

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



Thirtieth meeting of the Animals Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 16-21 July 2018

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: nine (Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu).

Although they do not show up on the CITES world map, the Oceania region still has a large proportion (47%) and number (8) of non-members to CITES: Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Tokelau, 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 (e.g. American Samoa, Pitcairn Island) do come under the CITES umbrella through membership of their parent states.

Communication with Parties in the region since AC 29 (Geneva, July 2017)

3. Following AC29, Dr Robertson sent a report to member Parties outlining the key outcomes affecting Oceania. This report concentrated on:
 - The first application of the streamlined **Evaluation of the Review of Significant Trade (RST)** mechanism – no Oceania species were included – and the forthcoming exploration of the benefits and disadvantages of country-wide significant trade reviews.
 - The first application of **RST for captive-bred and ranched specimens** and the inclusion of the species/country combination of giant clam *Tridacna crocea*/ Federated States of Micronesia in the review process.

* *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.*

- The outcomes from the **Sharks and Rays** working group meeting; especially the implementation issues arising listings at CoP16 and CoP17. Problems of identification of fresh shark fins has largely been solved through the FAO's iSharkfin guide and other identification guides published by PEW and others. Further developments regarding identification of dried fins and processed fins is underway and being tested at workshops around the globe, such as at our **Fiji** workshop in May 2017 (see paragraph 10). Development of rapid DNA techniques are underway, but identification is always going to be easiest starting with fresh fins, meat or other commodities at point of capture/ landing/ processing. Australia was thanked for making its sharks NDFs available on the CITES website (in the Sharks and Rays portal). Going forward the AC recognised that little was known of the use and trade of shark and ray meat and other products (cartilage, skin, oil), and that there were likely to be problems with the traceability of these products, especially when they are combined with similar products of non-CITES listed species, such as in shark liver oils, or in fish meal
 - The **Sharks and Rays** Working Group considered documents and oral submissions by 23 Parties (including Australia, Fiji and New Zealand) in response to CITES Notification 2015/027. The working group made recommendations on the making of and publication of NDFs; ongoing collaboration with FAO, CMS and Regional Fisheries Bodies; on identification and traceability issues, including expanding the FAO's iSharkFin identification tool to dried and skinned fins, and sharing knowledge on DNA testing of shark products; on development of better methods to reduce bycatch and improve the survival chances of released sharks; and on provision of new information to be considered at AC29.
 - Of the species examined as part of the **Periodic Review of the Appendices** process, four marsupials and two bristlebirds from Australia were the only candidates from the Oceania region.
 - In corridor discussions with importing Parties about the legality and sustainability of exports of some **butterflies and corals** from Parties in our region.
4. A copy of this report was also sent to representatives of nine Oceania countries that were not at that time members of CITES, and to several IGOs and NGOs working in the region.
 5. CITES officials from Australia and New Zealand have started to hold bi-monthly phone meetings to address common implementation issues.
 6. Oceania Parties were encouraged to respond to Notification 2018/041 on sharks and rays, and to respond to the request from the European Commission for information on three Indo-Pacific species of sea cucumbers/ bêche-de-mer of the genus *Holothuria*.

Relevant CITES implementation issues in the region

7. 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 Australia and Fiji) and there are concerns about the rapid depletion of stocks of some marine species such as sharks and rays, *Nautilus* species, and the many species of sea cucumber, especially of the genus *Holothuria*. 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.

There has been considerable interest in the region in the implementation of the shark and ray listings that came into force following CoP16 and CoP17, 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. Many Oceania parties plan to use a generic regional template to do their NDFs for sharks and ray, with some fields already populated with biological and regional information, with country-specific data to be entered into remaining fields.

8. 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, if not impossible. The recent listing of commercially important sharks and rays has raised the profile of CITES within many parties and regional organisations; it has also led to improved cooperation between environmental, fisheries and police/customs agencies within countries and across the region.

9. 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

10. With funding from the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and with assistance from the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and Pew Charitable Trusts, the Fijian and New Zealand governments jointly organised a regional CITES capacity-building workshop in Fiji from 22-26 May 2017. The workshop covered a broad range of implementation topics, but had a special focus on the prevention of illegal wildlife trade. Over 60 participants came from all 17 countries in the region, as well as CITES officials from New Caledonia and the United States. CITES or law enforcement experts from the Secretariat, Interpol, Oceania Customs Organisation and NZ Ministry for Primary Industries participated. There was a good mix of Management Authority, Scientific Authority and Enforcement officials and so plenary sessions were mixed with sessions where each of the three pillars of CITES met alone or jointly with each of the other pillars to continue capacity-building and to discuss issues of mutual concern.
11. The Samoan Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment held a national enforcement workshop, on 27 and 28 February 2018, that highlighted the amended Marine Wildlife Protection Regulation 2018 which provides stronger conservation and management measures for sharks and rays. The meeting involved various government, non-government organizations and community representatives.
12. The Government of Samoa, with support from the Pew Charitable Trusts, Paul G. Allen Philanthropies, Global FinPrint Project and SPREP, hosted a Pacific Ministerial Shark Symposium on 1 and 2 March 2018. The meeting was attended by 10 Pacific countries in support of the Blue Pacific concept adopted at the Pacific Islands Forum in 2017. The Ministerial Declaration from the meeting included: a call prohibiting the import and export of shark products, increased collaboration and information sharing to ensure strict compliance with conservation measures, encouragement for the creation of further shark sanctuaries, development of measures to reduce lethal by-catch, development of best practice standards for ecotourism, and encouragement to be more active in the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission.
13. The Fijian Ministry of Environment, in partnership with SPREP and Pew Charitable Trusts, held a national workshop in Suva on 27 and 28 March 2018. This brought together various government and non-government officials, community conservation officers and academic institutions to strengthen the collaboration and implementation of CITES across the various sectors. Participants discussed challenges, successes and lessons learnt, and also did a practical training session on the identification of CITES-listed shark species.
14. CITES staff from the Solomon Islands attended a 1 to 4 May 2018 training workshop in Bogor, Indonesia, on the application of new CITES guidance on trade in captive-raised animals. This workshop was the first of a series targeting major trading regions of captive-raised animals, and in this instance the workshop concentrated on the captive snake trade.
15. Since 2010, New Zealand and Australia have funded and/or organised over a dozen CITES-related workshops in eight Pacific countries. As the largest Parties in the region, both Australia and New Zealand are still looking for effective ways to support requests for assistance from our Pacific colleagues. We appreciate the increasing input from colleagues in the SPREP (South Pacific Regional Environment Programme) who were particularly active in supporting delegates from small island nations in the lead-up to and at CoP17. I would also 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 8 years that I have been Oceania representative on the AC, because their input and expertise has been invaluable to this distant region.

Agenda items of particular interest in the Oceania region

16. The following items are of particular interest to the nine Parties of Oceania:

- Sharks & Rays
- Periodic Review of the Appendices
- European Commission work on sea cucumbers of the genus *Holothuria*
- Appendix III listings
- Eels
- Precious corals
- Nomenclature – identification of CITES-listed corals in trade
- Capacity building and identification materials