


CITES Scientific Authority

**C/O NATIONAL ENVIRONMENT & PLANNING AGENCY
CONSERVATION AND PROTECTION SUB - DIVISION**

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Ref # 22/9

30 April 2018

Secretary General
 Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species
 of Wild Fauna and Flora
 International Environment House
 Chemin des Anemones
 1219 Chatelaine, Geneva, Switzerland

Dear Sir/Madam

**Re: Document AC Doc. 26 on Species Specific Matters, Aquatic Species-Queen Conch
*(Strombus gigas)***

The document AC 29 Doc. 26 on Species Specific Matters, Aquatic Species – Queen Conch (*Strombus gigas*) prepared by the Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and tabled at the 29th meeting of the Animals Committee, Geneva (Switzerland) 18-21 July 2017 was discussed by Jamaica's Scientific Authority and a copy provided to the Fisheries Division, Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries. The Scientific Authority reviewed the decision of the Animals Committee meeting and has subsequently prepared a formal document with comments for submission to the CITES Secretariat for submission to the Regional representative and Chairman of the Queen Conch Management Working Group of the Animals Committee.

Please find enclosed a copy of the document captioned "Scientific Authority of Jamaica – Comments on CITES Document AC29 Doc. 26".

Yours sincerely
Scientific Authority



EF/ys

Copy: Dr. Maurice Isaacs, Regional Representative Standing Committee
 Sr. José Alberto Álvarez, Regional Representative Animals Committee

Attachment:

SCIENTIFIC AUTHORITY OF JAMAICA

COMMENTS ON CITES DOCUMENT AC29 DOC.26

Introduction

Jamaica's Scientific Authority having reviewed the document (AC29 Doc 26) from the Twenty-ninth meeting of the Animals Committee, Geneva (Switzerland), 18-21 July 2017, prepared by the Secretariat, wishes to make the following comments as listed below.

- 1) **Decision 17. 288** tasks the Animals Committee with reviewing "the process of setting Scientific Quotas for queen conch in particular where scientific quotas make up a large portion of the overall export quota". It should be noted that this item is itself largely the result of the Jamaican delegation to COP17 in Johannesburg raising the problem of certain countries having scientific quotas as large as, or larger than national commercial quotas in the Plenary, September 2016. Jamaica's Director of Fisheries, Mr. Andre Kong had discovered this unusual situation during earlier discussions with Honduran queen conch fishery authorities.
- 2) **Table 1 (AC29 Doc.26)** shows another example of the highly unusual situation whereby Nicaragua has large "scientific quotas" for queen conch which we suggest could be really commercial quantities of queen conch. Nicaragua could thus be confusing "scientific conch" with commercial conch.
- 3) **Item 10** of the document states that Honduras is using the export of 210 tons of queen conch meat in order to cover the costs of scientific studies. This is unusual and should not be used as a model for other Queen Conch exporting countries to follow as it can be used as a cover to simply increase catch exports, possibly to detrimental levels of harvesting. Scientific studies should be funded by the agencies conducting such research and not by the proceeds from the conch sales (See also Comment #7 below).
- 4) Honduras has accepted a number of conditions imposed on it, one of which is that there is now a moratorium on their commercial queen conch fishery. This would suggest that no Honduran vessel should be found fishing queen conch and, in particular, in Jamaican waters e.g. Pedro Bank during the 2017 Jamaican conch fishing season, and further, any Honduran vessel found with conch on board would therefore be illegally fishing for same.
- 5) It is important that the Animals Committee reviews the scientific quota determination process and develop some guidelines as to what a scientific quota should be' as can be seen in 9.(f) where, for Honduras, it should not exceed 20% of the commercial export quota. The Scientific Authority is in support of this level as "scientific (export) quota" as a first attempt.
- 6) Jamaica wishes to enquire as to whether the countries using "scientific quotas" have accounted for the proceeds from these exports. For example Honduras, as stated in #9 of AC29 Doc. 26, the Review of Significant Trade (RST) of Honduran conch was concluded in 2006 as detailed in AC22 Inf. 4 . In the latter, Honduras was committed to, *inter alia*, "provide periodic reports to the CITES

Secretariat on progress with the queen conch research plan" (attached p.7, no. 26.j.). Also, Item #10 of AC29 Doc 26 states that Honduras had "an export quota of 210 tons of queen conch meat per year from 2006 to 2015, reflecting scientific catch obtained in monitoring and stock assessment cruises" (and referred to as a "scientific quota"). Jamaica wishes to enquire therefore, has Honduras presented the results of their research and analysis on the status of the queen conch populations, as required in AC22 Inf. 4 to CITES?

This query applies also to Nicaragua which has been using scientific quotas and therefore we wish to enquire if Nicaragua has accounted for proceeds from its scientific quotas over the years? As the purpose of the Scientific Quota was to enable monitoring and assessment of stock, there should be sufficient results by now to enable a decision to be made on the future of the conch fisheries in these countries. If no provisions for an updated evaluation of the situation in Honduras and Nicaragua were made when the RST was concluded in 2006, it could be suggested that the Animal Committee assess whether a final review is required now. This could include an assessment on the need for future 'scientific quotas' for the two countries. It is noted in AC29 Doc. 26 #10 that Honduras did not submit a Scientific Quota in 2016, so the country may have already ceased such activity.

7) Lastly, Jamaica would like to know whether "scientific quotas" are in use for any other CITES species. If not, why are they still in use for queen conch, long after the completion of the RST? Regardless of the purpose of profits from wildlife exports, any harvest and export of Appendix II species should be subject to a Non Detriment Finding (as noted in AC29 Doc. 26 #11).

CITES Scientific Authority of Jamaica