

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



Twenty-ninth meeting of the Animals Committee  
Geneva (Switzerland), 18-22 July 2017

Species specific matters

Aquatic species

PRECIOUS CORALS  
(DECISION 17.192)  
(agenda item 22)

Membership (as decided by the Committee)

Co-Chairs: the representative of Asia (Mr. Giyanto) and the acting representative of Europe (Mr. Nemtsov);

Parties: European Union, Estonia, France, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Netherlands, Spain, Tanzania, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland\* and United States of America; and

IGOs and NGOs: Conservation Force, EIA, FAO, Natural Resources Defense Council\*, Sea Save Foundation, SWAN International\*, TRAFFIC, and WWF\*.

Mandate

Taking into account the information provided in document AC29 Doc.22 and its annexes, as well as discussions in plenary and any additional information, the working group shall:

- a) analyse the outcomes of the precious corals survey, and the information provided by range States and Regional Fisheries Management Organizations;
- b) Taking into account the outcomes of paragraph a), if necessary, identify other issues to be covered by the study by species experts called for in Decision 17.191, the results of which are to be considered in AC30; and
- c) Define the Terms of Reference for an intersessional working group on corals, which will facilitate the analysis of the study referred to in Decision 17.191 and the formulation of recommendations for consideration at AC30.

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\* *was not present at WG meeting at AC 29.*

## General comments from WG

- The Secretariat should call for additional responses from important coral trade import and exporting Parties and other relevant Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) which did not respond and distribute these and RFMO responses to the WG.
  - The Secretariat, in cooperation with Parties and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), should identify more experts, including from the coral industry, and invite them to join the intersessional WG.
1. Summary of questionnaires in AC 29 Doc. 22 Annex and AC 29 Doc. Inf 24.

Based on AC 29 Doc. Inf. 24, the WG discussed the results in 8 themes:

### **A. General Info and Population Status**

- i) Black corals (Order Antipatharia) are semi-precious with different biology and trade patterns from red and pink corals (referred to as precious corals), so they need to be looked at separately and not lumped together.
- ii) It is difficult to monitor populations in the wild. Therefore, Parties often use landing data and trade activities (permits) as proxy for actual population studies.
- iii) There is a need to do a desktop study on research available on conservation status and research of species/populations. Major trading parties should be invited to provide non-detriment findings (NDF) and/or domestic studies on conservation status of these corals.
- iv) There is a lack of research of stocks and of a comprehensive picture of collection from the wild.
- v) The issue is complex. It is not always clear which are the range states for each species, and there are differences between deep and shallow water populations.

### **B. Legislation and Regulatory Framework**

- i) There is a need to make a distinction between regulations and laws for domestic vs. international. Some Parties have hierarchical legislation (eg. Regional Economic Integration Organizations, Federal, State, etc.).
- ii) Regulation of use: Domestic use vs. international use.
- iii) In some countries, Appendix III listed species are sometimes regulated differently from Appendix I or II listed species, or not at all.
- iv) Need to look at also the category of a country's legislation in CITES National Legislation Project.
- v) Overseas territories are an issue as laws can differ from the parent state, and needs to be taken into account when analysing trade data such as annual reports.
- vi) There is no need for deep study of this issue but rather just of the major trade countries and gaps in legislation/ regulatory frameworks.

### **C. Management Framework**

- i) The responses dealt with legislation and not real management of the species and harvest.
- ii) States and overseas territories often have different laws and management schemes.
- iii) Not allowing harvest is also a form of management.
- iv) Need to look at countries with large volumes of collection from the wild, and see if there are adequate management measures in place.

#### **D. International Trade**

- i) Survey gave partial information but the global picture is incomplete about actual volume of trade and species and pathways.
- ii) Trade in non-CITES listed species are not recorded in the CITES Trade Database making it difficult to acquire data on trade in non-listed species.
- iii) Some Parties do not issue import permits for Appendix II and Appendix III species.
- iv) There is no doubt that IUU (Illegal, unregulated and unreported) collection from the wild occurs, but it will be difficult for the consultant to acquire these data.

#### **E. Enforcement**

- i) Most countries responded that there is little illegal harvest. Is this the case globally?
- ii) EU has data on illegal imports.
- iii) Domestic vs. international enforcement can differ.

#### **F. Research**

- i) See listing proposals from previous meetings of the Conference of the Parties (CoP) which contain a lot of useful information.
- ii) Study should look for research gaps and not necessarily summarize all known data on these species.
- iii) Need to consult with researchers of these species; most coral research is on reef-building corals.

#### **G. Role of RFMO (Regional Fisheries Management Organizations)**

- i) Synergies and common issues between RFMOs and CITES is relevant with regards to many marine species and needs to be taken into account.
- ii) RFMOs can produce guidelines and recommendations for collection and management of species at a regional level, but these are not always legally binding.
- iii) Cooperation with RFMOs such as GFCM (General Fisheries Commission of the Mediterranean), is very important at the level of the European Union.
- iv) GFCM deals with Mediterranean coral species but not black corals.

#### **H. Mariculture**

- i) The survey reported no current commercial mariculture.
- ii) There is a need to try to find if there is there any commercial mariculture at all of these species?
- iii) There could be future technologies, such as synthetic biology.

2. Identify other issues to be covered by the study by species experts called for in Decision 17.191.

- a) In consideration of the expected timeline, the study needs to look at main issues and not get bogged down in too many details.
- b) It must deal with black corals separately from red/pink corals.
- c) The main questions should be: Is the international trade sustainable, and are there populations / species whose conservation status is affected by trade?

- d) The study will need to find actual volume of trade and species and pathways.
- e) There is a need to discuss effectiveness of legislation and management measures, not just provide a list of legislation.
- f) It should take into account trade from stockpiles that are very old, since this can be trade that does not affect wild populations directly.
- g) We need to avoid repetition in the study, for example, GFCM has report of red corals in the Mediterranean and TRAFFIC is preparing a soon-to-be-released report on corals in the Indo-Pacific.

3. TOR for an inter-sessional working group

- a) To analyse the study commissioned in response to Decision 17.191 and to formulate recommendations for consideration at the 30th meeting of the Animals Committee.
- b) To analyse the outcomes of the study and prepare recommendations on actions to enhance the conservation and sustainable harvest.
- c) Review other relevant issues, such as identification of corals and coral products in trade issues.
- d) Think about potential future enforcement issues such as synthetic corals.