

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



Joint sessions of the 30th meeting of the Animals Committee and  
the 24th meeting of the Plants Committee  
Geneva (Switzerland), 20-21 July 2018

Strategic matters

Capacity building and identification materials

REPORT OF THE SECRETARIAT

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.

Background

2. At its 17th meeting (CoP17, Johannesburg, 2016), the Conference of the Parties adopted Decisions 17.31 to 17.34 on *Capacity building* as follows:

***Directed to Parties***

17.31 *Parties are encouraged to:*

- a) *provide financial and in-kind resources for capacity building activities, particularly activities to achieve Goal 1 (Ensure compliance with and implementation and enforcement of the Convention) and Goal 3 (Contribute to significantly reducing the rate of biodiversity loss and to achieving relevant globally agreed goals and targets by ensuring that CITES and other multilateral instruments and processes are coherent and mutually supportive) of the CITES Strategic Vision, as well capacity building activities required in the implementation of Resolutions and Decisions;*
- b) *use the CITES implementation reports, recommended to be introduced in 2018, to inform the Secretariat regularly about their capacity and needs; and*
- c) *utilize the CITES Virtual College to support capacity building activities and provide the Secretariat with inputs and financial support to update and improve its services, including translation of the contents into national languages.*

***Directed to Animals and Plants Committees and the Secretariat***

17.32 *The Animals and Plants Committees shall establish a joint working group on capacity building and identification materials to undertake the following tasks, in consultation with the Secretariat:*

- a) *provide assistance to Parties in identifying CITES-listed taxa and in undertaking capacity building activities that contribute to the enhanced implementation of the Convention;*
- b) *determine the current availability of capacity building materials, including identification guides and other tools, and enhance their accessibility;*

- c) *review selected capacity building and identification materials, and assess the need for their revision and improvement, taking into account the materials that are being developed or have already been developed by Parties and materials requested in Decisions;*
- d) *undertake, or provide scientific guidance to the Secretariat's undertaking of the revision and development of selected capacity building and identification materials, including materials on the development, establishment and implementation of voluntary national export quotas;*
- e) *review the project proposal on Improvements to the CITES identification materials: Options to promote accuracy and availability of identification material to the Parties to CITES, drafted by the United Nations Environment Programme-World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC), as well as any other projects or programmes identified by the Secretariat, and consider whether funding should be actively sought to support the activities;*
- f) *review Resolution Conf. 3.4 on Technical Cooperation and Resolution Conf. 11.19 (Rev. CoP16) on Identification Manual, and make recommendations, including possible amendments to these Resolutions if appropriate, to promote accuracy and availability of capacity building and identification materials; and*
- g) *report on progress with these activities at the next meetings of the Animals and Plants Committees as well as at the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.*

17.33 *The Animals and Plants Committees shall inform the Standing Committee, as necessary, on the progress made in implementing Decision 17.32.*

**Directed to the Secretariat**

17.34 *The Secretariat shall, subject to the availability of external funding where needed:*

- a) *continue to develop and enhance the CITES website as well as the CITES Virtual College as an electronic means of providing capacity building support to Parties, including the incorporation of the following information:*
  - i) *a list of references to capacity building found in the current Resolutions and Decisions, as well as the relevant sections of the CITES implementation reports, so as to enhance the continued monitoring of capacity building activities; and*
  - ii) *a list of possible financial resources and mechanisms to support the implementation of CITES (such as the Global Environment Facility and the African Elephant Fund);*
- b) *within the scope of Goals 1 and 3 of the CITES Strategic Vision, provide targeted technical capacity-building support and deliver general and specialized training, to: CITES Management and Scientific Authorities, Customs and law enforcement entities, the judiciary, legislators and other stakeholders, particularly in new Parties, developing country Parties, Parties identified through the compliance mechanism and Small Island Developing States.*
- c) *in consultation and cooperation with the Animals and Plants Committees, undertake the revision and development of selected capacity building and identification materials, including materials related to the development, establishment and implementation of voluntary national export quotas;*
- d) *issue a Notification to the Parties inviting developing countries and countries with economies in transition to provide to the Secretariat precise information on their capacity building needs, and report to the Standing Committee at its 69th meeting on the answers received; and*
- e) *further cooperate with institutions and organizations to provide Parties with joint capacity building assistance of relevance to CITES, for example through the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Intergovernmental Science -Policy Platform*

on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC) (including each of its partners), the International Trade Centre (ITC), the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), the International University of Andalusia, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE).

3. The Conference of the Parties also adopted Decisions 17.160 and 17.161 on *Identification materials*, as follows:

**Directed to Parties**

17.160 *The Parties are encouraged to support the efforts of the working group on capacity building and identification materials by providing to the Secretariat information on available capacity building materials, and identification and guidance materials that are used by Parties, and particularly by enforcement and inspections officers, to facilitate implementation of the Convention.*

**Directed to the Secretariat**

17.161 *Subject to the availability of funds, the Secretariat is directed to:*

- a) *continue compiling information on available identification and guidance materials, and make them available on the CITES Virtual College;*
- b) *support the development of databases and other means to make the identification materials available in a user-friendly manner;*
- c) *continue to explore means to improve and promote the accuracy and availability of identification materials on CITES-listed species, including the development of and identifying financial resources to fund projects or programmes, such as the project proposal on Improvements to the CITES identification materials: Options to promote accuracy and availability of identification material to the Parties to CITES, prepared by the United Nations Environment Programme-World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC), as well as the addition of functions and technologies to the Wiki Identification Manual on the CITES website.*

4. In addition to the above, several other Decisions adopted at CoP17 contain elements or activities related to capacity building or identification.

