



ANNEX 1



Photo: Kathy WILLIAMS

OPENING SPEECHES





**Welcome speech by Northern Territory Deputy Chief Minister
and Minister for Parks and Wildlife, Mr Mike Reed**

Recognition of presence of dignitaries:

- Chair of the Plants Committee, Prof. Dr. Margarita Clemente Muñoz
- Dr Jim Armstrong, Deputy Secretary General, CITES
- Dr Ger van Vliet, Acting Head of Scientific Co-ordination Unit, CITES
- Representatives of the CITES Secretariat
- Regional representatives of the Plants Committee
- Delegates representing parties to the Convention
- Delegates representing Non-Government Organisations

To all of you here today, welcome to Darwin, the Northern Territory and Australia – It is a city, Territory and nation that we are very proud of and keen to show off to you all.

I believe you will have the opportunity to explore some aspects of Darwin and its surrounds during the coming week and I expect you will find interest in what you see and experience here.

I'd just like to say that it is apt that you are meeting here in Darwin, a city with the name of one of the world's greatest scientists and naturalist, Charles Darwin – a man whom you all no doubt hold in great regard.



Photo: Victoria ZENTILLI

In 1839, Captain John Wickham and Captain John Lort Stokes sailed into Darwin Harbour aboard the HMS Beagle. They were the first British sailors to discover Port Darwin. Captain Wickham named the harbour after Charles Darwin who had been a former colleague on board the Beagle during the historic voyage when Darwin began formulating his theory of evolution.

Charles Darwin's connection to our city is recognised in one of the Territory's newest national parks. Only a couple of kilometres from where we are now, and inside the city's boundaries lies Charles Darwin National Park which the NT Government opened to the public last year. This park protects a considerable expanse of mangroves and other habitats on the edge of Darwin Harbour and also provides magnificent views over the harbour and our city. You may like to take the opportunity to visit there during your stay with us.

Another very good reason for you to be meeting in Darwin is the fact that, as you will know, one of your colleagues, Dr Greg Leach of the NT Parks and Wildlife Commission, is based in Darwin and is the Oceania region's representative on this Plants Committee.

Dr Leach's standing in the botanical world is acknowledged and we are extremely proud that a Territorian is a representative on such an important body.

The discussions that you will be having here are particularly relevant to the Northern Territory. This is the only place in Australia that a State or Territory Government has formally approved sustainable use as a valid conservation strategy – clearly indicating that the NT is taking a leading role in conservation within Australia.



This came about largely as a result of our practical experiences in a now well known sustainable use program involving the crocodiles of the Northern Territory.

While these animals were hunted to near extinction here, this hunting was banned in the 1970s. The population has recovered to the stage where we now have about 70,000 saltwater crocodiles in the Territory – a healthy population and the envy of many other countries around the world.

This recovery in numbers has been assisted not only by the ban on hunting but also by the Northern Territory's Crocodile Management Program which was introduced in 1986 following the easing of national and international controls over the trade in Australian crocodile skins.

The program involved facilitating the farming of crocodiles for their skin and meat and thereby creating an industry which provides employment and income for Territorians. The scheme relies on the wild resource for the collection of crocodile eggs in a controlled and measured manner to supply animals for crocodile farms. Through having this reliance on the wild population, the crocodile farming industry has a strong incentive to nurture it. Without a healthy wild population there is no 'raw material' for the industry and the industry would cease to exist.

As a result we have a healthy wild population, and the crocodile has become a valuable asset worth sustaining not only for the skin and meat industry which puts wages in the pockets of Territorians - increasingly so for Aboriginal people who are breaking into the industry - but also for its obvious tourism advantages. The Northern Territory is 'crocodile country' and marketed as such to the tourism industry.

In effect, it was realised that we can have our cake and eat it too.

It is a case of recognising the stark reality - although a frustrating fact for some - that many people rarely look after something unless it has a value to them, usually monetary value.

By accepting this reality, the Northern Territory Government seeks to use it to create not only a healthy economic environment, but also a sustained natural environment. As a mechanism to achieve this, the Northern Territory Government has officially adopted a Strategy for Conservation through the Sustainable Use of Wildlife.

I believe copies of this Strategy are available in the foyer for those who are interested in taking one home to read.

In this Strategy, the Territory recognises that while many habitats are protected in parks and reserves, the vast majority of the Territory's land lies outside of parks and reserves.

