



ANNEX 1



Photo: Ger van Vliet

Mammillaria spp.

OPENING SPEECHES



Mrs G.H. Faber
State Secretary for Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries

First I bid you all a warm welcome on behalf of the Dutch government. You are the guests of one of the major trading nations in the field of flowers and plants. That will no doubt have been obvious during your visit to the Floriade yesterday. And you will see further evidence on Wednesday on the trip to the Aalsmeer flower auction. No less than 60 per cent of world trade in flowers and plants passes through the Netherlands. - Not only flowers and plants originating in the Netherlands, but also from distant countries like Kenya and Ecuador. The Dutch trade places orders throughout the world and demands rapid delivery. We are mainly concerned with the trade in cultivated plants. Some of these cultivated plants are of species, which are endangered in the wild. It is the international trade in these species which the CITES convention addresses.

Trade in cultivated specimens takes some of the pressure off the wild populations. Thus it is a matter of protecting the species in the wild: preserving biodiversity. For that reason the Netherlands attaches much importance to proper and efficient implementation of CITES and to the work of your committee.

The rich variety of species is coming under heavy pressure throughout the world. We can only counter this negative trend by entering into agreements at international level. The Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna plays an extremely important role here. With 158 participating countries it is the global legal framework for this trade. CITES also has the great advantage of provisions which can be both verified and enforced. CITES is not a collection of vague declarations of intent - it contains very concrete rules. Rules which make it possible to actually direct and control the trade in endangered species of flora and fauna. I am thinking here about the licensing system, for example, which sets strict rules for the issuing of licences. The customs authorities can carry out careful checks to determine whether the licences are in order.

I am very pleased that plants have now been given their proper place within CITES, particularly since it has nothing to do with their endearing qualities. Generally speaking animals - from magnificent elephants to loveable little monkeys have greater appeal than plants. However, from the point of view of maintaining biodiversity the preservation of plant species is also of paramount importance. The specific plants officer at the CITES secretariat played a significant role in ensuring that endangered plant species were given full recognition within CITES. This was supported by the Netherlands. I am convinced that in the years ahead plants will continue to receive urgent attention within the scientific unit of the Secretariat. The Plants Committee has a key role to play. The scientific input you deliver is indispensable for the proper functioning of the CITES convention.

I believe that CITES can also play an important supporting role in the protection of forests, since CITES also relates to the trade in different types of trees and timbers. I have also supported the work of your committee on this point. UNEP-WCMC has drawn up a report on the 'evaluation of tree species using the new CITES listing criteria'. I understand that you will be devoting time to this topic this week. The issue is whether certain types of trees or timbers meet the CITES criteria. I look forward with interest to your recommendations on this point - Not least against the background of the Sixth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity which I had the honour of chairing last month in The Hague. There too, there was considerable debate about forests, and particularly about the management of forests. A new working programme for forests has been established by all countries, based on the CBD principles of preservation, sustainable use and fair distribution of the benefits. Again it has been stipulated that the countries themselves are responsible of the elaboration of the working programme.

Illegal logging is a serious threat to forests and so to biodiversity. It also threatens timber production in the long term. Illegal logging results in an uncontrolled loss of natural resources. Sooner or later that has repercussions for the economy of a country. Here too there are benefits to be gained from cooperation between CBD and CITES. And CITES can provide a useful instrument for regulating trade, particularly for commercial species. The trade in caviar is a familiar example.



Your committee has a long agenda to deal with this week. A final preparation en route to CoP12 in Chile. Plants have been given full recognition within CITES. Your committee can help to ensure that CITES itself receives the more prominent place it deserves in decision-making about maintaining global biodiversity. I wish you every success for the coming week.



**Prof. Dr Margarita Clemente Muñoz,
Chairman of the Plants Committee and representative of Europe**

His Excellency, Rector Magnificus of the University of Leiden, Prof. Dr. Breimer
Her Excellency, the Secretary of State for Nature Management, Mrs. Faber
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, Representatives of the Plants Committee
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, Observers from Party Countries and from Intergovernmental and
Non-Governmental Organizations
Distinguished Members of the CITES Secretariat
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, present at this opening ceremony:

For me it is an honour and a great pleasure to address you all as Chairman of the Plants Committee at this opening ceremony our twelfth meeting, and to welcome you.

In the first place, on behalf of the Plants Committee, I would like to express our deepest gratitude to the Authorities of the Netherlands for this marvellous invitation to hold our meeting in the incomparable setting of the town of Leiden. We are also privileged to be at one of the most emblematic institutions, not only of the Netherlands but of all Europe: the University of Leiden, well known for the quality of its teaching and the prestige of its researchers.

