

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



Nineteenth meeting of the Animals Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 18-21 August 2003

Strategic planning

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ANIMALS COMMITTEE PRIORITIES

1. This document has been prepared by the Chairman of the Animals Committee.
2. This document presents a rough working programme for the Animals Committee for 2003 to 2004 up until the 13th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP13), based on items relevant to the Animals Committee contained in: the Action Plan of the Strategic Vision through 2005, adopted at CoP11; Resolution Conf. 11.1 (Rev. CoP12) on the Establishment of Committees; and Resolutions and Decisions directed or related to the Animals Committee (see document AC19 Doc. 6.2), completed by some additional issues (addressed to the members of the Animals Committee).
3. It should be kept in mind that this working programme, which should be implemented from the 19th meeting of the Animals Committee, includes all relevant actions or activities listed in the documentation referred to above. The Committee cannot endeavour to deal with all of these points at the same time. In fact, it may not be able to deal with all of them by CoP13 owing to time constraints. They should therefore be part of a continuous process and be prioritized. Some assignments are very general and seem just to express an intention, while others are very precise and practical. Others still have already been entirely or partly completed (as indicated below).
4. The following elements (but not exclusively) should be part of the Animals Committee's working programme for 2003 to 2004 (with an indication of the origin of the assignment and some additional comments from the Chairman added in italics):
 - a) Implement the actions directed to the Animals Committee in the Action Plan adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its 11th and 12th meetings;
 - b) Clearly separate and identify scientific issues from technical implementation issues that concern animals and, in collaboration with the Working Group on Technical Implementation Issues established at the 49th meeting of the Standing Committee, finalize a list of technical implementation issues to be dealt with by the working group and the Standing Committee. (Decision 12.24);
 - c) Assist Parties and the Secretariat in ensuring adequate review and adoption of policies, measures of enforcement and compliance and legislation that may have a significant impact on the conservation status of species or the implementation of the Convention (Action Plan);

These could be issues that do not clearly involve biological or scientific aspects and therefore could be regarded as implementation issues.
 - d) Develop and improve, in coordination with the Parties, the Secretariat and other experts, regulations and model practices to prevent unnecessary loss during catching, storage and transportation of live animals (Action Plan);

This issue is a borderline case. It mainly concerns development, improvement, implementation and knowledge of technicalities, rules and regulations, but knowledge of biological properties is also necessary.

- e) Participate in the process of the revision of the criteria for the inclusion of species in the Appendices [Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP12)], as adopted by the Parties at CoP12. Coordinate an open, transparent and broadly consultative process to consider further revision of document CoP12 Com. I. 3. Review selected taxa, to ensure that the applicability of the criteria and guidelines to a broad array of taxa is assessed. Make the results of these reviews widely available (Decision 12.97);
- f) Continue the general process of reviewing the Appendices regularly, applying the criteria included in Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP12). Establish a guideline to facilitate the identification of species to be reviewed and to outline the process for conducting reviews, as well as a schedule for reviewing the biological and trade status of these species; identify problems or potential problems concerning the biological status of species being traded; consult the Parties on the need to review species and seek their assistance in such reviews; and prepare and submit amendment proposals resulting from the review through the Depository Government for consideration at meetings of the CoP. Share the experience regarding the undertaking of periodic reviews with the Plants Committee [Resolution Conf. 1.11 (Rev. CoP12); Decision 12.96];

A number of taxa were already selected during AC15 on the basis of differing natural history characters, size, habitat (terrestrial versus aquatic) and distribution (pandemic versus endemic), and several reviews have been undertaken. At AC18 a working group drafted internal guidelines as mentioned above and it has been agreed to develop a rapid assessment process. The work has been continued intersessionally. At SC49 it was decided that proposals resulting from the process and submitted to the CoP will not be withdrawn anymore, as happened in the past.

- g) Assist the Secretariat and the Parties in developing and enhancing databases that include information related to species in trade, CITES Decisions and procedures (Action Plan);

The issue of submitting and financing of research projects in the framework of CITES will be discussed in a separate agenda item at AC19.

- h) Assist the Secretariat in developing a manual specifying the obligations and procedures of the Scientific Authorities in order to encourage the development of specific training courses for them. Support the Secretariat in its work on the development of a programme to assist Scientific Authorities in making non-detriment findings in accordance with the provisions of Article IV of the Convention (Action Plan);

The issue of capacity building is addressed in several other points as well, and is an ongoing activity of the Secretariat. In 2002, IUCN published a Guidance for CITES Scientific Authorities containing a checklist to assist in making non-detriment findings for Appendix-II exports.

- i) Develop regional directories that list the zoologists in each region who are experts in CITES-listed species (Action Plan);

This seems to be a specific task for regional representatives and their alternates. The Plants Committee has completed this directory. It consists of lists of scientific experts and specialists who are also members of the CITES Scientific Authorities. The idea is to create a network of specialists that can be consulted by Scientific and Management Authorities, independent of national borders.

- j) Continue the Review of Significant Trade as outlined in Resolution Conf. 12.8. Draft terms of reference for an evaluation of the Review of Significant Trade to be considered at the 13th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (Action Plan; Decision 12.75);

This issue will be discussed in a separate agenda item at AC19.

