

CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA



Joint sessions of the 26th meeting of the Animals Committee and
20th meeting of the Plants Committee
Dublin (Ireland), 22-24 March 2012

CLIMATE CHANGE (DECISION 15.15)
REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP

1. This document has been prepared by the co-chairs of the CITES Joint Intersessional Working Group on Climate Change, in collaboration with the working group members .
2. Membership: United States (Plants Committee (PC) Co-Chair), Canada (Animals Committee (AC) Co-Chair), Representatives of Asia (both PC and AC), Representative of Africa (PC), Representative of Central and South America and the Caribbean (both PC and AC), Representative of North America (PC), Representative of Oceania (PC), Alternate Representative of Oceania (AC), Alternate Representative of Europe (both PC and AC), Australia (PC), Chile (AC), China (AC), India (AC), South Africa (PC), the European Union (PC), Animal Welfare Institute, Defenders of Wildlife, International Environmental Law Project, International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), IUCN, Natural Resources Defense Council, TRAFFIC International, UNEP-WCMC and WWF.
3. At CoP15 (Doha, 2010) Parties agreed that discussion of climate change within the CITES context should be limited to aspects of science-based decision-making and adopted Decision 15.15 on climate change as follows:

Directed to the Animals and Plants Committees

Given the implications of climate change for science-based decision-making, the Animals and Plants Committees shall identify the scientific aspects of the provisions of the Convention and of Resolutions of the Conference of the Parties that are actually or likely to be affected by climate change, report their findings, and make recommendations for further action in relation to the Convention and to Resolutions of the Conference of the Parties as appropriate, at the 62nd meeting of the Standing Committee.

4. To this end, the Technical Committees established a Joint Intersessional Working Group on Climate Change (CCWG) with the following Terms of Reference, as noted in the PC19 and AC25 documents and summaries pertaining to climate change:

To produce draft findings and recommendations for further action on the following provisions of the Convention and of Resolutions of the Conference of the Parties that are actually or likely to be affected by climate change:

- a) Species listings [Resolutions Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP15) and Conf. 9.25 (Rev. CoP15)];
- b) Non-detriment findings (Articles III and IV);

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.

- c) Periodic Review of the Appendices (Resolution Conf. 14.8);
- d) Review of Significant Trade [Resolution Conf. 12.8 (Rev. CoP13), to the extent that this pertained to Article IV (non-detriment findings)];
- e) Quotas [Resolution Conf. 14.7 (Rev. CoP15)]; and
- f) Trade in alien invasive species [Resolution Conf. 13.10 (Rev. CoP14)].

The intersessional working group should report to the joint meeting of the Plants and Animals Committees in March 2012.

5. The CCWG members commenced their work via email by responding to the following five questions. The questions were designed to develop a common understanding of the science-based decision-making provisions and Resolutions of CITES and how they might be used to address climate change as it relates to the central mandate of the Convention.
- 1. What is the role of the provision or Resolution within the context of CITES (how is its role different from or similar to the other 5 science-based decision-making processes)?
 - 2. What aspects of this provision or Resolution address factors related to climate change?
 - 3. What aspects of climate-change need to be addressed for this provision or Resolution?
 - 4. What resources might assist Parties in taking climate change into consideration within this provision or Resolution?
 - 5. What examples are there of CITES-listed species for which this provision or Resolution has taken climate change into consideration?