I would like to mention and deeply thank the representative of Europe on the Plants Committee, our good friend Mr Jan de Koning, him and all of his team at the Botanic Garden, and our dear Chris Schürmann, for the splendid work they have done in preparing and organizing this meeting.

I also wish to thank the observer-delegates from the Parties and Intergovernmental and Non-Governmental Organizations for their presence at this meeting. I shall thank them all for their valuable contributions to our deliberations.

The Netherlands is a country that is well known for the laborious, enterprising and open spirit of its inhabitants. It is the cradle of philosophers and thinkers such as Erasmus of Rotterdam and Baruch Spinoza, mathematicians and astronomers like Christian Huygens, grand masters of art such as Rembrandt or Van Gogh.... And I shall refrain from mentioning more, as the list would be endless. In short, the Netherlands has been the cradle of men and women renowned worldwide for their contributions to the advancement of knowledge and culture.

Furthermore, in the Netherlands we are surrounded by one of the country's most characteristic signs of identity: its excellent horticultural industry and vigorous trade in plants obtained by artificial propagation. The quality of Dutch horticulture is a paradigm throughout the world, as is the special dedication of the Dutch to knowledge of the Plant Kingdom. As you all well know, the Netherlands has spawned excellent botanists. The Dutch are constantly concerned with the conservation of natural resources, as is clearly demonstrated through the excellent work carried out by their government, their universities and botanic gardens; from their non-governmental organizations and from the sensitivity Dutch citizens show towards these matters.

I must say, I feel truly moved and grateful that the Secretary of State and the Rector Magnificus of the University are accompanying us in this ceremony. It is a symbol of how university communities are co-operating more and more with their countries' governments in developing CITES, such as in Spain the University of Cordoba and its Botanic Garden are doing and also others Universities and Botanic Gardens around the world. They offer the knowledge of their academic community and that of the researchers at their botanic gardens, as recommended in the CITES Strategic Plan. Again, Mr. Rector and Mrs. Secretary, the Netherlands is at the forefront in this area, just as your country is one of the foremost in implementing the CITES Convention.

This Committee Meeting, the last one before the next CoP in Chile, has an extensive agenda. The topics to be discussed are numerous. We have interesting documents presented by the representatives, as well as valuable contributions and studies that the observers from Party countries and Non-Governmental Organizations have submitted for the Committee's consideration.



Once more I know, dear colleagues, that we will all work harmoniously and exhaustively, as Erasmus of Rotterdam said, "in study, there is no such thing as satiation." We shall be insatiable, and happy at the same time, because as the great Erasmus pointed out in another of his maxims, "happiness consists of accepting one's luck and wanting what one is." Dear representatives, according to this, we are totally happy, since we voluntarily want to be what we are: representatives of the Parties that elected us, to fulfil the purpose with which they entrusted us, that of giving our scientific advice.

To carry out all the work I propose for you during this meeting, we are fortunate, as always, to have the inestimable aid of the CITES Secretariat. We are thankful for all their untiring efforts in preparing the documentation and in the organizational tasks, so that this meeting can proceed properly. I would also like to welcome Mr Lindeque, the CITES Secretariat Scientific Coordinator and Ms Zentilli to this meeting. They are here with us, and will doubtless be of great service in our discussions.

However, I would like to take this opportunity to especially mention Mr Van Vliet, who has left us to join another department of the CITES Secretariat. I will state that at times, in the heat of our liveliest discussions, both he and some of us have felt the unpleasant pang of offense. But as the philosopher Spinoza wisely pointed out "*insulto aequo animo pinzador*" in other words, it is necessary to "bear offences serenely" and this is how it has always been for all of us. Spinoza offers us another beautiful thought: "*soli homines liberi erga invicem gratissimi sunt*" which means, "only free humans are very grateful to one another". We, as free and independent people, are extremely grateful for the excellent work Mr van Vliet has performed as Plants Officer on the Plants Committee. We wish him all the best in his new responsibility.

Finally, I would like to end with a bit of a poem by one of the most famous Dutch writers of the twentieth century. She was a highly original woman with a very broad perspective and an extraordinary sense of humour. Nearly everyone in the Netherlands can recite some of her poems or songs. Her children's books have become a national and international institution. I am talking about Annie Schmidt, and I particularly like the one that says:

I do not want it, I don't
I don't want to shake hands!
I don't want to say again and again:
Yes sir, yes mem...
No, never again, the rest of my life!
I hold my hands behind my back
And I don't say a thing.
.....
that is all I want
if they are angry with me, I'll say:...

Well the Annie's final word is not very academic... so, I am going to say:

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!