

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

Species conservation on trade

Aquatic species

Seahorses (*Hippocampus* spp.)

REPORT OF THE SECRETARIAT

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.
2. At its 19th meeting (CoP19; Panama City, 2022), the Conference of the Parties adopted Decisions 19.228 to 19.232 on *Seahorses* (*Hippocampus* spp.), as follows:

***Directed to the Secretariat***

**19.228**

*The Secretariat shall:*

- a) *subject to external funding, collaborate with Parties and species experts to prepare a report on the global illegal trade in seahorses, for consideration by the Standing Committee. The report should include an analysis of extracted data from the CITES illegal trade database, consultations with regional enforcement networks as applicable, analysis of illegal trade routes, modus operandi and seizures, and information contained in the studies prepared in response to Decision 18.229 paragraph c) i); and*
- b) *report on implementation of paragraph a) of the present Decision to the Standing Committee at its 77th and 78th meeting.*

***Directed to source, transit, and consumer Parties for which there is evidence of illegal and/or unsustainable international trade in dried seahorses***

**19.229**

*To effectively implement the inclusion of seahorses in Appendix II of CITES, source, transit, and consumer Parties for which there is evidence of illegal and/or unsustainable international trade in dried seahorses are encouraged to:*

- a) *collaborate with key stakeholders and species experts to develop national or regional plans of action to improve CITES implementation for seahorses and should include the following, inter alia:*
  - i) *encouraging collaboration and communication between key stakeholders at a national and regional level, including Environment, Fisheries and Enforcement agencies, with respect to CITES implementation and data gathering for the international trade in seahorses;*

- ii) *improving monitoring, detection and law enforcement activities related to seahorses in coastal areas and at transaction points (e.g. in the marketplace, online, in maritime areas, and at air- and seaports);*
  - iii) *submitting comprehensive and accurate information on illegal international trade in seahorses in their annual illegal trade reports to the Secretariat, as required in compliance with Resolution Conf. 11.17 (Rev. CoP19) on National reports, and in support of Decision 19.228, paragraph a);*
  - iv) *addressing the main drivers of illegal and unsustainable trade by effectively regulating and constraining the operations of non-selective fishing gears, such as bottom trawls and gillnets, to reduce their impacts on seahorses, and combating illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing of seahorses by developing best practices for sustainable harvest; and*
- b) *share progress in developing and implementing these national or regional plans of action with the Secretariat for its report to the 33rd meeting of the Animals Committee.*

**Directed to Parties, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations**

**19.230** *Parties, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations are encouraged to provide financial and technical assistance to Parties to implement Decision 19.229 and any further recommendations made by the Standing Committee.*

**Directed to the Animals Committee**

**19.231** *The Animals Committee shall:*

- a) *in consultation with species experts, analyse and review the results of any activities under Decisions 19.228 and 19.229, the report produced under Decision 18.229, paragraph c) i), and other relevant available information;*
- b) *develop recommendations to the Parties, the Secretariat, and relevant stakeholders, as appropriate, to ensure sustainable and legal international trade in seahorses;*
- c) *consider recommending seahorses as a case study to the 2nd international expert workshop on non-detriment findings; and*
- d) *report on the implementation of the present Decision to the Standing Committee, as appropriate.*

**Directed to the Standing Committee**

**19.232** *The Standing Committee shall:*

- a) *analyse and review the results of any activities under Decisions 19.228 and 19.229, the report produced under Decision 18.229 paragraph c) i) and, as appropriate, the report of the Animals Committee produced in support of Decision 19.231;*
- b) *develop recommendations to the Parties and the Secretariat, as appropriate, to strengthen CITES implementation and enforcement for international trade in seahorses; and*
- c) *report on the implementation of Decisions 19.228 to 19.232 to the Conference of the Parties at its 20th meeting.*

**Implementation of Decision 19.228**

3. To implement Decision 19.228, paragraph a), the Secretariat is collaborating with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to prepare the report on global illegal trade in seahorses. This work is supported by generous contributions from Monaco and the United States of America. The Secretariat appreciates the financial support provided in this regard.

4. The Secretariat issued [Notification to the Parties No. 2024/091](#) of 22 August 2024, which included a [questionnaire](#) to gather information and data to support the preparation of the report. Responses were received from Argentina, China (including Hong Kong and Macao Special Administrative Regions of China), Colombia, Finland, Indonesia, Jamaica, Japan, the Netherlands, Mexico, New Zealand, Singapore, South Africa, Sweden, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America. The Secretariat thanks these Parties for their replies.
5. Despite some progress, the report on the global illegal trade in seahorses will not be finalized in time for consideration at the present meeting. Extensive work is still foreseen, which amongst others includes interviews, fieldwork, site visits and additional desk research. The Secretariat therefore proposes replacing Decision 19.228 with new draft decision 20.AA, as presented in the Annex to the present document to allow the implementation of this work in the upcoming intersessional period. Should the Committee agree, Decision 19.228 can be proposed for deletion.

