

**Secretariat Proposal for the arrangements for the  
31st Meeting of the Animals Committee and 25th Meeting of the Plants Committee**

**Background**

The COVID-19 global outbreak is having an impact on the world in a form that is unprecedented in recent history. The United Nations and its staff also are affected and much of the work that had been planned for this “biodiversity super-year” has been revisited in order to maintain the momentum and keep attention focused. However, most international meetings planned for after March 2020 have either been carried out as online meetings or postponed for later this year or for 2021.

Like most CITES national authorities and observer representatives, United Nations staff, including the CITES Secretariat, are working from home in response to the sanitary and social distancing measures established by our host countries with “shelter-in-place” or “stay-at-home” orders. It has not been without challenges as many who are working from home have experienced, but the Secretariat is fully operational while allowing for flexibility under the present circumstances. Outputs continue to be produced on schedule and activities that can be carried out from a distance are taking place, including online meetings with Parties and partners.

The Secretariat has been deliberating about possible options for the 31st meeting of the Animals Committee (AC31) and 25th meeting of the Plants Committee (PC25), planned for Geneva, Switzerland and scheduled for 13-17 July 2020 and 17/20-23 July 2020, respectively. The following risk factors were considered, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, that could impact holding a physical meeting of the Animals and Plants Committees as planned:

- The obligation to ensure the health and safety of meeting participants.
- The obligation to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the Secretariat and conference staff servicing the meetings.
- The existing measures on public gatherings enforced by the Swiss government (currently, no more than five persons in a group at any one time).
- The decision by the Swiss government to close borders to foreigners who are not residents of Switzerland.
- The decision by other governments to close their borders and limit (or stop) air travel into and out of their countries.
- The countries that had been impacted earliest by COVID-19 experiencing “second waves” of infections brought in by returning residents.

The risk assessment by the Secretariat determined that these threats to the success of the meeting would remain for the short to medium-term and could neither be prevented nor mitigated. Therefore, the Secretariat does not advise to hold a physical meeting in Geneva in July.

In view of this high risk to the effective functioning of the Animals and Plants Committees and impact on activities and meetings thereafter, the Secretariat began consultations on: the agendas of the meetings; the application of the rules of procedure; potential software solutions for online meetings, including translation; administrative solutions to ensure equal digital accessibility, etc. The Secretariat consulted

with the Chairs of the Animals and Plants Committees, with UNEP, other UN system bodies, other UN administered conventions, providers of various services for online meetings and other sources of information. These consultations provided a wealth of information on actions needed by the members of the Committees on the agenda items, digital accessibility at the global level, the online meeting services that had been tested by others, and the progress that has been made in the last years in carrying out online meetings. Much was learned also from others' experiences of running of, and participating in, recent online meetings, and the resulting successes and challenges. The proposal developed by the Secretariat herein reflects the application of this knowledge to fulfill the need for CITES business continuity despite the global health emergency. The Secretariat believes this is a good opportunity to test new mechanisms for the operations of the Convention that address reduced international travel, the current economic downturn and environmental sustainability in general.

### **Decision-making authority**

Article XII of the Convention charges the Secretariat to arrange for and service meetings of the Parties and to perform any other function as may be entrusted to it by the Parties. In doing so, the Secretariat must follow UN rules and regulations and seek the advice of the Standing Committee (SC) as the SC is charged in para 2 of Annex 1 to Resolution Conf. 18.2, *inter alia*, with providing operational direction to the Secretariat concerning the implementation of the Convention between meetings of the CoP; coordination and advice as required to the other committees; and such interim activities on behalf of the CoP as may be necessary, including advising on emerging operational issues identified by Parties or the Secretariat until direction on the matter is provided by the CoP.

The Standing Committee should therefore provide advice on alternative arrangements for AC31 and PC25 prepared by the Secretariat in close consultation with the Chairs of AC and PC, bearing in mind the current planned schedule for upcoming CITES meetings indicated below.

