

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

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

Interpretation and implementation of the Convention

Species trade and conservation

Reptile sourcing and traceability systems [Decision 16.103, paragraphs b) to d)]

PROJECT ON TRACEABILITY OF PYTHON SKINS

The attached information document has been submitted by Switzerland in relation to agenda item 14.2.\*

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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.*

## Project description: Linking information and physical flows through GS1 management processes and system

### Introduction

CITES Management Authority of Switzerland asked GS1 Switzerland to conduct a study about the feasibility of “Linking information and physical flows through GS1 management processes and system”. Partners intend to collaborate in supporting this survey with human and financial needs, and plan to sign a contract.

As a matter of fact, GS1 standards are the global language of business to identify, capture and share information about products of any kind. Most common use is the barcode on consumer goods. Worldwide traceability for food and pharmaceutical industries as well as healthcare, anti-counterfeiting systems for WCO (World Custom Organization) use GS1 standards. This may also be imposed by legal authorities (e.g. FDA requests use of GS1 standards for medical devices). GS1 is a not-for-profit organization with offices in 111 countries.

### Project

Named as “Transparency in the trade of endangered species to serve CITES mission”, the project aims to:

- Evaluate feasibility and efficiency of GS1 standards to enhance endangered species’ traceability and sustainability, focused on snake and/or alligator skins,
- Publish the results,
- Make a stress test of the result with the involved parties.

### GS1 Mission from CITES

CITES Management Authority of Switzerland is asking GS1 Switzerland to acquire Partners from the Luxury Goods Industry in order to collaboratively establish and proceed the project. The general Context of the Project is outlined in the Appendix “Context of the Project within CITES”.

#### 1. Scope

- analyze the entire Supply Chain, but field study and solutions will be limited to 1st tier (from wild or farm to tannery)
- Reptiles (focusing on Pythons and/or Alligators)

#### 2. Parties

- CITES Management Authority of Switzerland (Principal)
- CITES Secretariat (Advisor to the Principal)
- GS1 Switzerland (Consultant)
- Parties from the luxury goods industry using snake and/or alligator skins (Partners)

#### 3. Use of the Result

CITES Management Authority of Switzerland is committing to use the Result of the Project after success of the stress test with the involved parties as showcase, as Input to the Work of the Standing Committee Working Group on Snake trade for consideration. A recommendation about use of GS1 standards in reptile supply chain traceability will be issued later on by GS1 Switzerland.

CITES Management Authority of Switzerland is involved in the Project by a small amount of financial investment.

#### 4. Partner commitment

In order to launch the Project, industry partners are needed to cover most of the Project financial investment and supply furthermore human resources and contacts in the supply chain.

## Appendix: Context of the Project within CITES

### Project on track and trace of python skins (CITES Management Authority of Switzerland, GS1 Switzerland in collaboration with the CITES Secretariat and the Standing Committee Working Group on snake trade and conservation management)

The Conference of the Parties, at its 16th meeting (Bangkok, 2013) adopted Decisions related to the traceability of specimens of CITES-listed species. These Decisions, among others, included: 27 species of sturgeon and paddlefish (16.136 to 16.138 Sturgeons and paddlefish (*Acipenseriformes* spp.)), Queen Conch (16.141 to 16.148 Regional cooperation on the management of and trade in the queen conch (*Strombus gigas*)) and other marine species, timber (16.58 Physical inspection of timber shipments), ivory and other elephant specimens (16.78 to 16.83 Monitoring of illegal trade in ivory and other elephant specimens (*Elephantidae* spp.)), and reptile skins (decisions 16.102 to 16.108 Snake trade and conservation management (*Serpentes* spp.)).

In this context, a feasibility lessons learnt project on traceability of CITES-listed snakes may offer opportunities to develop recommendations or guidelines related to the implementation of a global track and trace system for python skins in international trade. For example, Decision 16.103 on Snake trade and conservation management directs the CITES Animals Committee to:

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;

b) examine the study undertaken by the UNCTAD Biotrade initiative's Working Group on reptile skin sourcing mentioned in Decision 16.102, paragraph c), and any other relevant available information concerning:

i) existing marking and tracing systems and, where relevant, accompanying certification schemes of all kinds (and not necessarily limited to those currently in use for trade in wild species), which could provide best practices that might be applicable to snakes;

ii) a traceability system to confirm the legal origin of snake skins; and

iii) the economic feasibility of current technologies to implement such a traceability and marking system;

c) advise the Standing Committee on the feasibility of implementing such a traceability system for snakes; and

d) report on the status of this work at the 65th and 66th meetings of the Standing Committee.

In their report (SC65 Doc. 44) to the Standing Committee (Geneva, 2014), the Secretariat and the Animals Committee noted that:

b) Concerning traceability, the Animals Committee suggested that the Standing Committee consider implementing a traceability system for snake skins comprising the following characteristics:

- For the formulation of relevant provisions, the Standing Committee may draw upon Resolution Conf.11.12 (Rev. CoP15) on Universal tagging system for the identification of crocodylian skins as a template;
- In particular, the traceability systems should commence as close to the point of harvest of the animal or production of the skin as possible. It should be made mandatory up to and including finished skins. Any use of the tagging information further on in the trade chain is optional; and
- The identification of skins should make use of devices that are tamper proof, affordable, uniquely serially numbered and contain the following minimum information: species, country of origin (where relevant regional code), year of harvest or production, unique serial number, source code. In addition, Parties are encouraged to add other information they deem necessary.

The Standing Committee endorsed the recommendations made in document SC65 Doc. 44:

- a) consider the present interim reports and recommendations from the Animals Committee and the Secretariat provided in accordance with Decisions 16.102 and 16.103 and, as appropriate, the results of the ITC study on trade in python skins in Asia, the UNCTAD Biotrade Initiative Working Group on reptile skin sourcing, and any other relevant available information;
- b) examine the study undertaken by the UNCTAD Biotrade Initiative Working Group on reptile skin sourcing, and any other relevant available information concerning:
  - i) the socio-economic implications of such a traceability system; and
  - ii) the potential costs of the system at all levels along the supply chain, from producers to consumers.

The project between CITES Management Authority of Switzerland and GS1 Switzerland on a possible system for the traceability of python skins is timely and would provide lessons learnt in efforts to develop similar traceability systems for other specimens of CITES-listed species.

That is, the project seeks to answer questions related to the governance, extent and elements of a CITES track and trace system. Or, alternatively, the project contributes to the development of a system able to trace the history, application or location of an entity by means of recorded identification (ISO 9001:2000)

The project will, among other activities:

- identify key users and customers of a CITES track and trace system;
- advise on the possibility of extending such a system as close to the point of harvest of the animal or production of the skin as possible;
- advise on possible and minimum categories of information, including, but not limited to, species, country of origin (where relevant regional code), year of harvest or production, unique serial number, source code;

- ensure that a track and trace system adheres to the CITES regulatory framework;
- advise on possible data and information exchange standards throughout the entire business chain;

advise on costs related to the implementation and use of such a system.

Additionally, the project might also advise on:

- reducing risk and increase CITES compliance;
- enhancing logistics management and quality control;
- a possible governance or administration, if needed, for such a system;
- documentation and records that show where all the products were distributed;
- reducing fraud;
- providing information to Parties, end users and the private sector;
- providing product authentication;
- greater visibility in the supply and business chain.

The project is being developed in collaboration with the CITES Secretariat and the Standing Committee Working Group on snake trade and conservation management.