#### Implementation of Decision 19.229, 19.231 and 19.232

6. In accordance with Decision 19.229, paragraph b), the Secretariat prepared document [AC33 Doc. 42.1](#) on *Seahorses* (*Hippocampus spp.*) for consideration by the Animals Committee. At its 33rd meeting (AC33, Geneva, July 2024), the Committee agreed to propose the renewal of Decision 19.229. The Secretariat notes that Decision 19.230 is relevant to Decision 19.229, as it pertains to providing assistance for Parties in implementing Decision 19.229. Additionally, part of Decision 19.229, paragraph a) iii) has already been implemented, with information on illegal trade in seahorses submitted by Parties in response to Notification to the Parties No. 2024/091. Based on the above, the Secretariat proposes revised draft Decisions 19.229 (Rev. CoP20) and 19.230 (Rev. CoP20), as well as a new draft decision 20.BB, as presented in the Annex to the present document. Should the Committee agree, Decision 19.232 can be proposed for deletion.
7. The Secretariat notes that document SC78 Doc. 71.1 on *Seahorses* (*Hippocampus spp.*) prepared for the present meeting provides detailed reporting on the work and activities conducted by the Animals Committee.

#### Recommendations

8. The Standing Committee is invited to:
  - a) review and submit to the Conference of the Parties revised Decisions 19.229 (Rev. CoP20) and 19.230 (Rev. CoP20), as well as new draft decisions 20.AA and 20.BB, as presented in the Annex to the present document; and
  - b) agree that Decisions 19.228 and 19.232 can be proposed for deletion.

DRAFT DECISIONS ON SEAHORSES (HIPPOCAMPUS SPP.)

**Directed to source, transit, and consumer Parties for which there is evidence of illegal and/or unsustainable international trade in dried seahorses**

**19.229 (Rev. CoP20)** To ~~effectively~~ effectively ~~the inclusion of~~ regulation of international trade in seahorses in Appendix II of CITES, source, transit, and consumer Parties for which there is evidence of illegal and/or unsustainable international trade in dried seahorses are encouraged to:

- a) *collaborate with key stakeholders and species experts to develop national or regional plans of action to improve ~~CITES~~ the implementation of CITES regulations for seahorses and should include, inter alia, the following, ~~inter alia~~:*
  - i) *encouraging collaboration and communication between key stakeholders at a national and regional level, including Environment, Fisheries and Enforcement agencies, with respect to CITES implementation and data gathering for the international trade in seahorses;*
  - ii) *improving monitoring, detection and law enforcement activities related to seahorses in coastal areas and at transaction points (e.g. in the marketplace, online, in maritime areas, and at air- and seaports);*
  - iii) *submitting comprehensive and accurate information on illegal international trade in seahorses in their annual illegal trade reports to the Secretariat, as required in compliance with Resolution Conf. 11.17 (Rev. CoP19) on National reports; ~~and in support of Decision 19.228, paragraph a)~~*
  - iv) *addressing the main drivers of illegal and unsustainable trade by effectively regulating and constraining the operations of non-selective fishing gears, such as bottom trawls and gillnets, to reduce their impacts on seahorses, and combating illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing of seahorses by developing best practices for sustainable harvest; and*
- b) *share progress in developing and implementing these national or regional plans of action with the Secretariat for its report to the ~~33rd meeting of the~~ Standing Animals Committee.*

**Directed to Parties, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations**

**19.230 (Rev. CoP20)** *Parties, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations are encouraged to provide financial and technical assistance to Parties to implement Decision 19.229 (Rev. CoP20) and any further recommendations made by the Standing Committee.*

**Directed to the Secretariat**

**20.AA** The Secretariat shall:

- a) *continue to work on and finalize the report on the global illegal trade in seahorses that includes an analysis of data from the CITES illegal trade database, illegal trade *routes, modus operandi*, seizures, information contained in the studies prepared by the Secretariat in previous intersessional periods and information received through consultations with Parties, species experts and regional enforcement networks as applicable; and*
- b) *make the report available to the Standing Committee together with any recommendations the Secretariat may have.*

**Directed to the Standing Committee**

**20.BB** The Standing Committee shall:

- a) review the report and any recommendations presented to it in accordance with Decisions 20.AA and 19.229 (Rev. CoP20) and develop recommendations as appropriate, to strengthen CITES implementation and enforcement regarding international trade in seahorses; and
- b) report on the implementation of the Decisions on *Seahorses* (*Hippocampus spp.*) to the Conference of the Parties at its 21st meeting.