenges through increased cooperation between the United Nations Environment Assembly, the United Nations Environment Programme and multilateral environmental agreements* (see [UNEP/EA.6/Res.6](#)).

16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP16)

16. The CITES Secretariat worked closely with the other members of the [Liaison Group of Biodiversity-related Conventions](#), also known as the Biodiversity Liaison Group (BLG), to make a joint intervention at the High Level segment of the CBD COP16 regarding the cooperation among the biodiversity-related MEAs in the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF). A "GBF Pavilion" was set up at CBD COP16, in which CITES was an active participant. The Secretariat, as well as Parties, shared their experiences on cooperation and synergies at the global and national levels.
17. The CBD Secretariat designated certain thematic days in addition to the GBF Pavilion which remained active throughout the CBD COP16. The CITES Secretariat actively contributed to the Biodiversity and Health Day;

Forest and Water Day; Biodiversity and Governance Day; Trade Day, and BLG Cooperation Day through participation as speakers or panelists at the meetings and side events of the Collaborative Partnership on Sustainable Management of Wildlife (CPW; for which CITES acts as Chair); Collaborative Partnership on Sustainable Forest Management (CPF, for which CITES acts as vice-chair); UN-Oceans; UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD); BLG; and Environment Management Group (EMG).

18. In this context of the implementation of Decision 17.56 (Rev. CoP19), the Secretariat would like to draw attention to document SC78 Doc. 14 on the *CITES Strategic Vision* containing the Mapping of the *CITES Strategic Vision 2021-2030* objectives against the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and against the KMGBF. 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 KMGBF and its monitoring framework.

Updates on other partnerships of CITES

19. This document does not 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 prepared for 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.

Collaborative Partnership on Sustainable Wildlife Management (CPW)

20. The Collaborative Partnership on Sustainable Wildlife Management (CPW) is a voluntary partnership established in March 2013 consisting of 13 international organizations with substantive mandates and programmes to promote the sustainable use and conservation of wildlife resources. 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 has been chair of the CPW since 2022.
21. The 15th meeting of CPW was held on 26-28 September 2023 in Rome, Italy. One of the key outcomes of the meeting was the finalization of a [2023-2025 CPW workplan](#) which was officially launched at a side event on 16 October 2023 during the 25th meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA-25) of CBD. SBSTTA-25 adopted [recommendation 25/7](#), which requested the Executive Secretary to collaborate with the CPW to undertake, in line with the mandate of the Convention and the goals and targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, a further gap analysis (beyond the wild meat sector) to identify areas that are not adequately covered by existing guidance developed under relevant multilateral environmental agreements and by competent intergovernmental organizations. The Subsidiary Body requested the Executive Secretary to submit the results of the further gap analysis, including the revised list, to the Conference of the Parties for consideration at its sixteenth meeting.
22. At the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP16, Cali, October 2024), as Chair of the CPW, the CITES Secretary-General introduced the gap analysis undertaken by the CPW at the request of SBSTTA-25. This analysis identified areas that were not adequately covered by existing guidance developed under relevant multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and by competent intergovernmental organizations. It was conducted within CPW's mandate covering terrestrial wildlife across all biomes and utilizing internal financial resources, taking into consideration the seven key elements of effective policy for the sustainable use of wild species identified in the IPBES Thematic Assessment Report on the Sustainable Use of Wild Species.
23. At CBD COP16, Decision CBD/COP/16/L.2 on Sustainable wildlife management was adopted, setting the stage for enhanced synergies in the field of sustainable use of wildlife with the CITES Secretariat, the Food and Agriculture Organization and the secretariats of other relevant MEAs. The Decision also calls for the CBD Executive Secretary, in collaboration with the CPW, to prepare draft global guidance on the sustainable management of wildlife focusing on inclusive and participatory decision-making, the inclusion of multiple systems of knowledge and the recognition of rights, and the equitable distribution of costs and benefits.

Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF)

24. 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 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 was in close communication with the CPF Chair (Food and Agriculture Organization – FAO) to coordinate CITES contributions in preparation for the Sustainable Development Goals Summit, which took place from 18 to 19 September 2023 in New York (USA).

25. The Secretariat attended the 27th session of the FAO Committee of Forestry (COFO27) “Accelerating forest solutions through innovation” which took place from 22 to 26 July 2024 (Rome, Italy). The event provided an excellent opportunity for the Secretariat to engage with CPF members and explore potential new partnerships with FAO in matters relevant to forests. The highlights of COFO27 were the approval of FAO’s State of the World’s Forests 2024 ([SOFO 2024](#)), and the endorsement of the [FAO Forestry Roadmap 2024-2031](#).
26. On 25 October 2024 CITES Secretary-General, in her role as Vice-Chair of the CPF, attended and delivered the closing remarks of CBD COP16 Forest and Water Day (Cali, Colombia). The event opened with the launch of “[The Forest Factor](#)” a major initiative of the CPF, which showcases how sustainable forest management is crucial to help countries conserve, restore and sustainably use their forests while contributing to global biodiversity targets. The full remarks of Secretary General Ms. Higuero are available in this [link](#).

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

27. The CITES Secretariat and the Secretariat of WOAH signed on 1 March 2024 a Memorandum of Understanding that includes 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 were presented to the Standing Committee for comments and endorsement at its 77th meeting (see document SC77 Doc. 17.2). A further update on the collaboration with WOAH can be found in document SC78 Doc. 15.

