

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



Twenty-fifth meeting of the Animals Committee  
Geneva (Switzerland), 18-22 July 2011

Regional Reports

OCEANIA

1. This document has been submitted by the regional representative for Oceania (Dr Hugh Robertson, New Zealand) .

General Information

2. AC Membership: At CoP15 (Doha, 2010) the region confirmed that Dr Hugh Robertson (New Zealand) would replace Dr Rod Hay (New Zealand) as regional representative, who, after three terms had decided to step down from this role. Dr Hay served the region very well and ably chaired a number of AC Working Groups during his time on the AC. Dr Hay's expertise is not lost completely to the AC or the region because he was appointed as the alternate representative for the region at CoP15.
3. Number of Parties in the region: 8 (Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu).

The following 9 countries in Oceania are not Parties to the Convention: Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Tokelau, Tonga and Tuvalu. The Cook Islands and Niue are self-governing in free association with New Zealand, and Tokelau is a self-administering dependency of New Zealand. While New Zealand assumes some responsibility for foreign affairs for these countries this does not render them a party to CITES under New Zealand law. In contrast, the French overseas territories of French Polynesia, New Caledonia, and Wallis and Futuna, and the Australian, United States and United Kingdom territories in the region do come under the CITES umbrella through membership of their parent states.

4. Parties responding to communications: 2 (Australia, New Zealand)  
Non-parties/ IGOs responding to communications: 1 (IUCN Oceania)

Regional Directory

5. An updated Regional Directory, produced in September 2010, is presented as an annex to this report (English only).

Communication with Parties in the region since AC24 (Geneva, April 2009)

6. Following AC24, Dr Hay circulated his Oceania Report for the meeting to the Parties in the region for their information, and also circulated a report of the outcomes of the meeting focusing on matters of greatest relevance to the region (especially the inclusion of the Solomon Islands populations of *Tridacna* spp. (giant clams) and *Tursiops aduncus* (Indo-Pacific bottle-nosed dolphin) in the Review of Significant Trade, along with all populations of three seahorse species (*Hippocampus kellogg*, *H. spinosissimus* and *H. kuda*)

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\* *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.*

7. 7 parties from the region attended COP15 in Doha, Qatar, 13-25 March 2010. One non-party (Marshall Islands) also attended as an observer. Officials from these eight countries met as a group on most days during the COP to share views.
8. Dr Robertson circulated the agenda of AC25 and a copy of Notification to the Parties 2010/027 to all Management and Scientific Authorities across the region, and also to competent authorities of other countries in the region and relevant IGOs operating in the region.
9. As regional representative on the SC, Australia has also continued to communicate on a range of matters relevant to the AC.

#### Follow-up on agenda items since AC 24

10. Dr Hay, the former regional representative, chaired the AC24 Working Group on Sharks. The work leading up to COP15 was co-ordinated mainly by Parties, with communication between Working Group members.

#### Reviews of Significant Trade

11. At AC24, under agenda item 7.2, it was noted that Solomons Islands had been exporting *Tridacna* spp. (giant clams) after they had been excluded from the ongoing Review of Significant Trade in Tridacnidae spp. on the basis that they had not been exporting them. The Solomon Islands was therefore added to the review process. To the end of April 2011, no response has been received by the Secretariat to this notification.
12. At AC24, under agenda item 7.6, it was decided to include the Solomons Islands population of *Tursiops aduncus* (Indo-Pacific Bottlenose Dolphin) in a Review of Significant Trade. The Solomons Islands have responded to the Secretariat's notification of the review with an explanation of their activities regarding this species.

#### Reviews of the Appendices

13. Following the removal of *Pteropus macrotus* (flying fox) and *Mirounga leonina* (southern elephant seal) from the list of species for which reviews were sought, the Oceania region is left with only two species on the current list. Sadly, both *Rheobatrachus silus* Australia and *Rheobatrachus vitellinus* Australia (gastric brooding frogs) have been listed as extinct under Australian national environmental law.

