

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

Regulation of trade

TRADE IN STONY CORALS (*SCLERACTINIA* SPP.)

1. This document has been submitted by the Animals Committee.*
2. At its 19th meeting (CoP19; Panama City, 2022), the Conference of the Parties adopted Decisions 19.177 and 19.178 on *Trade in stony corals (Scleractinia spp.)* as follows:

Directed to the Animals Committee

19.177 *The Animals Committee shall:*

- a) *taking into account document CoP19 Doc. 46 and its Annex, provide advice on possible amendments to Resolution Conf 11.10 (Rev. CoP15) on Trade in stony corals, in consultation with coral reef nations and coral reef experts, and report with recommendations to the Standing Committee;*
- b) *make recommendations, as necessary, to revise the Guidelines for the preparation and submission of CITES annual reports and Guidelines for the preparation and submission of the CITES annual illegal trade report, to ensure that they provide sufficient clarity on the use of appropriate terms and units for trade in stony corals; and*
- c) *in consultation with coral reef nations and coral reef experts, provide advice on the conversion factors used to analyse trade in corals for the CITES Review of Significant Trade process and report to the 20th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.*

Directed to the Standing Committee

19.178 *The Standing Committee shall:*

- a) *review any proposed amendments to Resolution Conf. 11.10 (Rev. CoP15) on Trade in stony corals from the Animals Committee; and*
 - b) *review any recommendations from the Animals Committee with regard to Decision 19.177, paragraph b), and make its own recommendations, as appropriate.*
3. At the 32nd meeting of the Animals Committee (AC32; Geneva, June 2023), the Committee considered documents [AC32 Doc. 23.1](#) and [AC32 Doc. 23.2](#), which were submitted by the Chair of the Animals Committee and Sweden, on behalf of the European Union respectively. The Annex to document AC32 Doc. 23.1 contained proposed amendments to Resolution Conf. 11.10 (Rev. CoP15) on *Trade in stony corals*

* *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.*

to address the issues raised. Document AC32 Doc. 23.2 proposed amendments to the *Guidelines for the preparation and submission of CITES annual reports* in order to address reporting issues related to trade in stony corals.

4. The Animals Committee established an in-session working group on trade in stony corals with the mandate to draft a Notification to the Parties concerning the implementation of Decision 19.177, seeking advice from coral reef nations and coral experts (see [AC32 Com. 1](#) as amended in [AC32 SR](#)).
5. The Committee also established a joint intersessional working group with a mandate to (see summary record [AC32 SR](#)):
 - a) review the responses to the Notification to the Parties concerning the implementation of Decision 19.177, seeking advice from coral reef nations and coral experts;
 - b) make recommendations on possible amendments to Resolution Conf. 11.10 (Rev. CoP15) on *Trade in stony corals* and
 - c) provide advice on the conversion factors used to analyse trade in corals for the Review of Significant Trade process;
 - d) propose amendments to the *Guidelines for the preparation and submission of CITES annual reports* and the *Guidelines for the preparation and submission of the CITES annual illegal trade reports*; and
 - e) present its findings to the 33rd meeting of the Animals Committee.
6. On 12 July 2023, the Secretariat issued Notification to the Parties [No. 2023/081](#) at the request of the Animals Committee inviting Parties, especially coral reef nations, to express an interest in participating in the Animals Committee's intersessional working group on trade in stony corals and further inviting stony coral experts and other stakeholders to express their interest in contributing to the work of the working group. The final membership can be found [here](#).
7. The working group did not have an opportunity to meet or consult in advance of the 33rd meeting of the Animals Committee meeting (AC33; Geneva, July 2024), so AC33 agreed to establish an in-session working group to consider the proposed amendments to Resolution Conf. 11.10 (Rev. CoP15) and sections 3 and 6 a) of the *Guidelines for the preparation and submission of CITES annual reports* and section 4 a) of the *Guidelines for the AC33 preparation and submission of CITES annual illegal trade reports* and any further recommendations from the intersessional working group.
8. Based on the report from the in-session working group ([AC33 Com. 1](#)), as amended in the [AC33 Summary Record](#), the Animals Committee agreed to submit for the consideration of the Standing Committee at its 78th meeting the following:
 - a) proposed amendments to Resolution Conf 11.10 (Rev. CoP15) on *Trade in stony corals* (see Annex 1);
 - b) proposed amendments to the *Guidelines for the preparation and submission of CITES annual reports* and *Guidelines for the preparation and submission of the CITES annual illegal trade report* (see Annex 2); and
 - c) a set of draft decisions on *Trade in stony corals* (see Annex 3).
9. The Animals Committee noted that, should the amendments to Resolution Conf 11.10 (Rev. CoP15) on *Trade in stony corals* to include the word "skeleton" before fragments to read "coral skeleton fragments" in the Annex to the Resolution be accepted, this would require consequential amendments to Resolution Conf. 9.6 (Rev. CoP19) on *Trade in readily recognizable parts and derivatives* in the sixth preambular paragraph and in paragraph 3 a). The consequential amendments to Resolution Conf. 9.6 (Rev. CoP19) are included in Annex 4 to the present document.

