

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



Twenty-seventh meeting of the Animals Committee
Veracruz (Mexico), 28 April – 3 May 2014

Interpretation and implementation of the Convention

Species trade and conservation

Snake trade and conservation management (Serpentes spp.)

REVIEW OF STUDIES
[DECISION 16.103, PARAGRAPHS A) AND D)]

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.
2. The Conference of the Parties adopted at its 16th meeting (CoP16, Bangkok, 2013) a number of interconnected decisions on *Snake trade and conservation management (Serpentes spp.)*, as follows:

Directed to the Secretariat

16.102 *The CITES Secretariat shall, where appropriate in consultation with the Standing Committee:*

- a) *subject to external funding, hire independent consultants in liaison with local scientists, and local research and academic institutions to:*
 - i) *undertake a study of production systems for Asian snakes listed in CITES Appendix II and the use of source codes; and develop guidance to assist Parties in monitoring and controlling captive-breeding operations and other production systems, including information to assess their biological feasibility and, where possible, economic viability (i.e. whether it is financially viable for commercial facilities to produce and export specimens as permitted by national authorities);*
 - ii) *compile information and develop guidance that can assist Parties in the making of non-detriment findings, management systems for wild populations and the establishment of export quotas for Appendix-II snake species in trade, by undertaking relevant research, consulting with relevant experts, examining suitable examples and case-studies, and building on the results of the International Expert Workshop on CITES Non-Detriment Findings (Cancún, 2008) and recommendations on the making of non-detriment findings from the Conference of the Parties;*
 - iii) *undertake a study of one or more high-value snake species in the pet trade (e.g. unique colour or morphological forms, or range-restricted endemics) to determine the impacts on wild populations of legal and illegal harvest for international trade, and to provide information required for making non-detriment findings for trade in these species; and propose actions to enforce the Convention as it relates to trade in these species; and*
 - iv) *undertake a study on methodologies to differentiate between wild and captive-bred CITES-listed snakes in trade, including parts and derivatives, ensuring that the work is carried out in line with recommendations of the Standing Committee concerning source;*

- b) *issue a Notification to the Parties encouraging Parties to engage with interested institutions to investigate the possibility of forensic identification of specimens of CITES-listed snakes in trade, and requesting Parties to inform the Secretariat about the results of such engagement;*
- c) *inform Parties of the results of the International Trade Centre (ITC) study on trade in python snakes in Asia, the UNCTAD Biotrade Initiative's Working Group on reptile skin sourcing, when these become available, and other relevant studies and information;*
- d) *present the outcomes of the activities mentioned in paragraphs a) and b) above, together with its recommendations, to the Animals Committee for review at its 27th or, as appropriate, 28th meeting, and make the final results available on the CITES website following review and approval by the Standing Committee pursuant to Decision 16.105;*

Directed to the Animals Committee

16.103 *The Animals Committee shall:*

- a) *review the results of the activities indicated in Decision 16.102, paragraphs a) to c), as well as the results of the ITC study and other relevant studies on trade in python snakes in Asia and UNCTAD Biotrade Initiative's Working Group on reptile skin sourcing, when available; and, based on these studies and reports, develop guidance and recommendations for consideration by the Standing Committee;*
 - d) *report on the status of this work at the 65th and 66th meetings of the Standing Committee.*
3. Concerning the four studies mentioned in paragraph a) of Decision 16.102, the Secretariat has been able to secure external funding to undertake these research activities, for which it is particularly grateful to Switzerland and the European Union. At the time of writing (February 2014), discussions on a Small-Scale Finance Agreement were ongoing with independent consultants. The Secretariat will provide an update on progress with the implementation of Decision 16.102, paragraph a) at the meeting.
 4. The Secretariat intends to issue a Notification to the Parties concerning the studies and requests in Decision 16.102, paragraphs b) and c). The International Trade Centre (ITC) study on trade in python snakes in Asia can be found at <http://www.intracen.org/The-Trade-in-South-East-Asian-Python-Skin/>. The study emanating from UNCTAD Biotrade Initiative's Working Group on reptile skin sourcing has only very recently become available (Ashley, D. 2013. *Traceability Systems for a Sustainable International Trade in South East Asian Pythons*. See document AC27 Doc.19.2). The study is available from http://www.biotrade.org/ResourcesPublications/UNCTAD_DITC_TED_2013_6_webonly.pdf (this is an advanced, not officially edited version).
 5. As explained in paragraphs 3 and 4 above, the Secretariat is not yet in a position to provide the outcomes of the activities mentioned in paragraphs a) and b) of Decisions 16.102, with its recommendations, to the Animals Committee for review. It believes, however, that it will be able to provide the Animals Committee with comprehensive and well-researched studies by its 28th meeting. The Animals Committee may agree to review some of the results intersessionally, as and when the studies or parts thereof become available. The Secretariat would be very willing to collaborate with the Animals Committee (or a working group of the Committee) in this regard.

Recommendations

6. The Animals Committee is invited to review the ITC study on trade in python snakes in Asia and the UNCTAD/CITES study on Traceability Systems for a Sustainable International Trade in South East Asian Python, and consider the status of the work concerning activities indicated in Decision 16.102, paragraphs a) to c). It should initiate the development of recommendations and guidance for consideration by the Standing Committee, and report on progress at the 65th meeting of the Standing Committee.
7. The Animals Committee is invited to consider the suggestion of the Secretariat in paragraph 5 above.