

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

Compliance

Compliance matters

Totoaba (*Totoaba macdonaldi*)

REPORT OF THE TRILATERAL CONTACT GROUP ON LAW ENFORCEMENT
TO COMBAT THE ILLEGAL TRADE OF TOTOABA

1. This document has been prepared by Mexico in its capacity as Chair of the Trilateral Contact Group on Law Enforcement to Combat Illegal Trade of Totoaba (hereinafter TCEG).*
2. At its 19th meeting, the Conference of the Parties (CoP19; Panama City, Panama, 2022) adopted Decision 19.74 requesting China, the United States of America and Mexico to jointly submit, through the TCEG Chair, a report to the 77th Standing Committee Meeting (SC77; Geneva, Switzerland, 2023) on the operationalization of the TCEG and the activities conducted in accordance with the TCEG Terms of Reference (ToR), as well as associated results achieved.
3. During SC77, Mexico, in its capacity as Chair of the TCEG, introduced document [SC77 Doc. 33.13.1](#) and provided an oral report on the operationalization of the TCEG, reporting that the ToR, contained in the Annex to the information document [SC77 Inf. 28](#), had been agreed in September 2023. Mexico also indicated that the first meeting of the TCEG would be organized in the first quarter of 2024.
4. SC77 requested China, Mexico and the United States of America to report to the 78th Standing Committee Meeting (SC78; Geneva, Switzerland, 2025) in accordance with Decision 19.74, and to decide at that meeting if sufficient progress has been made or if further measures are needed regarding any of these three Parties ([SC77 SR](#)).
5. On March 7, 2024, the TCEG was formalized through its inaugural meeting, which was held remotely and attended by delegates of the three Parties. During the meeting, parties exchanged information on: actions taken to combat totoaba trafficking, and identified opportunities for collaboration. It was agreed that a subgroup of law enforcement authorities would be installed with the objective of improving the exchange of law enforcement information and greater collaboration of international law enforcement organizations such as INTERPOL and World Customs Organization to help facilitate the exchange of law enforcement intel. In addition, there was an agreement to have a second TCEG meeting between September and October 2024.
6. During the 8th Interregional Wildlife Crime Law Enforcement Meeting (WIRE) held in Cape Town, South Africa, from 4 to 7 November of this year, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), with support of the CITES Secretariat, hosted an invitation only working group on totoaba smuggling, with the aim of promoting exchange on best practices, cross-border cooperation and the optimal use of available instruments and tools. The United States, Mexico and China were invited to, each, nominate three members of the TCEG Law Enforcement Subgroup to participate in the working group. INTERPOL was also invited to

* *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.*

attend the working group. This meeting served as an opportunity to implement key recommendations of the Decision 18.292 (Rev. CoP19), paragraph a). The Draft Outcome Brief of the meeting is found in the Annex to this document, and is being reviewed by the participants to continue with the validation of agreements and the programming of the following activities.

7. The trilateral efforts that allowed the creation and progress of the TEGC will continue with the objective of increasing collaboration, and information sharing, on cases through frequent meetings.

Recommendations

8. The Standing Committee is invited to:
 - a) take note of this report; and
 - b) welcome the trilateral efforts of Mexico, China, and the United States to combat illegal trade of totoaba, urge the continuation of these efforts, and invite the three Parties to report to the next regular meeting of the Standing Committee on the progress of the TEGC.

Annex to the Report of the Trilateral Contact Group on Law Enforcement to Combat the Illegal Trade of Totoaba

Trilateral Enforcement Contact Group (TECG) on the issue of illegal trade in totoaba
Meeting between China, Mexico, and the United States of America

5-6 November 2024, Cape Town South Africa
As part of the 2024 Wildlife Inter-Regional Enforcement Meeting (WIRE)
organized by UNODC with the support of ICCWC

DRAFT Outcome Brief

This meeting was organized in accordance with the outcomes of the [Meeting of Range, Transit and Consumer States of Totoaba](#) held in October 2021, and requested by the Standing Committee of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in [Recommendation i\) on Totoabas \(*Totoaba macdonaldi*\)](#) agreed at its 77th meeting (SC77, Geneva, November 2023).

Ten representatives from the TECG joined the meeting. The productive discussions held demonstrated the commitment and collaborative efforts to tackling this urgent issue. As agreed during the meeting, due to the sensitive nature of discussions, detailed notes were not taken. However, the following key points were captured as a conclusion to the meeting.

1. UNODC will circulate contact information of all TECG participants in this meeting to facilitate further coordination and follow up as needed.
2. The TECG participants committed to brief their country counterparts on the outcomes of the meeting and share information for further follow-up as needed.
3. The TECG participants agreed to arrange their own virtual meeting in December 2024, to be attended by TECG members only, to follow up on case information. USA TECG participants volunteered to convene the meeting. TECG participants also agreed to arrange further follow-up meetings as needed.
4. INTERPOL will establish a closed group within its closed and secure communication structures for TECG participants to interact, communicate and share information. INTERPOL will follow up with TECG participants regarding access and its use.
5. TECG participants expressed their commitment and the importance of meeting again in person. It was suggested that a meeting in March 2025 in Mexico was a possibility to explore. Invitations should be sent well in advance of the event to secure participation.
6. Interpol will work to convene a Regional Investigative and Analytical Case Meeting (RIACM) on totoaba in accordance with the outcomes of the Meeting of Range, Transit and Consumer States of Totoaba (October 2021) and as requested by CITES Standing Committee. Alignment with the potential meeting in Mexico (see point 5 above) will be explored and will be designed to ensure it is complimentary to the discussions held in Cape Town.