### **Current planned schedule for upcoming CITES meetings**

#### **2020**

**AC31**                   CICG, Geneva. Monday 13 July – Thursday 16 July 2020  
Joint sessions of AC and PC: Friday 17 July 2020

**PC25**                   CICG, Geneva. Monday 20 July – Thursday 23 July 2020

**SC73**                   CICG, Geneva. Monday 5 October – Friday 10 October 2020

---

#### **2021**

**AC32/ PC26**       Spring 2021.  
[CICG, Geneva closed for renovations. Discussions being held with Portugal as a potential host]

**SC74**                   CICG, Geneva Monday 25 - Friday 29 October 2021

---

#### **2022**

**SC75**                   Costa Rica. 2 March 2022

**CoP19**               Costa Rica. 3 – 14 March 2022

It should be noted that no host has yet been secured for AC32 and PC26. Dates for SC75 and CoP19 were proposed by Costa Rica on 7 April 2020 and have not been finally confirmed with the Secretariat yet. However, the Secretariat understands that due to national elections to be held in spring 2022 in Costa

Rica, it is most unlikely that the dates of CoP19 could be put back to allow more time for inter-sessional work by the CITES committees. It should be noted also that the expected dates of CoP19 will mean that the deadline for documents for that meeting will now be 5 October 2021, which is before the dates for which meeting rooms have been booked for SC74. A solution will need to be found for this situation.

## **Options for AC31 and PC25**

### **1. Cancellation**

Given the large volume of inter-sessional work which the Conference of the Parties has requested the Animals and Plants Committees to undertake and the rolling nature of the committees' tasks such as those related to the Review of Significant Trade, not holding the meetings of the Committees would have a significant impact on achieving the implementation of the decisions taken at CoP18. The Secretariat believes there would not be enough time intersessionally to achieve the outputs required by the CoP in the event of a cancellation.

### **2. Postponement**

At the time of writing, it is uncertain how soon COVID-19 measures will be relaxed sufficiently to permit a normal face-to-face meeting of the Animals and Plants Committees. If the delay in any postponement were too long, it may also necessitate the rescheduling of SC73 as the Animals and Plants Committees are due to report to SC73 on a number of matters. A lengthy postponement would also make it difficult to ensure the expected meetings of the Scientific and Standing Committees could take place before CoP19 given the date constraints of the CoP19 host country as mentioned above.

Any postponement of AC31 and PC25 would require the identification of conference facilities in which to hold the meetings. The Centre International de Conférences (CICG) in Geneva which is provided largely free of charge by the host government of Switzerland is fully booked for the whole year and is closed for renovation for the first half of 2021. This closure has caused increased demand for other conference facilities in Geneva.

A further option could be that a Party would agree to host AC31 and PC25 at a later date. In Resolution Conf. 18.1 on *Financing and the costed programme of work for the Secretariat for the triennium 2020-2022*, the Parties have affirmed that all meetings of the Animals Committee and the Plants Committee should be held in the Host country of the Secretariat unless a candidate host country pays the difference in costs between its proposed venue and the Host country. These additional costs comprise mostly the cost of travel and subsistence for the Secretariat staff and interpreters servicing the meeting and additional costs if it is more expensive to take sponsored members to the new venue compared with Geneva. Clearly these costs will depend on how far away from Geneva the proposed Host country is and the UN rate for daily subsistence at that venue. For a medium-haul distance from Geneva the costs might be expected to be around 70,000 USD. Any host country would need to also cover the cost of the conference facilities themselves, together with security and ancillary costs which would vary from country to country.

The Secretariat has not sought expressions of interest to host a postponed AC31 and PC25 but has concerns that the economic downturn resulting from COVID-19 will present some challenges for Parties in this regard.

If a postponement of AC31 and PC25 had a knock-on effect for SC73, then a new venue would be required for that meeting as well with similar logistical and financial challenges.

### 3. Online meeting

#### *a) Agenda and working programme for AC31 and PC25*

Regarding the business of the meeting, the Secretariat has discussed the options with the Chairs of AC and PC and identified 4 clusters under which agenda items could be placed:

- 1) Items to note or agree to by consensus;
- 2) Items for the establishment of intersessional Working Groups;
- 3) Items for which some discussion may be needed or that may require more complicated Terms of Reference for intersessional working groups; and items that require conclusions for communication to SC73; and
- 4) Items that may require a longer discussion. These are the Review of Significant Trade in specimens of Appendix II species [Resolution Conf. 12.8 (Rev. CoP18)] and the Review of animal specimens reported as produced in captivity [Resolution Conf. 17.7 (Rev. CoP18)]. For both processes, it is proposed that the online meeting sessions focus on the selection of a limited number of new species/country combinations following CoP18, while ongoing cases will be dealt with intersessionally with the members of the Animals and Plants Committees, as appropriate.

