

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

Appendices of the Convention

Nomenclature matters

HIGHER TAXON LISTINGS IN THE APPENDICES

1. This document has been submitted by the specialist on botanical nomenclature of the Plants Committee and the specialist on zoological nomenclature of the Animals Committee.*
2. At its 19th meeting (CoP19; Panama City, 2022) the Conference of the Parties adopted Decision 19.272 and 19.273 on *Higher taxon listings in the Appendices*, as follows:

Directed to the Animals and Plants Committees

19.272 *The Animals and Plants Committees shall, taking into consideration document AC31 Doc. 38 with its Annex and its addendum, as well as the provisions of Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP17) on Criteria for amendment of Appendices I and II, Annex 3, review the impacts of existing and future higher taxon listings in the Appendices and propose further guidance and recommendations as necessary, for consideration by the Standing Committee.*

Directed to the Standing Committee

19.273 *The Standing Committee shall take into account the guidance and recommendations from the Animals and Plants Committees and make any recommendations to the 20th meeting of the Conference of the Parties, as required.*

3. This Decision was adopted following the deliberations on Decision 18.315 on the listing of pangolins (*Manis* spp.) in the Appendices. Document [AC31 Doc. 38](#) and its [Addendum AC31 Doc. 38 Add](#) (paragraphs 7–9), and document [CoP19 Doc. 84.1](#) (paragraphs 29–33) noted that the deliberations in the Animals Committee brought concerns of a broader nature to light. It was therefore deemed advisable to conduct a general consideration of the listing of higher taxa in the CITES Appendices and consider this matter jointly with the Plants Committee and a basis for these considerations was provided in document [PC26 Doc. 42.2 / AC32 Doc. 45.2](#).
4. At the 26th meeting of the Plants Committee (PC26; Geneva, June 2023) and the 32nd meeting of the Animals Committee (AC32; Geneva, June 2023) a joint intersessional working group (JIWG) of the Plants and Animals Committees was established. The mandate and membership can be accessed on the CITES website through this [link](#). The work of the JIWG was reported to the joint session of the 27th meeting of the Plants Committee and the 33rd meeting of the Animals Committee (PC27/AC33, Geneva, July 2024) in document [PC27 Doc. 40.2/AC33 Doc. 47.2 \(Rev. 1\)](#).

* *The geographical designations employed in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the CITES Secretariat (or the United Nations Environment Programme) concerning the legal status of any country, territory, or area, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The responsibility for the contents of the document rests exclusively with its author.*