Cooperation on law enforcement

28. ICCWC is a partnership between the CITES Secretariat, INTERPOL, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the World Bank and the World Customs Organization (WCO) to strengthen criminal justice systems and provide coordinated support at national, regional and international level to combat wildlife and forest crime.¹ The partnership has evolved since its inception and is increasingly developing comprehensive coordinated strategies, most recently through the ICCWC Vision and its associated Strategic Action Plans, based on lessons learned and needs and priorities identified to support and strengthen wildlife authorities, police, customs and entire criminal justice systems to ensure that they are well equipped and capacitated to effectively respond to the threat posed by wildlife crime. Key initiatives and activities conducted in 2023 were highlighted in the [ICCWC annual report for 2023](#) and additional details were reported in document [SC77 Doc. 39.2](#) and are available on the [ICCWC website](#). The Secretariat provides a further update in this regard in SC78 Doc. 38.2 on the *International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime*.

Cooperation on trade issues and trade facilitation

29. The Secretariat collaborated with [United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business](#) (UN/CEFACT) on the ‘[Digitization of Transit Accompanying Documents](#)’ project, and maintained regular communication with UN/CEFACT experts on new international electronic business standards, and actively participated in UN/CEFACT Forums and meetings of the Task Force on Electronic Permit Information Exchange (EPIX). The Secretariat also engaged experts from UN/CEFACT, United Nations Trade and Development (UNCTAD) – Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA), World Trade Organization (WTO) and WCO to advance CITES e-permitting systems and risk assessment and inspections, with experts providing technical guidance and participating in workshops.
30. Supported by financial contributions from Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America, the Secretariat supported UNCTAD-ASYCUDA to maintain and update the [eCITES BaseSolution](#), a ready-to-use electronic permitting system implemented in Mozambique and Sri Lanka. Additionally, the Secretariat maintained close collaboration with the WTO Division of Trade and Environment and attended meetings of the WTO Committee on Trade and Environment. Additionally, the Secretariat regularly participated in International Air Transport Association [Live Animals and Perishable](#)

¹ The Consortium was formally established in 2010 through a Letter of Understanding signed by the executive heads of all partner organizations. See https://cites.org/sites/default/files/i/ccwc/mou_0.pdf

[Board](#) sessions, and contributed to the 2025 editions of the Live Animal Regulations and Perishable Cargo Regulations through species updates and relevant information, with ongoing discussions to make these accessible to CITES Parties. It also contributed to the International Chamber of Commerce's Digital Standards Initiative publication on [Key Trade Documents and Data Elements](#).

Regional cooperation

31. At the regional level, the CITES Secretariat works with a number of regional intergovernmental organizations, mainly to support Parties in the implementation of the Convention concerning different thematic matters of importance for the respective region. Examples are: the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme on marine species and general capacity-building for the Parties in Oceania; the African Union Commission on CoP preparation and implementation planning, the Secretariat of the Caribbean Community on customs and eCITES, and the Amazonian Cooperation Treaty Organization on the implementation of CITES tree listings and CoP Decisions on jaguars. While the Secretariat has long-standing working relationships with these regional organizations, the nature of the specific cooperation is mostly on a project-basis where activities will be jointly planned and executed upon availability of funds.

Recommendations

32. The Standing Committee is invited to:

- a) review and submit the draft Partnership Strategy for approval by the Conference of the Parties at its 20th meeting and encourage Parties to consider the strategy, as appropriate, to inform the way they partner on CITES matters;
- b) propose to the Conference of the Parties the deletion of Decisions 19.20 and 19.21 as they have been implemented;
- c) note the update provided by the Secretariat in order to strengthen cooperation, collaboration and synergies with other Multilateral Environment Agreements and international organizations;
- d) agree that, with the amendments to Resolution Conf. 16.4 on *Cooperation of CITES with other biodiversity-related conventions* proposed in document SC78 Doc. 14 on the *CITES Strategic Vision*, Decision 17.56 (Rev. CoP19) has been implemented and can be proposed for deletion to the CoP.
- e) propose to the CoP to incorporate Decision 17.55 (Rev. CoP19) into Resolution Conf. 16.4 as shown below (new text is underlined and deleted text is shown in ~~strike through~~) and subsequently delete Decision 17.55 (Rev. CoP19):

THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION

1. ENCOURAGES Parties to consider further opportunities to strengthen the cooperation, coordination and synergies among the biodiversity-related ~~agreements conventions~~ at all relevant levels, including at the national level by, among others, improving coordination and cooperation between national focal points and strengthening capacity-building activities; [text from Decision 17.55 (Rev. CoP19)]

CITES Partnership strategy (draft)

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I. OBJECTIVE AND PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGY

1. The preamble of the Convention recognizes that *“international co-operation is essential for the protection of certain species of wild fauna and flora against over-exploitation through international trade”*.
2. Goal 5 of the *CITES Strategic Vision: 2021 – 2030*² states that *“Delivery of the CITES Strategic Vision is improved through collaboration”*. As such, the collaboration called for under Goal 5 serves as a means of implementation for the other Goals of the Strategic Vision, in a similar fashion to how Sustainable Development Goal 17³ promotes the use of partnerships to strengthen the implementation of the other Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
3. The objective of this Partnership Strategy is to ensure that strategic partnerships contribute to the effective implementation of the Strategic Vision and thereby the Convention, such that Parties may achieve Goals 1 to 4, and their respective objectives. The Strategy builds on the knowledge and positive results generated through successful partnerships of CITES over many years, which have supported the delivery of the CITES mandate and objectives as well as contributing to the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDGs 14 and 15. Illustrative examples of CITES partnerships are referenced in the present document, which is also informed by a mapping of existing partnerships of the Secretariat.
4. Partnerships and collaboration have always been essential for the implementation of the Convention, and over the years, collaboration has evolved around a wide range of areas. The CITES Secretariat has formal relationships with some partners, but works also with a wide number of entities on specific issues and projects (see Section IV).
5. From an operational point of view, partnership efforts of the Secretariat, a UNEP-administered convention, are in accordance with the UN rules and regulations and aligned with the recently adopted UNEP Partnership Policy (June 2024) and the UNEP [Strategy for Private Sector Engagement](#). The purpose of the CITES Partnership Strategy is to focus on a higher strategic level and highlight elements, specific to the scope of CITES, which are important to be agreed as a common basis to guide the Secretariat in seeking and building partnerships to the benefit of the implementation of the Convention.
6. This Partnership Strategy seeks to outline a systematic approach to partnerships. It establishes principles and approaches to support strategic and intentional selection and establishment of partnerships, with a view to strengthening coherence and alignment at all levels of CITES. The strategy aims to focus collaboration efforts where the needs are greatest and prioritize partnerships to optimize the use of limited resources (human and financial).
7. In the same vein, the Partnership Strategy provides guidance on how to approach the identification of non-traditional partners (see Section IV), to enable collaboration with new stakeholders, aware that public funding alone cannot address wildlife conservation needs and many beneficiaries of wildlife are not investing in conservation, who can add previously untapped value to the effective implementation of the Convention, consistent with the terms of the Convention.
8. The Partnership Strategy is based on the premise that partnerships should create significant value to each of the partners involved in the partnership and to the implementation and enforcement of the Convention (see Section III).
9. The Strategy was developed in accordance with Decision 19.20 and supports the implementation of Decisions 17.55 (Rev. CoP19), 17.56 (Rev. CoP19) and 19.21 on *Cooperation with Multilateral Environmental Agreements and other international organizations*⁴.
10. Resolution Conf. 18.3 on *CITES Strategic Vision: 2021 – 2030*, conscious of the need to ensure the effective implementation of the Convention globally, acknowledges the importance of global

² <https://cites.org/sites/default/files/documents/COP/19/resolution/E-Res-18-03.pdf>

³ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal17>

⁴ <https://cites.org/eng/dec/index.php/44344>

cooperation to address the threats posed by illegal trade in wildlife as recognized, among others, in Resolution 69/314⁵ and subsequent Resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly on *Tackling illicit trafficking in wildlife*.

11. The *CITES Strategic Vision: 2021 – 2030* recognizes that Parties' efforts to implement the Convention may also provide benefit to, and draw strength from, efforts being undertaken in other fora. In this regard, it is worth recalling that the Vision Statement of the CITES Strategic Vision also recognizes that the implementation of the Convention contributes to achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

II. DEFINITIONS AND SCOPE

12. In the context of this Strategy, a CITES Strategic Partnership is defined⁶ as:

“an ongoing collaborative relationship between the Secretariat (including on behalf of the Permanent Committees or the Conference of the Parties) and one or more other entities, aligning their interests around a common vision, combining their complementary resources and competencies and sharing risk, to maximize value creation towards enhancing the effective implementation and enforcement of the Convention, and deliver benefit to each of the partners.”

13. The above definition is adapted from *The SDG Partnership Guidebook*⁷, which unpacks this definition further:

- a. *“an ongoing collaborative relationship...”* Partnerships usually require considerable time and effort to develop and commitment from all partners to work together.
- b. *“...aligning their interests around a common vision...”* Partnerships can only happen where there is a clear alignment of interests.
- c. *“...combining their complementary resources and competencies...”* Partnerships are able to deliver more through the complementarity and diversity of resources the different partners are able to bring to the table.
- d. *“...and sharing risk...”* Sharing risks helps to ensure engagement and build equity and trust among partners.
- e. *“...to maximize value creation...”* Partnerships are all about value creation – being able to deliver benefit and impact far greater than the sum of the parts.
- f. *“...and deliver benefit to each of the partners.”* For partners to remain engaged, all partners must gain value from their involvement.

14. CITES Strategic Partnerships, as defined in paragraph 12, are key to enabling the implementation of CITES' core mandate. These may take the form of long-term or medium-term partnerships⁸:

- a. Long-term partnerships are key to the effective implementation of CITES' core mandate. These partnerships may be renewed for as long as they remain necessary.
- b. Medium-term partnerships are like long-term partnerships, but only last for a limited, pre-defined period, for example for as long as a specific project lasts. Examples of this would

⁵ <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n15/238/62/pdf/n1523862.pdf?token=9PBzhOfKSEwUKNr01&fe=true>

⁶ The UNEP Partnership Policy defines a “Partnership” as a “voluntary and collaborative relationship between parties, in which all Partners agree to work together to achieve a common purpose or undertake a specific task and as mutually agreed, to share risks and responsibilities, resources and benefits.” While similar, the definition adopted here is deliberately made more specific to the context of CITES to explicitly enhance the implementation and enforcement of the Convention.

⁷ <https://thepartneringinitiative.org/knowledge-centre/partnering-guidebooks/sdg-partnership-guidebook/>

⁸ Both types of partnerships referred to in paragraph 14 may correspond to the ‘cooperation partnership’ or ‘multi-stakeholder partnership’ modalities as defined in the UNEP Partnership Policy.

be partnerships engaged in specifically to deliver the objectives of the CITES Tree Species Project.

