

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

Administrative and financial matters

Administrative matters

REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME
ON ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

1. The present report is submitted by the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) for consideration at the seventy-eighth meeting of the Standing Committee of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES or the Convention), to be held in Geneva, Switzerland from 3 to 8 February 2025.
2. Building on the previous report provided to the Standing Committee at its seventy-seventh meeting (see document SC77 Doc. 10.2) held in Geneva, Switzerland in November 2023, updates are provided on the administrative and financial management support provided by UNEP to the Convention through its secretariat.

Administrative and financial management support provided to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora

Policy guidelines and procedures

3. **Partnership Policy and Procedures** – On 29 June 2024, the UNEP Executive Director issued a new Partnership Policy effective from 29 September 2024. The new Partnership Policy applies to all Partner Categories and Partnership Modalities, and at all stages of the Partnership management process at UNEP. The Policy sets the principles and guides the processes, whereas the Procedures guide the practical steps to operationalize the Policy. The new Partnership Policy was developed in close consultation with UNEP-administered MEA Secretariats and applies to them unless alternative processes are mandated by their governing bodies. UNEP Procurement and Partnerships Unit in the Corporate Services Division provided preliminary training to Administrative Officers in UNEP-administered MEA Secretariats in September 2024 and continues to provide tailored training as needed. Implementation of the new Policy will begin with a one-year transition period.

Human Resources

4. The human resources (HR) management services provided by UNEP to CITES through its secretariat play a crucial role in ensuring the adequacy, effectiveness, and compliance of human resources functions, systems, policies, and procedures to deliver the organizational mandates and effectively manage HR risks. These services include:
 - a) position management, covering the entire span of human resources staffing activities, ensuring consistency in the application of the Staff Rules and Regulations and related human resources procedures;

- b) recruitment, whereby UNEP oversees the engagement of staff and non-staff personnel, ensuring that recruitment processes are carried out effectively, objectively, and in accordance with the organization's policies and procedures;
 - c) provision of training, identifying training needs, developing training programs, and monitoring compliance with mandatory training; and
 - d) performance management, ensuring that performance management processes are implemented effectively and in a timely manner.
5. UNEP's human resources management services also play a crucial role in promoting diversity and inclusivity within the secretariat of CITES, other UNEP-administered MEAs secretariats and UNEP at large. UNEP further provides guidance and support in implementing best practices in human resources management, fostering a culture of accountability and transparency. In the period between August 2023 and September 2024, UNEP assisted CITES in processing 10 requests related to position management (including creation, reclassification and extension of position validity), 23 requests related to recruitment (including job advertisements and selections for different staff and non-staff categories) and 13 requests related to personnel administration (including processing of lateral assignments, transfers, resignations, separations, special post allowance and exceptional extensions of Consultants and Individual Contractors (CICs) and temporary appointments). UNEP has oversight for over 2 CIC contracts issued for the CITES Secretariat within the same period.
 6. UNEP also has a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the United Nations Office in Nairobi (UNON) for the provision of administrative support functions, including direct assistance to CITES secretariat personnel. Such assistance includes human resources related issues such as staff administration (including administration of benefits and entitlements, time management, client support desk, processing of CICs) and recruitment (including job building, review by Central Review Bodies, offer management and onboarding). Furthermore, the United Nations Office in Geneva (UNOG) and UNEP have a dedicated SLA for all administrative services provided to all UNEP Geneva-based offices including CITES.

Budget and Finance

7. **After Service Health Insurance (ASHI)** – The ASHI programme is a benefit provided to eligible retired staff members of the UN that enables continued access to the same health insurance schemes available to active staff coverage throughout their retirement. This benefit is earned during active service but utilized after retirement. It, therefore, creates an accrued liability for the UN which does not have secured funding allocated to it. To finance the unfunded portion of the liability, in Q4 2022, the UN Controller approved an increase in the ASHI accrual rate of 6 per cent of staff costs to 9 per cent. As a result, all UNEP staff budgets should now reflect the increased cost associated with the ASHI programme. As per the [report of UNEP on Administrative Matters to the Seventy-seventh meeting of the CITES Standing committee](#), **the Standing committee of CITES may wish to consider increasing its 2026-2028 staff budget accordingly.**
8. **PSC Income** – UNEP is committed to the continuous review of the existing PSC policy to ensure adequacy in sharing and apportionment of programme support resources. The amount of PSC income available in any given year is dependent on the income generated in the previous year. 67 per cent of PSC income generated by CITES activities is allocated to the CITES secretariat while 33 per cent is retained by UNEP to fund the provision of advisory services, policy formulation, and core services in human resource, finance, procurement, legal and other administrative services provided by UNEP and its main Service Provider, UNON. The administrative staff of the CITES secretariat are funded by the PSC allocation to CITES. **Due to the unpredictable nature of PSC income, it is recommended that fixed long-term costs, such as administrative staff salaries, should not be funded from PSC income. The Standing Committee may wish to consider increasing its staff budget over 2026-2030 to allow for a transition of a select number of administrative posts to the programme budget so as to reduce risks related to over reliance on PSC for core administrative functions.**
9. **Settlement of contributions** – The United Nations secretariat adopted the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) in 2014. Umoja implements strict IPSAS-based liquidity management, which requires that cash be available for the settlement of payments. **Parties are therefore encouraged to settle their assessed contributions in full early in each year to guarantee continuity of operations under CITES. Those Parties that are in arrears are requested to engage with the Convention secretariat on settlement modalities.**