5. The following key issues were discussed by the JIWG and reported on to PC27/AC33:
 - a) whether changes to [Resolution Conf. 9.24 \(Rev. CoP17\) on Criteria for amendment of Appendices I and II](#) are needed to provide further clarification on when a higher taxon listing may be deemed appropriate, taking into consideration the scientific aspects of Annex 3 to Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP17); and
 - b) regarding the difference between a higher taxon listing and a listing of all individual species in that higher taxon, whether converting a complete listing of all species in a genus into a genus listing represents a substantive change [i.e., subject to a full amendment proposal under [Resolution Conf. 9.24 \(Rev. CoP17\)](#)], or could be considered a non-substantive change that could be made as a matter of nomenclatural updates to the Appendices mandated under [Resolution Conf. 12.11 \(Rev. CoP19\)](#) on *Standard nomenclature*.
6. A wide range of considerations concerning the listing of higher taxa in the CITES Appendices were discussed at PC27/AC33. While several Parties expressed satisfaction with the current text of Annex 3 to [Resolution Conf. 9.24 \(Rev. CoP17\)](#), some Parties proposed amendments to Annex 3 to clarify the section on Higher taxa. Regarding the second issue on the difference between a higher taxon listing and a listing of all individual species in that higher taxon, the members broadly (but not unanimously) considered that there is a substantive difference between a higher taxon listing, and separately listing all species included in that higher taxon. The substantive difference is the following:
 - a) the higher taxon listing explicitly acknowledges that any currently unknown taxa that are yet to be discovered, described, named, and taxonomically placed in the higher taxon, are automatically included in the CITES Appendix in which the higher taxon is listed;
 - b) on the other hand, an unknown and newly discovered novel species (i.e., not a split-off from a known and listed species) described and placed in a genus whose other known species are individually listed in a CITES Appendix does not automatically qualify for inclusion in CITES, and its inclusion in a CITES Appendix requires a formal proposal consistent with Article XV and [Resolution 9.24 \(Rev. CoP17\)](#).
7. Taking into account the broadly held view of the Parties that a higher taxon listing is potentially substantively different from a comprehensive listing of all individual species contained in that higher taxon, it appears prudent to conclude that any conversion of a listing of individual species to a higher taxon listing, or a higher taxon listing converted to a listing of individual species, is potentially a substantive change. In cases where there is a potentially substantive change, a proposal would be required to the Conference of the Parties compliant with the *Criteria for amendment of Appendices I and II* specified in [Resolution Conf. 9.24 \(Rev. CoP17\)](#) and/or [Resolution Conf. 9.25 \(Rev. CoP18\)](#). Where such a proposal is prepared and submitted entirely for the purpose of 'streamlining' the Appendices by reducing the number of species listings in favour of higher taxon listings containing all these species (i.e., consistent with Annex 3, section Higher Taxa, of Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP17)), Parties may consider that such a proposal could be prepared in a simpler format than that currently recommended in Annex 6 to Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP17). Such a simplified format could reduce its section C, Supporting Statement, to a detailed description of the current listing, the current and anticipated future taxonomic and nomenclatural situation, and the rationale for the proposed amended listing. It would also be essential to include a description of either confirmation of the continued usage of the adopted nomenclatural standard reference, or a proposal for the adoption of an updated nomenclatural standard reference in such a proposal.
8. In cases where the taxonomy and nomenclature of the taxa under consideration are clear, such conversions between a list of species and a higher taxon could be proposed as part of the established process under [Resolution Conf. 12.11 \(Rev. CoP19\)](#) when there is no doubt that there is no substantive difference in coverage, and the original scope and intent of the original Proposals are retained.

Conclusions

9. The conversion of a set of species listings into a corresponding higher taxon listing or converting a higher taxon listing into a set of species listings, therefore represents a potentially substantive change that is normally beyond the mandate of the nomenclature specialists of the Animals and Plants Committees to recommend under their mandate provided by Resolution Conf. 12.11 (Rev. CoP19) on *Standard nomenclature*.
10. The changes that may be proposed by the nomenclature specialists under the mandate of Resolution Conf. 12.11 (Rev. CoP19) should normally be restricted to: taxon splits (i.e., recognition of new names

applied to populations or taxa previously considered part of an already-listed species or higher taxon); and taxon merges (i.e., synonymizations).

11. Possible amendments to clarify the language in Resolution Conf. 12.11 (Rev. CoP19), paragraph 2.f) were discussed and agreed by PC27 / AC33 (PC27 SR/AC33 SR) as follows.

The Plants and Animals Committees:

- a) agreed to propose to the Conference of the Parties the following amendment to paragraph 2.f) of Resolution Conf. 12.11 (Rev. CoP19) on *Standard nomenclature*:

whenever a change in the name of a taxon included in the Appendices, or the taxonomic level in which a taxon is included in the Appendices, is proposed, the Secretariat, in consultation with the Animals or Plants Committee, determine whether this change would alter the scope of protection for fauna or flora under the Convention. In the case where the scope of a taxon is redefined, the Animals or Plants Committee shall evaluate whether acceptance of the taxonomic change would cause additional species to be included in the Appendices or listed species to be deleted from the Appendices and, if that is the case, the Depositary Government should be requested to submit a proposal to amend the Appendices in accordance with the recommendation of the Animals or Plants Committee, so that the original intent of the listing is retained. Such proposals should be submitted for consideration at the next regular meeting of the Conference of the Parties, at which the recommendations of the Animals and Plants Committees that are determined not to alter the scope of protection for fauna and flora under the Convention will also be considered by the Conference of the Parties;

- b) agreed that Decision 19.272 has been implemented and can be proposed for deletion to the 20th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

Recommendations

12. The Standing Committee is invited to:

- a) review and agree the amendments to Resolution Conf. 12.11 (Rev. CoP19) on *Standard nomenclature* in paragraph 11 of the present document to be considered at the 20th meeting of the Conference of the Parties; and
- b) agree that Decisions 19.272 and 19.273 have been implemented and can be proposed for deletion to the 20th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.