Sustainable Use therefore aims to protect wildlife on private lands in support of those populations already protected in parks and reserves. It does this by placing a commercial value on wild species and allowing controlled access to these resources by the landholders and thus gives people a reason and incentive to protect and conserve the species in its natural habitat.

The Territory intends to explore the opportunity for managing several wildlife species under the Sustainable Use Strategy and one that already has a Management Program in place, and will be of most interest to people in attendance at this conference, is for Cycads.

Many of these appealing plants are endemic to the Northern Territory and they are in demand from enthusiasts, the landscaping trade, and from the ornamental leaf trade due to the attractive shape and long shelf-life of Cycad fronds.

By promoting public awareness of cycads and allowing for legal collection from the wild to help meet demand with minimal impact on wild populations, the Management Program is aimed at thwarting the uncontrolled removal of plants and seed which has decimated some small populations of cycads in other parts of the world.



Through this Program, it is in the landowner's interest to nurture the habitat in which the plants live as they stand to gain financially from the existence of Cycads on their property. To do so enhances the landowners diversity of income and provides Cycads with a more secure foothold in an environment where they might otherwise have been replaced by pasture or allowed to diminish through other disturbances.

I believe some of the display material outside in the foyer provides further information on the Cycad Management Program so people wanting to study this one further might wish to refer to this material a little later on. You will also find copies of the Management Program for you to take away if you wish.

And later on in the week you'll get the opportunity to see cycads growing in all their glory in places like Litchfield National Park, the Darwin Botanic Gardens, and the Territory Wildlife Park – some of many parks and reserves managed by the Parks and Wildlife Commission.

We are pleased to have you here and recognise the importance of your deliberations this week. Unless the products of responsible sustainable use programs have access to all available markets then such programs will fail and conservation will suffer for it. While it is relatively easy to ban trade, experience has shown that it is almost impossible to enforce such bans.

And putting in place acceptable trading mechanisms that stimulate conservation of species through the application of sustainable use programs requires a high degree of knowledge about wild natural resources, economics, sociology and politics.

At present I would suggest that the public will be aware of the more contentious CITES issues such as the ivory debate but know little of the effort required from people such as yourselves that goes into achieving the conservation of plants. But such efforts are great and, as in so many other things, it is the patient work behind the scenes of experts such as yourselves that will show the greatest results. I offer my acknowledgement of your work and wish you successful deliberations this week.

Just as importantly though, enjoy your week. The discussion, debate and camaraderie between people of like interests is likely to be enjoyable on its own, but I do hope you take the advantage to see a bit of our great outdoors and enjoy what the Northern Territory has to offer with its glorious weather and almost festival attitude at this time of year.

And just before I hand back to the Master of Ceremonies, the Northern Territory Government is pleased to offer you a gift – which I believe will be handed to each of you as you go out for morning tea – a tie for the men, and a scarf for the women. Please accept this as a token of the warm welcome the Northern Territory Government extends to you all – and may it become a happy reminder, when you return home, of a pleasurable stay in the Northern Territory.

If Professor Dr Clemente Muñoz, your Chair, would just like to step forward to accept this special gift from the Northern Territory Government – once again something to remember this significant visit to our part of the world.

Thank you and welcome to Darwin.





**Opening speech by Prof. Dr. Margarita Clemente Muñoz,
Chairman of the Plants Committee**

Dr. Reed, Deputy Chief Minister and Minister
for Parks and Wildlife;
Dr. Freeland – Director of the Parks and Wildlife
Commission;
Dr. Armstrong and Dr. Van Vliet – CITES
Secretariat;
Distinguished Authorities
Representatives of the Plants Committee
Observers from the Parties and from Non
Governmental Organizations
Ladies and Gentlemen attending this Opening
Ceremony

It is an honor and pleasure for me, as Chairman of
the Plants Committee, to welcome you all at this
opening ceremony of our ninth meeting.

For the first time, after eight meetings, the Plants
Committee is able to meet in Australia and this is
a source of great satisfaction for all of us. On
behalf of all of us, I want to express our deepest
gratitude to the Australian Authorities, the Ministry of Parks and Wildlife and the Parks and Wildlife
Commission for their kind invitation to hold this meeting in the incomparable setting that is this city of Darwin.
In particular, I want to mention my profound appreciation to Dr. Greg Leach, the Oceania Representative to the
Plants Committee, for responding immediately and enthusiastically to my request by taking all the necessary
steps to make it possible that we all have this wonderful opportunity to meet here in Darwin for the first time.
I also want to thank his team for the splendid job they have done preparing and organizing this meeting. I also
want to thank Australian CITES Authorities for their economic contributions that have made this meeting a
possibility.

