

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



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

CONSERVATION OF AND TRADE IN SEA CUCUMBERS IN THE FAMILIES
HOLOTHURIDAE AND STICHOPODIDAE (DECISIONS 12.60 AND 12.61)

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.

Background

2. At its 12th meeting (Santiago, 2002), the Conference of the Parties adopted two Decisions related to sea cucumbers, as follows:

12.60 *The Animals Committee shall:*

- a) *review, with the assistance of experts as may be needed, the outcomes of the technical workshop convened by the Secretariat and other available information concerning the biology, catch and bycatch of and trade in sea cucumbers in the families Holothuridae and Stichopodidae and develop appropriate recommendations; and*
- b) *prepare, for consideration at the 13th meeting of the Conference of the Parties, a discussion paper on the biological and trade status of sea cucumbers in the above families to provide scientific guidance on the actions needed to secure their conservation status.*

12.61 *The Secretariat shall:*

- a) *assist in obtaining funds from interested Parties, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, exporters, importers and other stakeholders, to support a technical workshop of relevant experts on the conservation of sea cucumbers in the families Holothuridae and Stichopodidae;*
- b) *contingent on the availability of external funding, cooperate with other relevant bodies, including the fisheries sector, to convene a technical workshop to consider and review biological and trade information that would assist in establishing conservation priorities and actions to secure the conservation status of sea cucumbers in these families; and*
- c) *contract the preparation of a document for discussion at the technical workshop. This document should contain all relevant available information concerning the status, catches and bycatches of, and trade in specimens of species in the families Holothuridae and Stichopodidae and on any domestic measures for their conservation and protection, and a review of the adequacy of such measures.*

3. In view of its mandate in Decision 12.61 to convene a technical workshop in cooperation with relevant bodies, the outcomes of which are to be reviewed by the Animals Committee, the Secretariat wishes to

keep the Animals Committee informed about progress made so far. It would furthermore welcome comments and guidance from the Animals Committee concerning the workshop's proposed objectives, agenda, participation and practical arrangements, which are presented in paragraphs 5 to 13.

Budget

4. The cost of the technical workshop has been estimated at USD 80,000. Regarding paragraph a) of Decision 12.61, the Secretariat had secured USD 20,000 at the time of writing, and has been in contact with several interested donors. It seems that it will be feasible to secure the full amount required to hold the workshop.

Objectives of the workshop

5. The Secretariat proposes the following objectives for the workshop:
 - a) to review information on the status, catches and bycatches of and trade in specimens of sea cucumbers within the families Holothuridae and Stichopodidae; and on domestic measures for their conservation, including considerations of the adequacy of these measures;
 - b) to establish conservation priorities and actions to secure the conservation status of sea cucumbers within the families Holothuridae and Stichopodidae, addressing *inter alia* trade monitoring and controls, national legislation and regulations, fisheries management options, conservation management and research, enforcement and capacity building; and
 - c) to formulate findings and recommendations that can contribute towards the discussion paper on the biological and trade status of sea cucumbers within the families Holothuridae and Stichopodidae to be prepared by the Animals Committee.

Timing

6. The Animals Committee has been directed to review the workshop outcomes and prepare a discussion paper for consideration at the 13th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP13). The discussion paper should therefore be completed and communicated to the Secretariat at least 150 days before the beginning of CoP13, i.e. in all likelihood by 6 May 2004. The workshop should therefore be organized well in advance of this date (at least three months before).
7. The Animals Committee may wish to consider progress in implementing Decision 12.60 at its 20th meeting (probably to be held in March or April 2004), in which case it should be noted that relevant documents need to be provided to the Secretariat at least 90 days before the meeting.

Venue

8. The workshop should preferably be held in either a significant exporting or importing country.

Participation

9. The workshop should bring together representatives of the fisheries sector, exporting and importing countries, intergovernmental organisations such as FAO and IUCN, knowledgeable non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders and experts. The workshop costs and structure are based on a total participation of 50-60 individuals, requiring that representation from countries, territories and organizations will be limited to one individual.
10. Although it would be preferable to have all known exporting and importing countries represented in the workshop, such an approach seems unrealistic owing to the large number of countries involved. It is therefore suggested that priority for participation be given to those countries and territories that are known to have traded sea cucumbers in recent years and at volumes exceeding five tons, or that have particular expertise to contribute to the workshop.
11. Document CoP12 Doc. 45 on Trade in sea cucumbers in the families Holothuridae and Stichopodidae provides information in this regard:

- a) The following 28 countries and territories have imported or (re-)exported more than five tons of dried sea cucumbers during the period 2000-2001:

Australia, Canada, Chile, China, Cuba, Ecuador, Fiji, Hong Kong SAR, Indonesia, Japan, Kiribati, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Seychelles, Singapore, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Taiwan (province of China), the United Republic of Tanzania, Thailand, the United Arab Emirates, the United States of America and Vanuatu.

- b) During the same period, the following countries have exported five tons or less of dried sea cucumbers to Hong Kong SAR:

Brazil, Columbia, Cost Rica, Djibouti, France, India, Korea, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, Mozambique, the Netherlands, Oman, Spain, Swaziland, Vietnam and Yemen.

- c) The following additional countries and territories have been involved in the (re-)export of sea cucumbers to Taiwan, Province of China, during 1999-2001, but the precise volume of recent (re)exports for individual countries is not provided:

Croatia, Egypt, Germany, New Caledonia, Peru, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Yugoslavia (now Serbia and Montenegro).

Format of the workshop and proposed agenda

12. The workshop is planned to run for three or four days, and be conducted in English only unless sufficient funds for simultaneous interpretation can be found. The workshop would start with a presentation of brief overviews on biology, conservation status, utilization, trade, fisheries characteristics and management measures, which could be drawn from the discussion document to be prepared in accordance with Decision 12.61, followed by brief country reports. It is proposed that several working groups be tasked with prioritizing and developing recommendations concerning conservation strategies, fisheries management, national and international measures, and potential CITES implementation issues.
13. A draft agenda for the technical workshop is provided in the Annex to this document.

TECHNICAL WORKSHOP ON THE CONSERVATION OF SEA CUCUMBERS
IN THE FAMILIES HOLOTHURIDAE AND STICHOPODIDAE
(DECISIONS 12.60 AND 12.61)

DRAFT AGENDA

1. Adoption of the agenda and working programme
2. Background to the workshop – CITES and sea cucumbers
3. Sea cucumber biology
 - Taxonomy and distribution
 - Biology
 - Conservation status
4. Utilization of sea cucumbers
 - Utilization as food
 - Utilization in Traditional East Asian Medicines
 - Other uses
5. Sea cucumber fisheries and current trade
 - Legal trade
 - Illegal, unreported and unregulated trade
 - Bycatch
 - Socio-economic characteristics of the trade in sea cucumbers
6. Management and conservation strategies and practices
 - Fisheries management approaches
 - Wild harvest (e.g. minimum size limits, closed seasons, closed areas, etc.)
 - Aquaculture
 - Restocking
 - Trade controls and enforcement, including identification of specimens in trade
7. Reports from key sea cucumber trading countries and territories
8. Plenary discussion and agreement of working group topics
9. Working group sessions (addressing conservation strategies; fisheries management; national and international measures; and potential CITES implementation issues)
10. Working group reports back to plenary
11. Plenary discussion and identification of priorities and actions to secure the conservation status of sea cucumbers
12. Implementation of Decision 12.60 by the Animals Committee
13. Closure of the workshop