Recommendations

10. The Standing Committee is invited to:

- a) consider proposing the amendments to Resolution Conf 11.10 (Rev. CoP15) on *Trade in stony corals* outlined in Annex 1 to this document, and the consequential amendments to Resolution Conf. 9.6 (Rev. CoP19) on *Trade in readily recognizable parts and derivatives* in Annex 4 to this document for consideration at the 20th meeting of the Conference of the Parties;
- b) agree to the amendments to the *Guidelines for the preparation and submission of CITES annual reports* and *Guidelines for the preparation and submission of the CITES annual illegal trade report* as outlined in Annex 2 to this document; and
- c) consider proposing the revised draft decisions in Annex 3 to this document for consideration at the 20th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

DRAFT AMENDMENTS TO
RESOLUTION CONF. 11.10 (REV. COP15) ON *TRADE IN STONY CORALS*

New text is underlined and deleted text is in ~~strike through~~.

Conf. 11.10 **Trade in stony corals**
(Rev. CoP15)

AWARE that stony corals (~~in the orders Scleractinia, as well as non-scleractinian corals within the genera Distichopora, Heliopora, Millepora, Stylaster and Tubipora, Helioporacea, Milleporina, Scleractinia, Stolonifera, and Stylasterina~~) are in international trade as live or dead specimens intact specimens for aquaria and as curios;

RECOGNIZING that coral rock, skeleton fragments, sand and other coral products are also traded;

NOTING the unique nature of corals, namely that their skeletons are persistent, that they may become mineralized in time and that they are the foundation of reefs, and that, following erosion, fragments of coral may form part of mineral and sedimentary deposits;

NOTING also that coral rock may act as an important substrate for the attachment of live corals and that the removal of rock may have a detrimental impact on coral reef ecosystems;

AWARE, however, that coral rock can ~~not only~~ be readily identified ~~other than~~ to the order Scleractinia, or in the case of non-scleractinian corals, to the genus level (Distichopora, Heliopora, Millepora, Stylaster or Tubipora), and that accordingly non-detriment findings under Article IV, paragraph 2 (a), of the Convention cannot be readily applied;

NOTING however, that for practical purposes of implementing the Convention, all coral rock can be reported in trade as "Scleractinia spp." irrespective of whether the coral rock contains scleractinian corals, non-scleractinian corals, or a mixed composition, for ease of identification and reporting.

