

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



Fifteenth meeting of the Plants Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 17-21 May 2005

Regional communication

REVIEW OF THE CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH MEMBERS AND ALTERNATE MEMBERS
PERFORM THEIR DUTIES

1. This document has been prepared by the Chairman of the Animals Committee.
2. Decision 13.12, directed to the Animals, Plants and Nomenclature Committees, states the following:

The Animals, Plants and Nomenclature Committees shall review at their meetings the conditions under which their members and alternate members perform their duties to ensure continuity and effective regional representation, and report their findings to the Standing Committee

Background

3. In particular at their last two annual meetings in 2003 and 2004, concerns have been raised in the Animals and Plants Committees (AC and PC) about a lack of adequate regional representation and regional communication, and difficulties regional representatives face in executing their tasks under sometimes unfavorable conditions. Some of the points mentioned were:
 - i) Electronic communication with the AC members and alternate members of some regions proved to be very difficult.
 - ii) Communication within regions with a large number of Parties remained problematic (in particular lack of response from the Parties in the region).
 - iii) There were personal problems preventing regional representatives from adequately performing their duties, including: lack of time and insufficient means or facilities to execute the tasks (fulltime professional occupations, no budget for AC work, no office or no equipment, limited or no communication facilities, email or internet connection, etc.); lack of adequate support from their Government or institution; and lack of guidance on and understanding of the representative's mandate and duties, and how to accomplish these.
4. Good regional representation and regular regional communication are essential requirements for the effective operation of the Committees and for the members to fulfil their tasks as defined in Resolution Conf. 11.1 (Rev. CoP12) on establishment of Committees. The AC and PC acknowledged the need to improve regional representation and communication, as well as other aspects of the operation of the Committees.

5. Several means of improvement were proposed including:
 - i) A formal commitment should be submitted by the relevant Governments and the employer of the member or the alternate member to make available the necessary facilities and means, and to allow sufficient time for the members to perform their duties and tasks.
 - ii) In addition to the curricula vitae of the candidates a formal personal commitment from candidate members should be required, since a regional representative should also be prepared, able and willing to spend a certain amount of time on Committee tasks.
 - iii) AC and PC representatives should be enabled to participate in the meetings of the Conference of the Parties.
 - iv) A manual should be developed for regional representatives, outlining their tasks and duties.

The suggestions above were included in a joined document by AC and PC for the 13th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP13, Bangkok, 2004) on improving regional communication and representation (see document CoP13 Doc. 11.2). However, the proposed amendments to Resolution Conf. 11.1 (Rev. CoP12) to implement paragraphs i to iii above were not fully considered and are not reflected in Resolution Conf. 11.1 (Rev. CoP13). Concerning paragraph iv, Decision 13.13 was adopted directing the Animals and Plants Committees to develop a manual for regional representatives in 2005 (see agenda item 8.2).

6. A further matter that was discussed relates to the substitution of regional representatives. Regional representatives are normally replaced at the end of their term of office, after two consecutive intra-CoP periods. However it may be necessary to replace the individuals who were elected as regional representatives before their term of office ends for private or health reasons, change of employment or office, retirement etc. Particularly in regions with many Parties, and contrary to what one would expect, it has proven to be difficult to replace such members. There are also no clear guidelines how such replacements should be handled.
7. The Committees were also concerned that it will be impossible, or at least very difficult, to find a Chairman from a developing country or from countries with economies in transition because the Chairmen would probably lack the necessary financial means and support. The Committees felt that enabling Chairmen from developing countries or countries with economies in transition to properly fulfill their tasks properly requires that the Conference of the Parties develops another mechanism, including a specific budget line to support these Chairmen.
8. Furthermore, the AC discussed the double role of the Chairmen of the scientific committees, having to function both as Chairman and as a regional representative. It was recognized that this was disadvantageous for both functions. The AC advised that this problem could be solved at a regional level by enhancing the collaboration between the Chairman and his/her alternate. In mutual agreement, the alternate member of the region could for instance take over certain functions of the regional representative, provide assistance in compiling regional reports, help in communicating within the region, etc. No final recommendations were proposed.
9. The Committees recommended to review the capacity of the members and their alternates to perform their duties at each of their regular meetings to ensure smooth and more effective regional representation, as reflected in Decision 13.12, and to clarify and formalize the process for replacing AC or PC members and their alternates.

Recommended actions

10. The AC should create a platform for its members and their alternates to regularly report on their situation, in particular about problems or difficulties in fulfilling their tasks and functions. The same body should discuss and recommend ways and means to solve such problems in order to improve the situation.

11. Other issues that need to be dealt with include the formal commitment from Governments and/or employers, inclusion of a formal personal commitment by candidates, enabling Committee Members to participate in the meetings of the Conference of the Parties, and the replacement of regional representatives before their term of office ends.
12. The results of these discussions will have to be reported to the Standing Committee.
13. The AC Chairman proposes that:
 - i) members and alternate members provide at AC21 (and if the need arises at subsequent committee meetings as part as the regular regional reporting) key information on his/her conditions under which regional AC duties are carried out, particularly concerning the various aspects mentioned under paragraph 3 above, and formulate realistic suggestions to address eventual problems; and
 - ii) a working group/discussion forum be created, composed of AC members and alternates, to review this information, to develop appropriate solutions and mechanisms, and to prepare a progress report for the meeting of the Standing Committee in 2006.