15. Short-term partnerships, otherwise referred to as implementation partnerships, are ad-hoc and support the implementation of specific (parts of) Decisions. This category of partnerships is not covered by this Strategy.

III. CORE PARTNERSHIP PRINCIPLES AND APPROACHES

A. Significant added value

16. The primary driver for working through partnerships must be that, by combining resources, partnerships can deliver far more than the sum of their constituent parts. Additionally, every partnership must create net value for each partner, otherwise there is no incentive for their continued involvement⁹.
17. In recognition of these basic premises, a CITES Strategic Partnership should create significant value towards enhancing the effective implementation and enforcement of the Convention, which could not be achieved by either partner working in isolation. The value created by the partnership should outweigh the resources put into it (see Section III.B).
18. Furthermore, each individual partner has value it can bring to the partnership, and value it can gain from the partnership. The value gained by each individual partner should never be at the expense of the other partner(s), but through win-win approaches that deliver mutual benefits.
19. The following paragraphs articulate the value CITES brings to partnerships (sub-section III.A1.), identify how partnerships should create value to CITES and amplify the effective implementation and enforcement of the Convention (sub-section III.A2.), and outlines the principles to consider when defining how a (prospective or existing) partnership creates value (sub-section III.A3.). In other words, the lens of value-creation used here informs the selection, prioritization, and evaluation of partnerships, and should be considered both when designing new and evaluating existing partnerships.
 - A1. CITES' value proposition
20. The unique value CITES brings to partnerships is well-established:
 - a. As a Multilateral Environmental Agreement administered by the United Nations, CITES has been ratified by 184 Parties and is a globally recognized brand that offers legitimacy, credibility, impartiality, and considerable convening power to bring together governments, international organizations, civil society organizations, businesses, and other stakeholders in the regulation of international trade in endangered species of wild fauna and flora.
 - b. As the only legally binding instrument regulating international wildlife trade to ensure it's legal, and sustainable, and traceable, thereby ensuring that sustainable use contributes to the long-term conservation of species, CITES is an expression of sustainable development balancing social, economic and environmental objectives. Under CITES, trade can only be authorized in specimens that have been legally acquired, i.e. not in contravention with national laws and the Convention, as assessed by the authorities of the State of export, through a legal acquisition finding (LAF).
 - c. In addition, CITES is a science-based Convention where decisions about allowing trade have to be based on scientific findings that such trade is non-detrimental to the species' survival and its role in the ecosystem (non-detriment findings or NDFs). Similarly, proposals for the listing of species in CITES' Appendices need to be justified by scientific evidence regarding the conservation status and impacts of international trade. CITES' two scientific committees (the Animals and Plants Committees) provide scientific and technical support to the Parties' decision-making about species of fauna and flora that

⁹ <https://thepartneringinitiative.org/knowledge-centre/partnering-guidebooks/sdg-partnership-guidebook/>

are subject to CITES trade controls, further enhancing the credibility and the impartiality of the Convention.

- d. Compliance (i.e. to act in accordance with and in fulfilment of the Convention's requirements) is the primary responsibility of the Parties and a core business of the Convention. As the cost of non-compliance can be high for the survival of entire species or populations, the Convention has established various compliance procedures to which Parties may be subjected if they fail to comply with the Convention's requirements. These compliance procedures are managed by the CITES Standing Committee. Consequently, CITES is sometimes referred to as 'the Convention with teeth', which enhances its credibility and impact.
- e. CITES plays a central role in combating wildlife crime, as the primary legal framework for regulating international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants listed in its Appendices. Combating wildlife crime is a key part of achieving the CITES Strategic Vision, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the UN SDGs. CITES works to ensure that national legal and regulatory frameworks of its Parties treat illegal wildlife trade as a serious crime and prioritize it in law enforcement efforts alongside other serious transnational crimes such as human, drugs and arms trafficking. This work is complemented with other international organizations' mandates through ICCWC partnership to create holistic responses to wildlife crime (for further details see box 1 below).

A2. Value creation through strategic partnerships

- 21. Creating value has multiple dimensions, i.e. creating mutual value for each partner and creating value for the partnership as a whole to achieve results in line with global environmental priorities, including the Convention, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and the relevant UN Sustainable Development Goals.
- 22. Being able to articulate the value expected to be obtained from a partnership is vital in considering whether to initiate the partnership at all¹⁰. It will also enable more objective evaluation of the partnership down the line since it facilitates the creation of milestones and/or indicators against which to measure the success of the partnership. To create value for the Parties and towards the achievement of CITES' mission, a CITES partnership must:
 - a. through its contributions to one or more of the Strategic Goals and their respective Strategic Objectives as outlined in the CITES Strategic Vision: 2021 – 2030, create a measurable impact in terms of achieving the CITES Vision, and contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (see also paragraph 25); and
 - b. bring together a variety of resources or expertise towards enhancing the implementation and enforcement of the Convention, as well as its effectiveness and efficiency, that could not be achieved without these added resources or expertise. This may be achieved through, for example (this list is not exhaustive):
 - i. the adoption or improvement of national legislation, international standards, policies or principles that enhance the regulation of international trade in wild species of fauna and flora, and combats the illegal wildlife trade;
 - ii. increased capacity of Parties and/or availability of knowledge, tools and guidance to support Parties' efforts to enforce the Convention and to combat illegal wildlife trade;