5. At the joint session of the 29th meeting of the Animals Committee and the 23rd meeting of the Plants Committee (Geneva, July 2017), the Members of the Committees reviewed document [AC29 Doc. 9/PC23 Doc. 10](#), prepared by the Secretariat and including four proposed work packages. The AC/PC intersessional working group on capacity building and identification materials was established at AC29/PC23 with the following terms of reference (the membership can be found in [AC29 summary record](#), item 9):

1. taking into consideration inputs and recommendations made in plenary, consider the work plan and activities outlined in paragraphs 7 to 33 of document AC29 Doc. 9/PC23 Doc. 10;
2. finalize and implement a workplan with timelines, in consultation with the Secretariat, that will result in a determination of the availability of materials and the enhancement of their accessibility, revision or guidance to revise select material, a review of the project proposals as described in part e) of Decision 17.32, and the review of Resolution Conf. 3.4 and Resolution Conf. 11.19 (Rev. CoP16) and recommendations to promote accuracy and availability of materials; and
3. report to the 30th meeting of the Animals Committee and the 24th meeting of the Plants Committee.

Progress to date: Decisions directed to the Secretariat

6. The Secretariat has developed a [dedicated page](#) on the CITES website on capacity building. In accordance with Decision 17.34, paragraph a), the page contains a list of references to capacity building found in the current Resolutions and Decisions, and a list of possible financial resources and mechanisms to support the

implementation of CITES, as well as other information relevant to capacity building. The page is updated when new and additional information becomes available and is brought to the attention of the Secretariat.

7. The Secretariat continues to provide targeted technical capacity building support and deliver general and specialized training to Management and Scientific Authorities, customs and law enforcement entities, and other stakeholders in implementation of Decision 17.34, paragraph b). Some of these activities are conducted jointly with, or through the leadership of, partner institutions and organizations. The list of such support activities was provided in the Secretariat's report to the Standing Committee (see document [SC69 Doc. 21](#)).
8. The Secretariat also continues to explore means to undertake or support the revision and development of capacity building materials and identification materials as per Decision 17.34, paragraph c). The Secretariat is currently looking for potential donors to support the revision of the online courses on the CITES Virtual College, which require significant updating in terms of content, design and platform. The Secretariat is working with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) to develop a concept note for the revision of the online courses. The draft concept note will be made available as an information document to the present meeting.
9. The CITES Virtual College website, where the online courses are located, will also be revised in 2018-2019, subject to the availability of funding. The revision will coincide with the transfer of its hosting server (from the International University of Andalusia to the International Computing Centre).
10. In addition to the above, the Secretariat is involved in the development of two online courses that are led by partners. The Secretariat may provide an oral update on them at the present meeting as necessary:
  - a) *CITES and the WTO: Enhancing Cooperation for Sustainable Development*, an interactive online course coordinated by the E-Learning Unit of the Institute for Training and Technical Cooperation of the World Trade Organization (WTO). The collaboration has been ongoing since 2017, and the proposed course consists of two modules with six multimedia components.
  - b) *Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) on Combating Illegal Trade in Wildlife*, coordinated by the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Illicit Trade in Wildlife and Forest Products. The course is being developed by the Bureau for Policy and Programme Support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and will be available on the UNDP MOOC platform. The MOOC will be composed of a total of six modules; the first is currently under development.
11. In accordance with Decisions 17.160 and 17.161, paragraphs a) and b), the Secretariat also continues to collect and compile information on identification and guidance materials from Parties and other stakeholders, making them available on the CITES Virtual College as well as on the new [dedicated page](#) on the CITES website on identification materials. The webpage also includes information relevant to other Decisions related to identification materials, i.e. ivory (Decisions 17.162 and 163), tiger skins (Decisions 17.164 and 165), timber (Decision 17.166), and agarwood (Decision 17.194).
12. With regard to Decision 17.161, paragraph c), the Secretariat has secured generous funding from the European Union to implement this task, and has been in discussion with the World Conservation Monitoring Centre of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP-WCMC) to add the existing sheets from the CITES identification manual in the CITES Wiki identification pages as a link to the CITES Checklist and Species+. Some Parties have suggested making text-readable PDFs of the original print versions available through the CITES Website, rather than linking the existing Wiki ID manual to the CITES Checklist. With this in mind, and depending on the outcome of the discussion with UNEP-WCMC, the Secretariat may decide to seek a wider source of expertise for securing a professional contract that would make the best solution available for the CITES identification manual.