Present here today at this meeting are observers from 25 Parties and from 14 non governmental organizations.
In total, there are 72 participants from 28 countries here today and I want to thank everyone for their attendance
and contributions to this meeting. I want to give a special welcome to the French-speaking participants that
have joined the Plants Committee for the first time, undoubtedly encouraged due to the possibility to participate
in French. At the last three Plants Committee meetings, we have all observed the number of participants from
Spanish-speaking countries increase considerably due to the fact that the host countries (Spain, Costa Rica and
Chile) offered simultaneous interpretation. We hope that the same will happen with the French-speaking
countries since the meetings will be translated into the three official convention languages from now on.

Australia is a continent that is well known for its rich and exclusive natural resources and especially for the
country's wonderful management of these resources. Australia is equally well known for the kindness and
hospitality of its citizens, who, in a natural and spontaneous way, make one feel right at home. The first time
that I visited this beautiful country, besides the very favorable impression that I received of a vigorous and
hard-working country with a natural beauty I hadn't imagined, what impressed me most of all was the open and
welcoming spirit of the Australian people. For all these reasons, I am sure that this ninth meeting is going to be
a complete success thanks both to the human and natural environment that surrounds us.

The Plants Committee has been working very well and non-stop and has achieved some very significant
accomplishments for CITES. All one has to do is take a look at the regional reports and other documents that
will be discussed at this meeting to see that we have really taken off. The process of significant trade, the



Photo: Victoria ZENTILLI



revision of the regional appendices, the plant identification manual, the more and more frequent training courses that are constantly improving, the Master course on Management, Conservation and Control of species subject to international trade and the projects of cooperation among the Parties are a few examples of the productivity, efficiency and the know-how of this Plants Committee.

Undoubtedly all of this is due to the ever increasing efforts that are being made by the Representatives and to the extremely valuable contributions and studies presented by the observers from the Parties and by the non-governmental organizations for debate at our meetings. For all these reasons, we cannot stop and rest on our laurels here because we have new challenges before us prior to the 11th Conference of the Parties. Amongst these new challenges, several should be mentioned due to their importance for CITES in the next millenium: the Convention's Strategic Plan and the Plants Committee's Action Plan and the revision of the criteria for the inclusion of plants species in the CITES appendices.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we have before us an enormous task, but I know very well that I can count on all of you and that you will never let down the hopes that have been set on this Plants Committee. For all of these reasons, I feel very proud and honored to act as your spokesperson. It is necessary that our work keeps improving and that we work in a way that is more and more scientific, professional and independent in order to fulfill our responsibilities as the scientific and technical advisors for the Conference of the Parties.

In order to accomplish all of these tasks that I have laid out before us for this meeting, as always, we can count on the invaluable assistance of the CITES Secretariat. We all thank Dr. Van Vliet and Ms. Zentilli for all of the troubles they have gone to preparing the documents and organizing the meeting so that everything can run smoothly. I also want to welcome the Deputy Secretary General of the CITES Secretariat to this meeting and who will surely be of great service to us during some of our discussions.

We are at the gateway into a new century and the Convention needs a rejuvenating push. Beyond the shadow of a doubt, the new General Secretary, Mr. Willem Wijnstekers, is one of the most capable people I know for helping us gain momentum via the application of a Strategic Plan in the near future. He is very hard-working, intelligent and he has a completely thorough understanding of the Convention and all of us who work with CITES are very fortunate that he has taken over this post. We all send Mr. Wijnstekers our best wishes from the Plants Committee.

Not all is good news. We all remember Mrs. Cynthia Giddy, Chairman of the Cycadaceae Specialists Group, who collaborated with us at so many meetings. She has tragically passed away, but her memory will remain with us always.

When I became Chairman of the Plants Committee at the meeting held in Costa Rica in November of 1996, I paraphrased a great Spanish poet, Antonio Machado, by saying, "*There is no path. One makes one's path while walking*" And I encouraged us to walk together and pave our own path. Thanks to your level of commitment, your efforts and to the co-operation between all of you, I am proud to be able to say that during these last two and a half years, we have gone on quite some walk together, we have paved a good stretch of new pathways and we have built highways that are taking this Plants Committee, and the importance and considerations of the plant world of CITES to some new destinations of great relevance in this Convention. Thank you very much for everything and for your kind attention.