NOTING that Article IV, paragraph 3, requires the monitoring of exports of specimens of each species in Appendix II, in order to assess whether the species is being maintained at a level consistent with its role in the ecosystem;

NOTING that assessments under Article IV, paragraph 3, of the impacts of harvesting corals on the ecosystems from which they are derived cannot be adequately made by monitoring exports alone;

ACCEPTING that coral skeleton fragments and coral sand cannot be readily recognized;

RECOGNIZING also that it is ~~frequently~~ usually difficult to identify live or dead corals to the species level owing to the lack of a standard nomenclature and the lack of comprehensive and accessible identification guides for the non-specialist;

RECOGNIZING that stony corals that are fossilized are not subject to the provisions of the Convention;

NOTING that it has been difficult to apply and enforce the provisions of the Convention to trade in corals;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION

1. ADOPTS the working definitions of coral sand, coral skeleton fragments, coral rock, live coral and dead coral provided in the Annex to this Resolution;

2. RECOMMENDS that Parties give much greater emphasis to the implementation of Article IV, paragraph 3, when permitting the export of corals and that they adopt the principles and practice of an ecosystem approach, rather than relying on the monitoring of exports alone; and
3. URGES:
 - a) interested Parties and other bodies from range and consumer States to collaborate and provide support, coordinated by the Secretariat, to produce as a priority accessible and practical guides to recognizing corals and coral rock in trade and to make these widely available to Parties through appropriate media; and
 - b) Parties to seek synergy with other multilateral environmental agreements and initiatives to work for the conservation and sustainable use of coral reef ecosystems.

Annex

Definitions

Coral sand – material consisting entirely or in part of ~~fine sediments finely crushed fragments~~ of dead coral ~~origin~~ no larger than 2 mm in diameter and which may also contain, amongst other things, the remains of Foraminifera, mollusc and crustacean shell, and coralline algae. Not identifiable to the level of genus. In accordance with Resolution Conf. 9.6 (Rev. CoP16) on Trade in readily recognizable parts and derivatives, coral sand is not considered readily recognizable, and is therefore not covered by the provisions of the Convention.

Coral skeleton fragments (including gravel and rubble) – unconsolidated fragments of ~~broken finger-like~~ dead coral and other material between 2 and 30 mm measured in any direction, which is not identifiable to the level of genus. In accordance with Resolution Conf. 9.6 (Rev. CoP16) on Trade in readily recognizable parts and derivatives, coral skeleton fragments are not considered readily recognizable, and are therefore not covered by the provisions of the Convention.

*Coral rock*¹ ~~is (the collective term used for also live rock and substrate)~~ –hard consolidated material, >3 cm in diameter, formed of fragments of dead coral and which may also contain cemented sand, coralline algae and other sedimentary rocks. The term ‘coral rock’ should not be used on permits; which should instead refer to ‘live rock’ and ‘substrate’.

‘Live rock’ is the term given to large pieces of coral rock (usually > 0,5 kg each) to which are attached live specimens of invertebrate species and coralline algae not included in the CITES Appendices. Live rock should not have live specimens of CITES-listed coral species attached. Live rock is used as decoration and habitat in aquariums and is usually and which are transported in moist condition, but not in water, in crates. Live rock is subject to the provisions of the Convention and should be reported as *Scleractinia* spp.

‘Substrate’ is the term given to small pieces of coral rock (usually < 0,5 kg each), to which are attached invertebrates (of species not included in the CITES Appendices). Substrate is used as pedestal (base) for attached invertebrates, such as sea anemones or soft corals and is therefore and which are transported in water to keep these organisms alive, like live corals. Substrate should not have live specimens of CITES-listed coral species attached. Coral rock is not identifiable to the level of genus but is recognizable to the level of order. The definition excludes specimens defined as dead coral. Substrate, when readily recognizable as coral, is subject to the provisions of the Convention and should be reported as *Scleractinia* spp.

Dead coral – pieces of coral that are dead when exported, but that may have been alive when collected, and in which the structure of corallites (the skeleton of the individual polyp) is still intact; specimens are therefore identifiable to the level of species or genus.