Progress to date: intersessional working group on capacity building and identification materials

13. The Secretariat provided support to the co-chairs of the working group (Mr. Hugh Robertson and Mr. Byong-Yoon Lee) as they discussed their work plan on the basis of the work plan suggested by the Secretariat in document AC29 Doc. 9 / PC23 Doc. 10, and taking into consideration inputs and recommendations made in the joint session of AC29/PC23. The co-chairs made specific suggestions to the members of the working group on a number of issues in their initial communication in January 2018. This resulted in feedback from one working group member and one observer. The co-chairs will report at AC30/PC24 on any further progress made by the working group.

14. The Secretariat notes that this joint working group, as well as its predecessors, two AC/PC working groups that separately addressed capacity building and identification issues during 2013-2016, were not able to make much progress in meeting their mandates. From the limited discussion among the working group members that has taken place so far, the Secretariat identified three issues that seem to be significant in relation to the future work under this agenda item:

- a) Purpose and mandate of the working group: Considering that capacity building and identification materials are of great interest to CITES Management Authorities and relevant enforcement agencies, there were suggestions to invite customs and border officers to join the working group to bring on board their advice. While the Secretariat agrees that the audience of these materials is wide-ranging, the nature of the advice should remain scientifically based, considering that the working group is established by the Animals and Plants Committees, whose primary role is to provide scientific advice and guidance to Parties and to the Secretariat. The suggested addition to the working group membership may not only go beyond the mandate of the Animals and Plants Committees, but also dilute its scientific expertise and compromise its role in ensuring the scientific accuracy and appropriateness of the materials.
- b) Scope of the working group: The co-chairs of the working group sought the inputs from its members on how to describe the link between the capacity building and identification materials, in an effort to bring a better balance to the mandate of the working group. The feedback from one working group member seemed to indicate that there may be an overlap in the scope “capacity building and identification materials”, and instead suggested changing the scope to “training tools and identification materials”, both of which are considered capacity building materials. The change in the scope and coverage of the working group’s advice may be a sign that its mandates have been changing over time. The Animals and Plants Committees may wish to review the original intention for the establishment of this working group, and consider whether such a group is still needed to aid the Parties.
- c) Identifying “easy wins”: One of the main struggles of the working group has been to agree on priority activities that the members can readily implement. Unfortunately, much of the Secretariat’s work described in Decision 17.32 paragraph d), for which the working group’s advice would have been useful, has not been possible due to lack of funds. Furthermore, only a few Parties have requested the working group for the type of advisory role described in Decision 17.32 paragraphs a) through c).

In seeking other implementable tasks for the working group, the co-chairs proposed to review the work plan and activities outlined in paragraphs 7 to 33 of document AC29 Doc. 9/PC23 Doc. 10 by setting up subgroups for each work package. This may create a structure that is more complex than originally expected for the tasks given to this working group. The co-chairs also suggested adding a new task to the working group: to provide inputs to the Secretariat’s work on non-detriment findings (as per Decision 16.53), although any new work beyond its current lifespan would require a new mandate from the Conference of the Parties.

15. The Animals and Plants Committees are already tasked with assisting the Secretariat with the “*implementation of the Resolution on the Identification Manual and Decisions related to it*”, and cooperating with the Secretariat on the “*implementation of its programme of work to assist Scientific Authorities and provide scientific advice on training materials used in capacity building*”, provided for in [Resolution Conf. 11.1 \(Rev. CoP17\)](#) on *Establishment of committees* (see Annex 2, paragraph 1). Considering the challenges observed in paragraph 13 above, perhaps it may be necessary to revisit the ways in which the Animals and Plant Committees can provide such assistance and advice. In this regard, the Animals and Plants Committees may consider the following recommendations:

- a) The Secretariat can, in the future, inform the Animals and Plants Committees when needs arise for seeking their review or inputs, including when funds can be secured for the development of new capacity building and identification materials, or when the development of the new online function of the CITES identification manual begins. Once such activities are underway, the Committees can consider how to best provide assistance and advice to the Secretariat, which may include, but not be limited to, the establishment of working groups.
- b) Should there be a need for a general discussion on improving capacity building and identification materials that require a wider range of advice, the Secretariat could also request the Standing Committee for its inputs and review. As suggested above, the Standing Committee could agree on a case-by-case basis on how best to respond to these *ad hoc* requests, which may include the creation of working groups.
- c) The Secretariat remains of the view that Resolution Conf. 3.4 on *Technical Cooperation* and Resolution Conf. 11.19 (Rev. CoP16) on *Identification Manual* need to be reviewed to bring them in line with current

practice. The Secretariat will review and propose possible amendments to the two Resolutions to the Standing Committee at its 70th meeting. During the review process, the working group will be requested to review the draft proposed amendments and raise any particular elements that the Secretariat should take into consideration.

- d) In light of the above, the Secretariat does not believe that there is a need for the re-establishment of the joint working group on capacity building and identification materials beyond its current mandate.

#### Recommendations

16. The Animals and Plants Committees are invited to:

- a) take note of the present document; and
- b) consider the Secretariat's observations in paragraphs 14 of this document, and endorse the proposed approaches in paragraph 15, or otherwise, provide guidance.