Key Findings

6. Based on responses from the CCWG members, the following key findings are submitted to the Committees for consideration:
- a) CCWG members noted that the 6 science-based decision-making processes could generally be grouped into those that relate to Species listings [Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP15) and Resolution Conf. 9.25 (Rev. CoP15)]; and those that relate to non-detriment findings (NDFs; Articles III and IV of the Convention). The other processes under consideration are nested within these: the Periodic Review is a way of re-examining the species listing decisions, and Quotas and the Review of Significant Trade process involve the making of NDFs. The Resolution on Trade in Alien Invasive Species [Resolution Conf. 13.10 (Rev. CoP14)] may, in some cases, be indirectly taken into consideration in relation to species listing decisions or NDFs. Grouping the CITES decision-making processes in this way can help organize thoughts about how to address climate change in the CITES context and can help ensure consistency in approach among the processes.
 - b) There was general consensus amongst CCWG members that the 6 processes could provide the scope to consider the impacts of climate change on species in trade, even if “climate change” is not explicitly mentioned. This means that the decision-making framework developed within CITES is flexible enough to accommodate the consideration of climate change. Some working group members thought that further guidance would be useful to explicitly highlight the ways in which climate change may be taken into consideration, and that this guidance might take the form of a Resolution or other guidance on incorporating climate change science into CITES decision-making processes.
 - c) CCWG members identified the following key points regarding climate change impacts:
 - climate change can include direct, indirect, and human-mediated impacts on plants and animals;
 - climate change may have positive or negative repercussions;
 - there may be changes in species distribution that change the list of range states for a species;
 - the impact of climate change is expected to be highly variable; and
 - climate change impacts might exacerbate existing stressors or modify existing complex environmental, ecological and physiological processes.

- d) Despite the wide range of possible climate change impacts for a particular species, CCWG responses indicated that:
- many intrinsic or extrinsic attributes that are expected to be altered or perturbed by climate change are already familiar to Parties. For instance, these include temperature-dependent sex ratios, scarification requirements prior to germination, and altered pollinator-prey-dispersal relationships.
 - some impacts of climate change could affect “how CITES does business.” For instance, range state consultations that are required under these decision-making processes could include Parties that are not yet range states but that would be expected to become range states as a result of climate change impacts on habitat availability for species.
- e) A pervading theme amongst responses was the need for Parties to use the best available scientific information and to share expertise. Members made several suggestions for actions that could be taken to improve the access of Parties to available information on climate change, and to improve understanding of impacts of climate change on species within the CITES context, including:
- Encourage Parties to actively engage and participate in existing mechanisms within CITES that provide opportunities for information sharing and discussion. These include but are not limited to activities and discussions as part of the Periodic Review and Significant Trade Review processes, review and evaluation of species amendment proposals and quotas, and development of training materials as well as guidance for the making of non-detriment findings.
 - Capacity-building workshops could provide additional opportunities for discussion and information-sharing about climate change as it relates to CITES decision-making and CITES species.
 - Improve the search capability within the CITES website to allow improved access to CITES documents containing information on climate change or processes affected by climate change. For example, an improved ability to search periodic review results would be beneficial to optimize information-sharing among Parties in applying the provisions of this Resolution. Global searches of CoP Summary records would be easier than multiple individual searches within each session, to facilitate research on decisions involving particular species or threat factors taken into consideration, which may include climate change.
 - Create or identify a webpage of resources related to climate change, including peer-reviewed studies and scientific databases that may be of use in decision making by Parties, starting with the many suggestions provided by CCWG members in response to question 4 (paragraph 5). Such resources may also benefit the endeavors of other working groups currently underway, such as working groups on NDFs or Evaluation of the Review of Significant Trade Working Group. The site could be hosted through the Secretariat’s website and, similar to the Wiki ID Manual, could be user-maintained and updated to minimize the need for additional monetary or personnel resources. It would be important, to ensure that these efforts are not duplicative, to consider a vetting process for information that might be included on such a site, and to ensure opportunities for response or comments to be made regarding resources posted to such a site.
 - The detailed responses provided by CCWG members for questions 3 and 5 (paragraph 5), may be useful to Parties. The responses provide details regarding the scientific aspects of the provisions of the Convention and of Resolutions of the Conference of the Parties that are actually or likely to be affected by climate change, along with specific examples of CITES-listed species for which climate change impacts have been taken into consideration might be useful to Parties.
7. Overall, most of the CCWG members indicated that the six CITES decision-making processes noted in paragraph 4 provided the scope to accommodate climate change considerations. There was a minority view that there was need for further work to develop guidance on incorporating climate change science into CITES decision-making processes.
8. The Animals Committee and Plants Committee are invited to consider the above findings included in paragraph 6 and, if appropriate, advise on any further actions to comply with Decision 15.15 and report to the 62nd meeting of the Standing Committee.