¹⁰ Tool 4 ("Value assessment framework") of *The SDG Partnering Guidebook* is a useful reference to facilitate the identification and articulation of value-added of a partnership. <https://thepartneringinitiative.org/knowledge-centre/partnering-guidebooks/sdg-partnership-guidebook/>

- iii. products or services that enhance the legality, sustainability, and traceability of international wildlife trade (for example, the digitalization of permits can help reduce their vulnerability to fraud); or
 - iv. the generation of scientific data and knowledge regarding the conservation status of CITES-listed species, their sustainable use, and the impacts of CITES-listings on these and other areas of concern to the Convention.
23. In addition, the Secretariat may derive value from a CITES partnership if it, for example (this list is not exhaustive):
- a. leverages financial resources to support the implementation of the Convention and its Resolutions and Decisions;
 - b. increases CITES' reach, profile, and recognition in global priorities for trade, the environment and development; or
 - c. increases the capacity (expertise, human resources, time, material resources) of the Secretariat to fulfil its mandates, including support to Parties.
- A3. Types of value-creation
24. To identify how value is being added, it can be helpful to answer the following questions when considering a partnership, whether it is to create a new partnership, or to enhance an existing one to fully capitalize on its potential value:
- a. How is it that by working together, the partnership will be able to deliver significantly more than the sum of its parts?
 - b. What specific extra impact will the partnership be able to achieve?
25. Answering these questions should consider how the partnership generates one or more of the following types of value-added, both for the partnership as a whole and for each individual partner¹¹.
- a. Collective legitimacy and outreach: the partnership, by creating collective legitimacy and outreach that outweigh those of each individual partner, adds weight to new norms, standards and policies developed or influenced by the partnership. **Example**: The CITES Secretariat participates and contributes, within the scope of the Convention, in an inter-agency partnership among 16 UN agencies, international organizations, institutions, and secretariats, including the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), International Union for Conservation Nature (IUCN), World Bank etc., with substantial programmes on forests, which coordinate and cooperate their work to support countries to achieve SDGs and other global forest-related goals, e.g. those established under the UN Strategic Plan for Forests (UNSPF 2030). This partnership creates an added value for CITES, especially considering the increasing number of timber species listed in its Appendices, as it helps raise awareness of the Convention provisions and contributions among relevant actors working on issues pertaining to the mandate of CITES and support their integration into global agendas,
 - b. Innovation for effectiveness: the partnership, by connecting a wide range of experts, influencers and/or technologies, catalyzes the development of new, innovative solutions. **Example**: Partnering with a UN agency has enabled the creation of an electronic CITES permit management system. This system is readily accessible to CITES Parties, enabling them to implement the Convention more effectively through modern information and communication technologies. By doing so, it contributes to the streamlining of compliant trade processes and enhances efforts to combat illegal trade.

¹¹ Tool 4 ("Value assessment framework") of *The SDG Partnering Guidebook* serves as a useful reference to support the process of identifying value added.

- c. **Holistic response:** by bringing together actors from across societal and economic sectors, the partnership addresses multiple inter-connected socio-ecological challenges that affect, or are affected by, the implementation and enforcement of the Convention, including those issues that are only indirectly linked to CITES' core mandate. **Example:** See the case study in Box 1 below.
- d. **Shared learning:** the partnership creates a mechanism for collective learning and capacity-building, raising the level of knowledge, expertise, and capacity widely, and leading to more effective practice and greater impact. **Example:** Through InforMEA, the CITES Secretariat and Secretariats of other Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) pool resources and expertise on knowledge management, ensuring interoperability when developing new tools and services using information and communication technologies. This contributes to shared learning and increased synergies and helps reach out to respective stakeholders among the MEAs at national and international levels.
- e. **Synergies:** by aligning programmes, sharing resources, and cooperating on the implementation of activities, the partnership reduces costs, increases impact, and avoids a multiplication of effort. **Example:** Partnering with a UN agency with presence on the ground enabled CITES to reduce costs and duplication of effort in the implementation of activities as part of the Compliance Assistance Programme, where these activities were complementary to the objectives of another project being implemented by that same UN agency.
- f. **Scale:** the partnership combines delivery capacity across geographical locations, thereby scaling up aligned approaches for greater reach to address common challenges across multiple countries, regions, or range States of CITES-listed species. **Example:** Cooperation with regional organizations with presence in specific regions or sub-regions is enhancing CITES' capacity to address common challenges for the conservation of species in international trade across their range facing similar pressures in the different range States in the region(s) concerned.

Box 1 – Case study: the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICCWC)

Launched in 2010, ICCWC is an example of a strategic and powerful partnership that provides a holistic response and is critical to support efforts of CITES Parties to combat wildlife crime. The Consortium, comprising CITES, INTERPOL, UNODC, the World Bank Group, and the World Customs Organization (WCO), unites the key organizations at global level with complementary mandates to combat wildlife crime, and combines their expertise, tools and resources to tackle wildlife crime.

The importance of ICCWC as a partnership lies in its ability to create a unified and robust response to the complex challenges posed by wildlife crime by coordinating efforts and initiatives at national, regional, and global levels. By integrating partner initiatives and approaches, ICCWC provides a streamlined and coordinated response to strengthen the capacity of Parties to implement CITES, combat wildlife crime and the criminal networks involved, and protect endangered species. Its holistic approach ensures that all aspects of wildlife crime are addressed across the criminal justice chain, from on-the-ground enforcement and capacity-building to high-level policy, intelligence-led or financial investigations, making it a crucial force in the global effort to combat wildlife crime effectively. This approach not only ensures synergies are identified and partner programmes and initiatives are coordinated where possible, but also maximizes the use of resources available, reduces duplication and enhances the effectiveness of interventions.