Live coral – pieces of live coral transported in water and that are identifiable to the level of species or genus.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE GUIDELINES FOR THE PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION OF CITES ANNUAL REPORTS AND GUIDELINES FOR THE PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION OF THE CITES ANNUAL ILLEGAL TRADE REPORT

Text proposed to be deleted is indicated with ~~strike through~~. Proposed new text is underlined.

In section 3 “**Regarding stony corals**” of the *Guidelines for the preparation and submission of CITES annual reports*, add a final paragraph as follows:

Live corals should be reported as ‘LIV’ with the unit ‘number of specimens’. Coral rock (as live rock) and dead corals should be reported using the trade term code ‘COR’ with the unit kilograms (kg). Coral rock (as substrate) should be reported as ‘COR’ with the unit ‘number of specimens’.

In section 6a) of the *Guidelines for the preparation and submission of CITES annual reports*, and section 4 a) of the *Guidelines for the preparation and submission of the CITES annual illegal trade report*, update the explanations of ‘live’ and ‘corals (raw)’ in the terminology table:

Description	Trade term code	Preferred unit	Alternative unit	Explanation
Live	LIV	no.	kg	live animals and plants, excluding live fingerling fish – see FIG. <u>NB: live stony corals should be recorded as ‘number of specimens’; all coral rock (live rock and substrate) should be reported as ‘COR’.</u>
coral (raw)	COR	no. kg (for live rock and dead corals); <u>no. (for substrate)</u>	kg	raw or unworked coral and coral rock (also live rock and substrate) [as defined in Resolution Conf. 11.10 (Rev. CoP15)]. Coral rock (live rock and substrate) should be recorded as ‘Scleractinia spp.’ NB: the trade should be recorded by number of pieces only if the coral specimens are transported in water. <u>Live rock (transported moist in boxes) and dead corals should be reported in kg; coral substrate should be reported as number of pieces (since these are transported in water as the substrate to which non-CITES corals are attached).</u>

DRAFT DECISIONS ON TRADE IN STONY CORALS

Text proposed to be deleted is indicated with ~~strike through~~. Proposed new text is underlined.

Directed to the Animals Committee

19.177 (Rev. CoP20) *The Animals Committee shall:*

- a) ~~taking into account document CoP19 Doc. 46 and its Annex, provide advice on possible amendments to Resolution Conf 11.10 (Rev. CoP15) on Trade in stony corals, in consultation with coral reef nations and coral reef experts, and report with recommendations to the Standing Committee;~~
- a) taking into account the progress made at AC33, make further recommendations, as necessary, to revise the Guidelines for the preparation and submission of CITES annual reports and Guidelines for the preparation and submission of the CITES annual illegal trade report, to ensure that they provide sufficient clarity on the use of appropriate terms and units for trade in stony corals; and
- b) consider the information in the Annex to document AC33 Doc. 24 and ~~in consultation with coral reef nations and coral reef experts,~~ provide advice on the conversion factors used to analyse trade in corals for the CITES Review of Significant Trade process and report to the 21st20th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

Directed to the Standing Committee

19.178 (Rev. CoP20) *The Standing Committee shall:*

- a) ~~review any proposed amendments to Resolution Conf. 11.10 (Rev. CoP15) on Trade in stony corals from the Animals Committee; and~~
- b) review any recommendations from the Animals Committee with regard to Decision 19.177 (Rev. CoP20), paragraph a), and make its own recommendations, as appropriate.

DRAFT AMENDMENTS TO
RESOLUTION CONF. 9.6 (REV. COP19) ON
TRADE IN READILY RECOGNIZABLE PARTS AND DERIVATIVES

New text is underlined.