Legal

10. The UNEP Legal Unit in the Corporate Services Division provides corporate legal advice and solutions, reviews standard and non-standard legal instruments, drafts legal instruments as appropriate; represents the Organization/Administration before the Management Advice and Evaluation Section (MAES) and the United Nations Dispute Tribunal (UNDT) and provides advice on issues pertaining to liability/indemnity, privileges and immunities, interpretation and application of constitutive, legislative and other instruments governing UNEP's programmes of work with various Implementing Partners, amongst other things. The Unit continues to deliver reliable and consistent advice on the use of legal instruments, non-standard contribution agreements with donors, host country agreements with Governments for meetings, and contractual modalities for engaging with Implementing Partners as requested by the BRS Secretariat. In particular, Legal Unit assisted CITES Secretariat in its negotiation of donor agreement with DEFRA, Host Country Agreement with the Government of Uganda, and Project Cooperation Agreement with the World Customs Organization. The Legal Unit also assisted the BRS Secretariat in (a) cases which pertained to the law and practice of international administrative law before the MAES; (b) handled preliminary assessments of confidential referrals from the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS); (c) reviewed matters which concerned the interpretation and application of UNEP's internal policies (i.e. Delegation of Authority Policy and Framework); and (d) provided relevant legal advice on global frameworks. In June 2024, Legal Unit had an information session with CITES Secretariat on various legal issues.

Supply Chain Management

11. The UNEP Procurement and Partnerships Unit in the Corporate Services Division facilitates the effective provision of goods and services to meet the organization's needs. All low value acquisitions are managed by CITES Secretariat directly. All other acquisitions raised by CITES requisitioners come to the Unit for review and internal execution or routing to service providers. In the period August 2023-October 2024, UN Secretariat procurement teams processed 62 purchase orders (POs) for the CITES Secretariat. Of these 80% were processed by the UNEP Procurement and Partnerships Unit with an average of 2 working days from PO creation to approval. The main supply chain services support for CITES is provided by UNEP Procurement and Partnerships Unit that can further engage with two service providers, United Nations Office at Nairobi and the United Nations Office in Geneva, as needed. Procurement and Partnerships Unit also provides briefings to the CITES Secretariat on supply chain transactional processing, and has scheduled an onsite training in November 2024, in Geneva. Procurement and Partnerships Unit and the CITES Secretariat continue to engage on a regular basis.

Oversight

12. The UNEP Operations and Risk Management Unit in the Corporate Services Division provides coordination services between UNEP and various audit, evaluation, and oversight bodies such as the Board of Auditors, the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), and the Joint Inspection Unit to increase efficiency during ongoing audits and ensure timely implementation of audit recommendations. OIOS audited the CITES secretariat during the first two quarters of 2021 which resulted in nine recommendations, none of which were critical. As of September 2024, eight recommendations have been closed-as-implemented, and one recommendation - to develop a resource mobilization strategy - remains under implementation. The Secretariat is working on the draft resource mobilization strategy for presentation at the 20th meeting of the Conference of the Parties in late 2025. The Secretariat will provide an oral update on the progress at the CITES 78th meeting of the Standing Committee, as appropriate.

Enterprise Risk Management (ERM)

13. UNEP has started work on implementation of the United Nations Secretariat ERM policy and framework, its monitoring and development. A network of risk focal points in various UNEP-administered MEA Secretariats are being assigned and trained on a rolling basis.

Support to Multilateral Environmental Agreements

14. **Multilateral Environmental Agreements Advisory Unit** – Support provided by the Unit includes interpretation of policy, guidelines and procedures; human resources; budget and finance administration; corporate legal advice; supply chain management; audit coordination and risk management; information and communications technology; and backstopping of administrative staff, and treasury functions for multilateral funds. In the reporting period, the Unit has developed Standard Operating Procedures aimed at bringing precision to administrative processes, coordinated the process between UNON and UNEP Corporate

Services Division to issue UNON Guidelines for Depositing Low Value Contributions through UNDP Country Offices, and initiated a UNEP-wide process to ensure consultation of UNEP-administered MEA Secretariats in the development of UNEP corporate policies of programmatic and administrative relevance.

15. Furthermore, to increase and improve knowledge and sharing of best practices on administrative-related matters, the Unit has organised quarterly meetings with the Chief Administrative/Fund Management Officers of UNEP-administered MEA Secretariats and circulates weekly tips of relevance to them.