The partnership has evolved since its inception and is increasingly developing comprehensive coordinated strategies, most recently through the ICCWC Vision and its associated Strategic Action Plans, based on lessons learned and needs and priorities identified to support and strengthen wildlife authorities, police, customs and entire criminal justice systems to ensure

that they are well equipped and capacitated to effectively respond to the threat posed by wildlife crime.

B. Balancing partnerships value against costs

26. As stated in paragraph 13.a., partnerships usually take a significant amount of time to develop (transaction costs) and maintain (implementation costs). Therefore, when considering a partnership, it is important to weigh the potential value against the likely costs of developing and delivering it. Tools exist to support the undertaking of such an exercise in practice, e.g. the value assessment framework under the SDG Partnership Guidebook¹². The value created by a partnership should outweigh these types of costs, for example:
- a. Staff time: all staff time plus overheads / cost recovery used by each partner for the development and implementation of the partnership.
 - b. 'Hard' costs: monetary and other resources with a financial value (e.g. travel, office space, equipment, etc.) invested by each partner in the development and implementation of the partnership.
 - c. Non-tangible: social and political capital invested in the development of the partnership and used in its implementation.

C. Nurturing partnerships

27. An important part of effective partnerships is ensuring that all partners are working effectively together and are benefitting from the arrangement, and that there is strong communication, trust, and transparency.
28. Regular communication plays a central role in effective partnerships, where an ability to listen to each other and understand each other's differences is key.
29. Trust and transparency significantly improve the efficiency of a partnership, both in terms of addressing implementation challenges and the management of limited resources. The higher the level of trust and transparency between partners, the more each partner will be committed to finding solutions to challenges and keeping the partnership on a forward-moving trajectory.
30. Differences in mandates and organizational culture¹³, which may often be hidden, can cause challenges in a partnership. However, when there is effective communication, trust, and transparency across the partnership, this should create awareness and understanding of these differences, which can in turn create opportunities for them to create value-added to the partnership. When challenges do arise, it is important to focus on the goals of the partnership when collaboratively seeking solutions to those challenges.

IV. PRIORITY AREAS FOR CITES STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

31. A core principle and criterion for establishment of partnerships should be its potential to support the objectives of the Convention and the Strategic Vision through the creation of added value and synergies, by joining efforts with selected partners. This can also apply for activities, which, although not under the core mandate of CITES in a narrow sense, are required as enabling factors for the effective implementation of the Convention.
32. Some issues cut across partnerships, rather than supporting a specific thematic area. These include:
- a. Capacity-building, especially in support of Parties facing significant challenges to fully implement CITES provisions;

¹² <https://sdgs.un.org/publications/sdg-partnership-guidebook-24566>

¹³ Organizational culture is defined by the five Ps: process, principles, policies, practices, and politics.

- b. Information generation and sharing and knowledge management (including the Virtual College);
 - c. Digitalization and technology, including use for enhanced monitoring and control of trade in CITES-listed species;
 - d. Communication and awareness raising.
33. The Secretariat is currently engaged in partnerships, including on behalf of the Permanent Committees and the Conference of the Parties, in the following thematic areas related to the implementation of the Convention:
- a. Sustainable management and use of wild fauna and flora;
 - b. Species conservation and trade, including trade data;
 - c. Scientific research, including non-detriment findings (NDFs);
 - d. Livelihoods of rural communities;
 - e. National legislation for the effective implementation of the Convention;
 - f. Illegal trade and law enforcement, including illegal trade data;
 - g. Permitting and traceability, including legal acquisition findings (LAFs);
 - h. Transportation of live specimens;
 - i. Policies and principles related to biodiversity conservation.
34. Existing partnerships in these areas, such as those with other Multilateral Environmental Agreements, Intergovernmental Organizations and Civil Society Organizations (CSO), which are relevant and supporting the achievement of CITES objectives will be maintained and strengthened, where relevant.
35. The Secretariat's mapping of the current situation of partnerships implemented by the Secretariat, including on behalf of the CITES CoP and Permanent Committees, indicates that the Secretariat is starting to develop and implement partnerships in relation to some thematic areas where it might be desirable to consider increasing current efforts. The list below is not restrictive, and considering that the Partnership Strategy is a dynamic strategic framework, additional areas might be explored at the request of the Committees, such as on international trafficking of endemic species, international trade of invasive alien species etc.
- a. Fisheries: There is potential to strengthen and expand partnerships with regional fishery bodies (RFBs), including regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) and other relevant international organizations in line with Resolution Conf. 12.6 (Rev. CoP18) on *Conservation and management of sharks*. By building such partnerships, and in line with the priorities set by the Parties, implementation of CITES could be further enhanced in view of the increasing number of commercially exploited aquatic species listed in the CITES Appendices. These partnerships are also crucial in improving knowledge sharing and capacity building for addressing key issues such as the Review of Significant Trade and introduction from the sea.
 - b. Livelihoods, gender and wildlife conservation: Resolution Conf. 16.6 (Rev. CoP18) on *CITES and livelihoods* recognizes that *"the implementation of CITES is better achieved with the engagement of rural communities, especially those which are traditionally dependent on CITES-listed species for their livelihoods"* and emphasizes the many ways in which engagement and empowerment of rural communities in the implementation of CITES regulations is key to the effective implementation of the Convention and to realizing potential benefits to those communities, including recognition of resource tenure and ownership and traditional knowledge. Resolution Conf. 19.3 on *Gender and international trade in wild fauna and flora* notes that the engagement and empowerment