#### Relevant CITES implementation issues in the region

14. Oceania covers a vast area of mostly tropical regions dominated by the marine environment. Trade risks to wild fauna and flora must be seen in the context of the usual range of environmental threats, including habitat loss, invasive species, domestic over-exploitation and global climate change. Coral bleaching has had a dramatic effect on the reefs in some parts of the region (e.g. in Fiji). Marine resources form a key part of the local culture and the local economy. Therefore trade issues concerning them are of critical and growing interest to the countries of the region. The relationship between trade and other pressures needs to be kept in mind, but CITES has an important potential role in sustainable use and protection of species in the marine environment of the region.
15. Since AC24, several important marine conservation initiatives have been implemented in the Oceania region. In September 2009, Palau created a 630,000 sq km sanctuary for over 135 species of sharks and stingrays, and banned bottom-trawling in its territorial waters because of damage caused to corals and other bottom-dwelling marine life. In August 2010, all marine mammals within the sanctuary were protected. The nearby US territories of Northern Mariana Islands and Guam passed bills banning the practice of shark-finning in their territorial waters in January 2011 and March 2011 respectively.
16. Australia has raised two CITES implementation issues with the Oceania representative regarding Australian crocodiles.

At CoP15 under Agenda Item 34 *Review of the Universal Tracking System and trade in small crocodilian products*, which resulted in the adoption of Resolution Conf. 11.12 (Rev. CoP15), the spelling of the scientific name for the Australian freshwater crocodile was discussed. Australia supported the agenda document in general, but did not support the use of the name *Crocodylus johnsoni* in the Resolution, noting that their national legislation and permitting system would continue to refer to the species as *C.*

*johnstoni*. Australia indicated that it would consider preparing a case for the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature (ICZN) and would report on this issue through the Animals Committee before CoP16. Since then a paper has been published in 2010 in the *Australian Zoologist* [35 (2): 432-434] by Dr Anton D Tucker stating that, under the current provisions of the ICZN (Article 33.2.3.1), *C. johnstoni* is the correct spelling and that it is unnecessary to present an application to the ICZN nor have it use its plenary powers to resolve this issue. This issue is to be discussed further in Agenda Item 22 on nomenclatural matters.

Australia is also proposing to cease including year of production or harvest on all of its crocodile skin tags from 2012 and sought comment, in November 2010, from other Parties via the CITES on-line discussion forum for Management Authorities. In reviewing the tagging requirements in Resolution Conf. 11.12 (Rev. CoP15), Australia noted that, in paragraph c), it states "...and, where appropriate, the year of skin production or harvest, in accordance with the provisions of Resolution Conf. 11.16 (Rev. CoP15)". Australia consulted the CITES Secretariat on this point and the Secretariat agreed it appeared that including the year of production or harvest on the skin tag is up to the Party concerned to decide if it is appropriate. The Australian populations of *Crocodylus porosus* and *C. johnstoni* have an unqualified Appendix II listing, and Australia considers that it would greatly simplify tag production and management if there was no need for the tags to specify a year of production or harvest. The limited feedback received so far by the Australian MA suggests that other Parties have no issue with this. All other codes (ISO two-letter country code, the standard species code and a unique identification number) will still be on Australian tags. If any Parties have any comment, they should contact Mr Frank Antram ([frank.antram@environment.gov.au](mailto:frank.antram@environment.gov.au)) at the earliest opportunity.

17. Because of a small population size in relation to area administered, and small size of government departments, capacity remains a critical issue for the Parties and non-Parties in Oceania. CITES is normally but a small part of the wide range of environment and conservation responsibilities of a small number of government officials. Often just one or two people deal with all of the Multilateral Environmental Agreements, and staff turnover rates are often high in the small public services of island nations. Some Parties have very low levels of trade in CITES species and so attending to CITES requests for information is a low priority. These troubles are evidenced by several Parties in the region having difficulties in submitting their annual or biennial national reports by the deadline. The regional record of submitting biennial reports is poor, with only two parties submitting reports in the last four periods.
18. In some countries, suitable legislation supporting CITES is not yet in place, and the roles and responsibilities of MAs and SAs have not been clearly defined, thereby making CITES implementation difficult.
19. The Capacity Building Workshops held in the region have, however, been greatly beneficial and have been a key driver for the growth of membership from Oceania.
20. Scientific expertise is often difficult to obtain when needed, hence the value of building regional networks of expertise which can fulfil some of the technical requirements of CITES, notably those of Scientific Authorities.
21. In general, awareness and activity in support of conservation and sustainable use of natural resources, especially marine resources, are advancing significantly in the region, with increasing locally and externally funded activities, and increased levels of cooperation between countries.