- k) Assist the Secretariat in developing a simple guide to the Review of Significant Trade (Action Plan);

This work was initiated by Secretariat and a summary was presented at CoP11. An updated guide, reflecting the changes introduced by the adoption of Resolution Conf. 12.8, is under preparation.

- l) Where possible, evaluate trade and biological information on currently unlisted species subject to significant international trade to determine whether they would qualify for and benefit from CITES listing (Action Plan);

The ongoing issues of dealing with trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles, sea cucumbers and sharks fall into this category (see for instance Decisions 12.60 and 12.47). However, it should be kept in mind that because of budgetary and time constraints, the Committee's priorities must first and foremost be with species already included in the Appendices.

- m) Encourage Parties to consult with the AC to assist in the preparations of proposals to amend the Appendices (Action Plan);

This should not be interpreted as an invitation to Parties to ask the Committee to write these proposals. The AC can try to help by providing scientific information, guidance to the use of literature and references of specialists in the field, but that would depend on the expertise available among representatives and alternates. AC cannot instigate this work, but could possibly review and evaluate 'pre-proposals' from a scientific perspective and make recommendations to improve such proposals.

- n) For identified commodities, develop standardized units of measure for permits, trade analysis and reporting (Action Plan; Decisions 12.62 and 12.54);

Decision 12.62 directs the AC to consider and recommend a practical means of distinguishing fossilized corals from non-fossilized corals in international trade, and to report at CoP13; Decision 12.54 directs the AC to identify a minimum size for specimens of all Hippocampus species in trade.

- o) Support the Parties and the Secretariat in providing opportunities for Scientific Authorities to exchange information and data (Action Plan);

See item l).

- p) Assist the Secretariat and enforcement agencies in identifying the needs for and the potential benefits of innovative technologies (including Internet and electronic mail) [Action Plan];

This subject seems to fall outside the realm of biological expertise of Committee members.

- q) Assist the Secretariat in identifying the available technologies that may assist in implementing the Convention (Action Plan);

This subject seems to fall outside the realm of biological expertise of Committee members.

- r) Assist the Secretariat in developing with relevant institutions collaborative research projects for testing the appropriateness of new and forthcoming technologies [Action Plan];

This subject seems to fall outside the realm of biological expertise of Committee members.

- s) According to Decisions 12.78 and 11.102 (Rev. CoP12), the AC shall study and evaluate the process for registering operations that breed Appendix-I animal species for commercial purposes and report at CoP13. Furthermore, it shall continue to examine the complex issue related to the origin of founder breeding stock and the relation between *ex situ* breeding operations and *in situ* conservation of the species, in particular identify possible strategies by which registered *in situ* breeding operations may contribute to enhancing the recovery and/or conservation of the species within the countries of origin and report at CoP13 [Decisions 12.78 and 11.102 (Rev. CoP12)];

While the first issue includes a strong implementation component, the second is of a more philosophical nature and has less direct impact on the implementation of CITES per se, i.e. the regulation of international trade.

- t) The AC is asked to assist the Secretariat in developing guidance for making non-detriment findings, to provide input regarding capacity-building material concerning voluntary national export quotas, and to facilitate national and regional training for Scientific Authorities.

Decisions 12.91 to 12.93 are directed to the Secretariat. The AC is asked to assist where appropriate.

- u) Participate actively at scientific meetings and conferences and encourage participation in CITES issues by the scientific community (Action Plan);

This seems to be a strictly individual action of AC members and alternates to draw attention to CITES issues in other fora.

- v) Take responsibility for the scientific analysis of problems related to the international trade in animals, in order to provide scientifically-based findings for the drafting of proposals that could be presented to meetings of the Conference of the Parties. [Resolution Conf. 11.1 (Rev. CoP12)]

- w) Collaborate with the Nomenclature Committee when requested [Resolution Conf. 11.1 (Rev. CoP12)];

The process of taxonomic amendments will be dealt with in a separate agenda item AC19.

- x) Provide support to the Secretariat in its preparation of materials for the Identification Manual (Resolution Conf. 11.19);

This could be a means of ensuring that the Secretariat is informed about useful material published that could be incorporated in the Identification Manual or be considered in addition to it. The Secretariat could also ask the AC to review draft sections for the Manual or point out where information for the Identification Manual is missing or needs updating.

- y) Promote the organization of regional meetings, and improve the coordination between regional representatives and alternates. [Resolution Conf. 11.1 (Rev. CoP12)]

The Plants Committee has already organized several successful regional meetings. In 2002 a very useful meeting of the European region took place. The production of regional reports falls under this point as well. As most regions have two representatives and two alternates, there should preferably be a collective effort within the region to produce reports. Nevertheless, these reports are always slow in coming, often not complete and seem to be of minor interest. Therefore the issue of these regional reports needs to be looked at.

5. At AC16, the Committee accepted the following mission statement:

“The mission of the CITES Animals Committee is to provide the Conference of Parties, Parties, other committees and working groups and the Secretariat, with reliable scientific information and advice on biological matters (including criteria and their application) concerning international trade in animal species included in the Appendices, as well as when applicable, animal species subject to international trade that may be considered for inclusion in the Appendices in the future.”

It might be worthwhile to look at this mission statement to see whether it is still valid or needs to be revised.