of women and girls is high on the United Nations agenda, and “*recommends that Parties explore ways to further enhance the representation and participation of people of all genders [...] in conservation [...], including in CITES decision-making*”. Resolution Conf. 17.5 (Rev. CoP18) on *Youth engagement* also notes that engagement and empowerment of youth is high on the agenda of the United Nations, and “*invites the Secretariat to collaborate with relevant UN organizations and conventions as well as the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth on youth engagement initiatives*”. Resolution Conf. 17.5 (Rev. CoP18) further “*invites Parties and the CITES Secretariat to work with universities, youth groups, and other relevant associations and organizations, to create educated and engaged youth networks that can inform and influence conservation decisions*”. The implementation of the aforementioned Resolutions serves as a direct contribution to Sustainable Development Goals 15, 5 and 4, respectively¹⁴. In this regard, partnerships with indigenous peoples and local communities, gender-related groups and youth should be considered to the extent that they contribute to the achievement of CITES objectives and keeping in mind the importance of balancing value addition with costs. The form and means through which such partnerships could be executed vary depending on the type of stakeholders, the purpose of their involvement and the available resources, and should be defined on a case-by-case basis.

- c. Zoonotic diseases: As the CITES community continues to consider the nexus between international wildlife trade and zoonotic diseases and the role of the Convention in reducing the risk of future zoonotic disease emergence associated with CITES trade, the Standing Committee and the Conference of the Parties are expected to provide additional guidance on this issue. The Secretariat should prepare for the possibility that implementing such guidance may require new partnerships with actors from the health sector.
 - d. Global environmental challenges: The Secretariat’s work on sustainable management of CITES-listed tree species has the potential to contribute to mitigating biodiversity degradation and climate change. Expanding partnerships to include actors from the climate change community could enhance the impact of this work in that regard.
36. Further, CITES is a science-based convention, covering 40,000 different species, implemented by national authorities; it is also relevant for a number of economic sectors. In addition to existing partnerships with civil society organizations and other non-State actors, it would appear that CITES could benefit from strengthened relationships with groups of actors such as those listed below to support science-based decision-making, enhance visibility and collaboration with industry and the private sector, including the finance sector, to increase the effectiveness of the Convention and the resources available for its implementation:
- a. Academia and scientific societies could potentially be more largely included in the formal CITES partnership efforts reflecting the significant contribution provided to the work of CITES. Considering that limited information exists on the conservation status of many species in CITES Appendices, partnerships with academia can add value through shared learning and innovation, and by offering access to the latest science for informed decision-making, i.e. on amendment proposals on the listing of species in the CITES Appendices, production of non-detriment findings (NDF) etc. Such partnerships, including exchange of experiences and scientific knowledge, and formation of networks, can help bridge the gap between researchers and policymakers by catalyzing independent research on relevant topics. This type of partnerships may cover also cooperation with sectoral bodies representing organizations and government facilities, such as for example associations of botanic gardens, aquariums etc.
 - b. Media: CITES partnership efforts have tended to engage media on an ad-hoc basis. It is worth exploring how intentional partnerships with media could create additional value for CITES, particularly by delivering communication and awareness-raising on international wildlife trade and the work implemented under the Convention.
 - c. Partnerships with industry could add value by offering access to additional and complementary information on trade and markets, where the demand is, value chains,

¹⁴ In particular targets 15.7, 15.c, 5.5, 5.a, 4.4 and 4.7.

supply chains, harvest methodologies, species use alternatives/substitutions etc. In this framework, partnerships may be further explored mainly with sectoral organizations and associations and in principle not with individual private companies.

- d. Partnerships with the finance sector could add value by offering Parties sustainable financing options at scale and complementary to traditional funding mechanisms. Goal 5 of the CITES Strategic Vision: 2021 – 2030 includes an objective to enhance cooperation with “*international financial mechanisms and other related institutions in order to support activities that contribute to CITES implementation and enforcement*”. As noted in an information document ([CoP19 Inf.14](#)) submitted by the Secretariat to the 19th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP19, Panama City, 2022), the nature-based economy may present a strong growth opportunity for the economies of some countries, and several financial mechanisms are worth exploring. These may include, among others, payments for ecosystem services, carbon markets, green bonds and wildlife bonds, debt-for-nature swaps, and Conservation Trust Funds. The use of these financial mechanisms will require multi-stakeholder partnerships that comprise the involvement of local communities, improved intersectoral coordination, trust-building, enhanced conservation performance monitoring, and policy reforms to incentivize the private sector and donor investment.
37. To provide capacity-building support to Parties on strengthening the implementation of the Convention at the national level, there is a need for a strategic and long-term approach to partnerships. While current efforts involve short-term implementation partnerships, there is potential to create added value by collaborating with other international organizations that have a presence on the ground. By partnering with organizations that have complementary societal, economic, or environmental objectives as CITES, it is possible to provide targeted support to Parties. This approach would allow CITES to build on synergies with ongoing programmes and projects that align with the specific needs of a Party in implementing the Convention. The identification of suitable international organizations for such partnerships should consider the local context, recognizing that the same organization may not be equally suitable in different countries even if the objectives of the partnership are similar. Additionally, it may be useful for CITES to explore how to further facilitate peer-to-peer technical assistance and sharing of best practices between Parties to strengthen implementation of the Convention.

V. OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

38. This Partnership Strategy will be delivered in accordance with the UNEP Partnership Policy¹⁵, which outlines the operational procedures for setting up a partnership, including exclusion criteria which dictate when not to engage in a partnership.

A. Risk management

39. Risk management is an important aspect of managing partnerships and requires a proactive and adaptive approach to enable CITES to mitigate risks arising from engaging in partnerships, both during the development phase and during the implementation phase.
40. Risks may include financial risks, legal risks including breach of contract, environmental and social risks, capacity constraints, reputational risks, and operational risks including procurement risks.
41. In accordance with the United Nations’ zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse, the capacity of a (prospective) partner to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse should be taken into consideration.
42. The risk management process covers the entire lifecycle of a partnership, from inception through implementation to closure. It is a cyclical process that involves the identification of risks, and their

¹⁵ The 2024 UNEP Partnership Policy, which was signed by the UNEP Executive Director on 29 June 2024, has entered into effect in September and will be submitted as information document to the 78th meeting of the Standing Committee.

subsequent assessment, treatment (mitigation) and monitoring. Monitoring of risks during the implementation phase of a partnership is essential to anticipate and respond to new, emerging, or changing risks and manage them accordingly.

43. Given that risks can represent both threats and opportunities depending on how they are managed, proper risk management in accordance with the procedures prescribed by UNEP (see paragraph 44) will allow CITES partnerships to capitalize on opportunities that would otherwise threaten the success of a partnership.
44. The Secretariat shall undertake risk management in the context of CITES strategic partnerships in accordance with the risk management procedures in UNEP as outlined in the UNEP Programme and Project Management Manual¹⁶.

B. Dependencies and operating environment

45. The delivery of the Strategy will require a high level of ownership of Parties, the Permanent Committees, and particularly the Secretariat.
46. The Partnership Strategy offers non-binding guidance for Parties to consider when developing new or enhancing existing partnerships. Different local, national, or regional contexts affect the way in which partnerships are developed and managed.
47. At the level of the Secretariat, delivery of the Partnership Strategy falls under the responsibility of the Secretary-General as part of their Delegation of Authority. Subsequent to the adoption of the Strategy by the Conference of the Parties, the Secretariat may develop a more detailed Partnership Plan for how it envisages to implement and deliver the Partnership Strategy, including, as appropriate, development of standard operating procedures (SOP) and key performance indicators (KPIs). These additional tools for the operationalization of the Strategy are intended to guide and support the Secretariat and the committees in the consideration and development of potential new partnerships, including in identifying added value, shared visions and objectives and goals etc. These tools might also be useful in the evaluation and refinement, as appropriate, of new and existing partnerships, as well as the overall evaluation and monitoring of the implementation of the Strategy at large, including through the use and population of KPIs.
48. As the Secretariat of a Multilateral Environmental Agreement (MEA) administered by UNEP, the CITES Secretariat is subject to the UNEP Partnership Policy and its respective procedures, insofar as there is no specific decision from CITES governing bodies mandating a separate process. Where such governing body decisions do exist, they must be consistent with UN regulations and rules, and in case of conflict, the UNEP Partnership Policy shall apply.
49. The UNEP Partners Portal is an online platform and the single location to initiate engagement with partners. It brings more transparency and accountability in terms of how UNEP and the MEA Secretariats administered by UNEP engage with all types of partners. It operates in alignment with the UNEP Partnership Policy, among other policies, guidance, frameworks, and procedures.
50. The CITES Secretariat is currently undertaking an exercise to develop a CITES Resource Mobilization Strategy, which may affect (and be affected by) the emerging thematic areas (paragraph 35) and partnerships with the finance sector (paragraph 36 d).

VI. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

51. The Secretariat may present a report to the 21st session of the Conference of the Parties (TBC, 2028), through the Standing Committee, to take stock of progress achieved with the implementation of this partnership strategy. This progress report should also inform the process of preparing the new Strategic Vision, which should be initiated around that time. The Secretariat will also continue reporting to the committees on partnerships and cooperation including aspects related to the implementation of the present Strategy.
52. At the end of the 2012 – 2030 period covered by the Strategic Vision, the Secretariat will undertake an internal review of the partnership strategy to assess whether so far it has delivered

¹⁶ <https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/42752>

or is on its way to deliver on its intended purpose. The Secretariat will consider the following questions during that review:

- a. Has the partnership strategy enabled CITES to respond to international environmental priorities and take into account new international initiatives, consistent with the scope of the Convention?
- b. Has the partnership strategy made a meaningful and demonstrable contribution to amplifying the achievement of the Goals and objectives of the CITES Strategic Vision: 2021 – 2030?
- c. Has the partnership strategy enhanced coherence and alignment of partnerships across all levels of CITES?
- d. Has the partnership strategy facilitated the engagement of non-traditional partners?
- e. Globally speaking, are CITES partnerships creating value?
 - i. Is the value-added of CITES partnerships clearly defined?
 - ii. Has the strategy enabled CITES to avoid/exit partnerships that do not create value-added?
 - iii. Has the strategy enabled CITES to enter into new partnerships that create value-added for the Convention?