Conf. 9.6 **(Rev. CoP19)***

Trade in readily recognizable parts and derivatives

RECALLING Resolutions Conf. 1.5, paragraph 3¹, Conf. 1.7², Conf. 2.18², Conf. 4.8, Conf. 4.24², Conf. 5.9, Conf. 5.22, paragraph c), Conf. 6.18², Conf. 6.22, last paragraph, and Conf. 7.11², adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its first, second, fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh meetings (Bern, 1976; San José, 1979; Gaborone, 1983; Buenos Aires, 1985; Ottawa, 1987; Lausanne, 1989), relating to readily recognizable parts and derivatives;

RECOGNIZING that Article I of the Convention defines a 'specimen' as including readily recognizable parts and derivatives of animals and plants but does not define the term 'readily recognizable', which is therefore subject to differing interpretations by the Parties;

NOTING that the trade in parts and derivatives regulated by one Party is therefore not always subject to regulation in others;

ACKNOWLEDGING that, under Articles III, IV and V of the Convention, Parties may allow import of CITES specimens from other Parties only upon presentation of CITES documentation;

CONSIDERING that proper monitoring of and reporting on trade in ranched specimens are only possible if all importing countries consider all products of the operation to be readily recognizable;

RECOGNIZING that the species or genera of coral from which coral sand and coral skeleton fragments [as defined in the Annex of Resolution Conf. 11.10 (Rev. CoP15)³] are derived cannot be readily determined;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION

1. AGREES that the term 'readily recognizable part or derivative', as used in the Convention, shall be interpreted to include any specimen which appears from an accompanying document, the packaging or a mark or label, or from any other circumstances, to be a part or derivative of an animal or plant of a species included in the Appendices, unless such part or derivative is specifically exempted from the provisions of the Convention;
2. RECOMMENDS that:
 - a) Parties consider all products of ranching operations to be readily recognizable;

* Amended at the 11th meeting of the Conference of the Parties, corrected by the Secretariat following the 14th and 15th meetings; amended by the Secretariat in compliance with Decision 14.19 and with the decisions adopted at the 61st meeting of the Standing Committee; and further amended at the 16th and 19th meetings of the Conference of the Parties.

¹ Note from the Secretariat: repealed by Resolution Conf. 9.25 (Rev.), itself replaced by Resolution Conf. 9.25 (Rev. CoP18).

² Note from the Secretariat: repealed by the adoption of document Com. 9.14.

³ Corrected by the Secretariat following the 12th, 14th and 15th meetings of the Conference of the Parties: originally referred to Resolution Conf. 11.10, later corrected to Resolution Conf. 11.10 (Rev. CoP12), then to Resolution Conf. 11.10 (Rev. CoP14).

- b) Parties consider all specimens produced through biotechnology that meet the criteria in paragraph 1 to be readily recognisable unless specifically exempted from the provisions of the Convention; and
- c) importing Parties that require that CITES export permits or re-export certificates accompany imports of parts and derivatives do not waive that requirement when such parts and derivatives are not considered to be readily recognizable by the exporting or re-exporting Party;

3. AGREES also that:

- a) coral sand and coral skeleton fragments [as defined in the Annex of Resolution Conf. 11.10 (Rev. CoP15)³] are not considered readily recognizable and are therefore not covered by the provisions of the Convention; and
- b) urine, faeces and ambergris that has been naturally excreted are waste products and are therefore not covered by the provisions of the Convention; and

4. REPEALS the Resolutions, or parts thereof, listed hereunder:

- a) Resolution Conf. 4.8 (Gaborone, 1983) – *Treatment of Exports of Parts and Derivatives without Permit from a Party to Another which Deems them Readily Recognizable*;
- b) Resolution Conf. 5.9 (Buenos Aires, 1985) – *Control of Readily Recognizable Parts and Derivatives*;
- c) Resolution Conf. 5.22 (Buenos Aires, 1985) – *Criteria for the Inclusion of Species in Appendix III* – recommendation c); and
- d) Resolution Conf. 6.22 (Ottawa, 1987) – *Monitoring and Reporting Procedures for Ranching Operations* – the paragraph under RECOMMENDS.