

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



Twenty-eighth meeting of the Animals Committee
Tel Aviv (Israel), 30 August-3 September 2015

Regional matters

Regional reports

OCEANIA

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

General Information

2. 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 CITES: Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Tokelau, Tonga and Tuvalu. The Cook Islands and Niue self-govern in free association with New Zealand, and Tokelau is a self-administering dependency of New Zealand. While New Zealand has some role in the 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.

Communication with Parties in the region since AC 27 (Veracruz, May 2014)

3. Following AC27, Dr. Robertson sent a report to member Parties outlining the key outcomes affecting Oceania. This report included updates on:
 - a) the establishment of an intersessional Working Group on how extinct species should be treated on the CITES Appendices. Both Australia and New Zealand successfully removed extinct endemic species from the Appendices at CoP16 and so both joined the working group because of their interest and experience in this discussion.
 - b) progress on Review of Significant Trade which had retained the Solomon Islands population of *Tursiops aduncus* (Indo-Pacific bottle-nosed dolphin) in the review. AC27 congratulated the Solomons Islands for banning the further export of *Tursiops aduncus*, and so the zero export quota is appropriate until such time as the Solomon Islands is able to demonstrate that exports are sustainable.
 - c) progress on Review of Significant Trade of Solomon Islands populations of giant clams (*Tridacna* spp.). AC27 noted the new legislation (Fisheries (Clam) (Amendment) Regulation 2014) which bans

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the collection of wild specimens of giant clams, AC27 reiterated a zero export quota for all wild sourced giant clams (including all dead shells) and also recommended to the CITES Standing Committee that this be extended to a zero export quota for all sources of giant clam, until such time that the Solomon Islands can demonstrate that harvest of giant clams is legal and sustainable.

- d) selection of species for Review of Significant Trade following CoP15. AC27 eliminated from the review all stocks with the exception of two species of coral exported from Fiji (*Plerogyra simplex* and *P. sinuosa*), which were both classified as being of 'possible concern'. This means that further information will be required from Fiji about the basis of their non-detriment findings for these species, and export quantities.
 - e) selection of species for Review of Significant Trade following CoP16. AC27 selected 18 taxa for review, including several corals in our region. Range states were advised to respond in a timely manner to requests from the Secretariat for information on these species.
 - f) discussions at the Sharks and Rays Working Group, which concentrated on the implementation of the listings that were due to come into effect on 14 September 2014. Among the recommendations from the working group were that identification materials being developed by a number of Parties and organisations should be made available on the Sharks Portal on the CITES website, and that MAs and SAs need to work closely with fisheries authorities within their country and region. Germany had provided a model NDF process that they had developed with IUCN/TRAFFIC and were planning to test this methodology with a number of examples from shark fisheries around the globe, including some from Oceania. Australia had given a brief summary from both Oceania regional workshops at the Working Group meeting, and plans were being hatched to run another regional NDF meeting on sharks and rays.
 - f) the establishment of a joint AC/PC intersessional Working Group on identification materials and the formats that can be used to assist CITES authorities and border officials to identify CITES species in international trade, given that the technologies that are available in parts of Oceania may not be as advanced as those in some other parts of the world.
 - g) the establishment of a joint AC/PC intersessional Working Group on capacity-building,
4. A copy of this report was also sent to representatives of 9 Oceania countries that are not members of CITES, and to several IGOs and NGOs working in the region.

Relevant CITES implementation issues in the region

5. 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) and there are concerns about the rapid depletion of stocks of some marine species such as oceanic whitetip shark, silky shark and many species of sea cucumber. There is considerable interest in the implementation of the new shark and ray listings in September 2014, and the challenges of providing NDFs for migratory species where little data exists because shark catches and exports have generally not been recorded to species level. Plans are underway to adopt a largely regional approach to NDFs and to improve data collection and monitoring. 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 ensuring the sustainable use and protection of species in the marine environment of the region.
6. Because the region has a very small human population in relation to area administered, and small sizes 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 environmental 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, and electronic communications to registered MAs and SAs is sometimes technically difficult. The recent listing of commercially important sharks and rays has raised the profile of CITES within many parties and regional organisations, and has seen a new level of cooperation between environmental and fisheries agencies within countries and across the region.

7. In some Oceania countries, suitable legislation supporting CITES is still not in place, and the roles and responsibilities of MAs and SAs have not been clearly defined, thereby making CITES implementation difficult.

Capacity-building activities and awareness campaigns

8. In March 2014, the Secretariat for the Pacific Community (SPC), assisted by the CITES Secretariat and Australia, ran an NDF workshop with staff from the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources in the Solomon Islands. The workshop focussed on the live and dead (curio) trade of corals from the Solomon Islands; the trading requirements of the main markets, the USA and EU; and, the consequences of not having robust NDFs in place, with discussion about the Review of Significant Trade process that has looked at the sustainability of exports of several other marine taxa in the region.
9. Australia has facilitated a successful bid to the Secretariat to obtain EU funding to assist Parties (and non-Parties) in Oceania to develop NDFs (or comparable documentation) for their CITES-listed stocks of sharks and rays. Dr. Colin Simpfendorfer (James Cook University, Queensland, Australia) has been contracted to:
 - a) summarise existing fisheries knowledge of CITES-listed sharks and rays;
 - b) summarise existing fisheries management and conservation measures;
 - c) run a capacity-building sharks NDF workshop in the region, using Australian and New Zealand NDFs as case studies;
 - d) bring this all together as a common, regional, NDF template that all Oceania Parties and non-Parties could choose to use, and
 - e) develop agreed protocols for the ongoing regional collection of data on CITES-listed sharks and rays, and identify responsibilities and capacity-building requirements for ongoing region-wide monitoring.
10. The CITES Secretariat is planning to hold a half-day session on “ illegal and unsustainable trade as a threat to species” as part of the 3-day, IUCN-led, “Pacific Islands Species Forum” in Fiji in July 2015. The day after the forum, a technical workshop is proposed to pick up issues raised at the forum but also to focus on individual countries' capacity availability, needs and challenges for Parties in implementing CITES, and for non-Parties in joining the Convention, and how various national/regional stakeholders can help implement CITES. I hope to report on these activities at the AC28 meeting.
11. Since 2009, New Zealand has funded and organised over a dozen CITES-related workshops in eight Pacific countries. While the New Zealand input to the CITES capacity-building programme in the Pacific has now wound down, both Australia and New Zealand still look for effective – but less resource-intensive ways – to support any requests for assistance from our Pacific colleagues. I would like to express sincere thanks to staff of the CITES Secretariat for all of the assistance they have provided to the workshop organisers during the past 6 years, because their input and expertise has been invaluable to this distant region.

Agenda items of particular interest in the Oceania region

12. The following items are of particular interest to the 8 Parties of Oceania:
 - a) Capacity building regarding NDFs.
 - b) Extinct species
 - c) Review of Significant Trade, especially regarding corals.
 - d) Conservation and management of sharks