#### Capacity-building activities and awareness campaigns

22. In May 2009, participants from seven South Pacific countries attended a workshop in Auckland, New Zealand, on the 'Prevention of Illegal Wildlife Trade'.
23. In accordance with Decision 14.80, participants from seven Parties, four non-Parties, two territories of France and a territory of the United States attended a regional workshop on the 'Management of Sustainable Fisheries for Giant Clams (Tridacnidae) and CITES Capacity Building' in Nadi, Fiji, in August 2009. This workshop was facilitated by the CITES Secretariat and the South Pacific Commission (SPC), with support from the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), IUCN Oceania and NOAA.
24. Participants from eight Parties, two non-Parties and two French overseas territories attended a regional workshop on the 'CITES Non-detriment Finding Process for Marine-listed Species' in Honiara, Solomon

Islands, in May 2010. This workshop was lead by IUCN Oceania and NOAA, with support from the CITES Secretariat, SPC, SPREP, and the University of the South Pacific. Although the workshop focused on marine species, it did include more general consideration of implementation of NDFs.

25. The International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) and the NZ Wildlife Enforcement Group (NZWEG) conducted a workshop on the 'Prevention of Illegal Wildlife Trade' in Apia, Samoa, in May 2010. This workshop was run under the auspices of the Oceania Customs Organisation (OCO) and supported by the Pacific Security Fund. The approach of the workshop was to ensure multi-agency participation, in order to promote collaboration and communication among all government departments that work on CITES, wildlife and border issues.
26. At the request of IFAW, the OCO and the Solomon Islands Customs and Excise Department conducted a survey on CITES training needs in the Solomon Islands in December 2010. It also identified existing legislative and administrative gaps in relation to CITES in the Solomon Islands. IFAW and NZWEG then followed this up with their targeted training workshop on the 'Prevention of Illegal Wildlife Trade' in Honiara in December 2010.
27. A third in-country workshop on the 'Prevention of Illegal Wildlife Trade' is planned for Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, in May 2011.
28. The NZWEG has designed and published over 30 identification sheets and manuals specific to the Oceania region which cover various species and higher taxa (e.g. birds, reptiles) and related issues such as traditional medicines, smuggling techniques and permit verification. These have been distributed to border agency representatives in 25 countries. More sheets are planned to cover various marine and invertebrate species.
29. IUCN Oceania and the Fijian Department of Environment produced a CITES manual for the Fiji Islands CITES Authorities and Customs officials. The manual includes species identification guides, relevant legislation and information regarding enforcement. As part of the production process, a two-day workshop of talks and practical sessions was held to train officers on the use of the manual.
30. A joint initiative between the Management Authorities of New Zealand and Australia created and distributed throughout the region a series of CITES brochures (see: <http://www.doc.govt.nz/publications/about-doc/role/international/does-your-luggage-break-wildlife-laws-brochure/>). Copies are available in English and six Pacific languages (Fijian, Palauan, Pijin (Solomons), Samoan, Tok Pisin (Papua New Guinea) and Tongan). The same brochure translated into Bislama (Vanuatu) is under development. The collaborative approach was taken to promote a consistent Oceania message regarding CITES regulations and the import/export of CITES-listed species.
31. Australia has continued to undertake a variety of targeted education and awareness activities, including through the media, delivery of Customs recruit and in-service training, promotion of CITES at travel expos and traditional/ complementary medicine conferences, and promotion and education of the Endangered Species Certification Scheme to complementary medicine practitioners.
32. The Management Authority of New Zealand is in the process of publishing a Chinese language brochure on traditional medicines. The brochure outlines CITES documentation requirements for medicines containing CITES-listed species. Publication of the brochure is expected in May 2011.
33. Work is under way to develop a Regional Directory of Zoological Experts, to complement that already developed by the Plants Committee representative from the region.

#### Agenda items of particular interest in the Oceania region

34. The following items are of particular interest to the eight Parties of Oceania:
  - a) Review of Significant Trade regarding *Tursiops aduncus*
  - b) Non-detriment findings
  - c) Conservation and management of sharks
  - d) Sea cucumbers

- e) Nomenclatural matters regarding *Crocodylus johnsoni*/*C. johnstoni*
- f) Identification of CITES-listed corals in trade.

Work to be done by the next meeting of the Animals Committee

35. Complete preparation of a Regional Directory of Zoological Experts.