The Secretariat believes that with good advance preparation; targeted, well-structured agendas that clearly articulate for each agenda item the proposed handling and desired outputs; and a very strict working programme, it would seem feasible to cover the items on the agendas of both meetings. This could be accomplished in four 3-hour sessions for AC31; three 3-hour sessions for PC25 and one 3-hour joint session. Further details on the proposed handling and organization of agenda items can be found in Annex 3 of the present document.

#### *b) Online meeting services*

Online meeting services are developing at a rapid pace. The Secretariat has been working with and through UNEP, other MEA Secretariats, the International Annual Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publications forum and the UN Governing Bodies Secretariat Network to appraise the available online meeting services. Details of the functionality and requirements can be found in Annex 1 to the present document.

In summary:

- Of the major commercial products, [GotoWebinar](#) (product of GotoMeeting) and [WebEx](#) have a proven track record in recent/ongoing meetings of UNEP and CBD for a smaller body of participants (between 50 and 100+ participants) and offer the best potential. These platforms, however, do not support simultaneous interpretation, and countries under US export control

restrictions must use alternative ways to connect. [Zoom](#) has the capability for simultaneous interpretation, but security concerns relating to its use need to be carefully evaluated.

- Of the online meeting services that can accommodate simultaneous interpretation, [Interprefy](#) and [Interactio](#) seem to be assessed as best performers by the International Association of Conference Interpreters. **Interprefy** has long been used by the UN International Telecommunication Union and has been used by the World Trade Organization for sensitive negotiations. It is a partner of the CICG in Geneva. It can be used in combination with other meeting services, but also as a stand-alone. Interactio works with the European Commission and European Parliament, but is not supported in China.

*c) Application of the Rules of Procedure for the conduct of online meetings*

The Secretariat has consulted the UNEP Law Division, other multilateral environmental agreement secretariats including CBD and BRS, as well as FAO, OECD, WHO and WIPO on the question of the application of Rules of Procedure for online meetings. Based on the results of these consultations and an internal analysis, the Secretariat has developed provisional guidance for the application of the Rules of Procedure in the context of online meetings (Annex 2 to the present document).

It is worth to note that the Rules of Procedure do not expressly require that meetings be held face to face or “in person”, although they are written with that understanding and it has been the practice thus far. The Secretariat is of the view that rules of procedure do not expressly require physical presence, and the requirement of “presence” can be met through participation in an online meeting, should Committee Chairs so agree after consultation with their members. It is also important to note **that there would be no changes to the Rules of Procedure and therefore no requirement for adoption of the guidance**. The guidance is to facilitate the understanding of how the existing rules of procedure would be applied during the course of an online meeting.

The Secretariat is exploring all available technical solutions to ensure that online meetings will be open to the participation of observer Parties and other agencies and organizations, including IGOs and NGOs, in accordance with the rules of procedure (see Annex 2). The Chairs may need to propose time limits for speakers and encourage observers to submit written statements in advance of the meeting. All details regarding the decision-making process, participation of observers, written reports, and possible risks with the internet connection are explained in Annex 2 of the present document.

*d) Practical arrangements, logistics and financing*

Should online meetings be agreed as the way forward, a Notification to the Parties would be issued with an explanation of the modalities and conduct of the online meetings and details concerning the possibilities for non-Party observers to contribute to the meetings. Observers could also be requested to express advanced interest in being members of inter-sessional working groups.

Any online meetings could be held at the existing planned times for AC31 and PC25 which would mean that the existing registration requirements/deadlines and documents submission deadlines would remain valid.

The Secretariat is exploring with UNEP the possibilities for compensation and remuneration for sponsored AC/PC members who would participate in an online meeting and incur additional costs, i.e. connection charges. Further details of the costings for AC31 and PC25 are shown in Annex 4 of the present document.

Registration fees for observer organizations participating at the AC31 and PC25 are proposed to be waived for the 2020 meetings. The registration fees already paid will therefore be treated as credit in CITES accounts and may be used for future scientific and governing bodies meetings organized by CITES.

Concerning interpretation, six experienced interpreters have been identified as available for the AC/PC meetings over the period 13-23 July and contractual and practical issues have been discussed with them. We understand that they have experience in online meetings interpretation.

### **Conclusions of the Secretariat**

The Secretariat does not believe that either cancellation or postponement of AC31 and PC25 are viable options for the reasons stated above.

The Secretariat believes that the items on the AC31 and PC25 agendas could be managed with the able chairing of the AC and PC Chairs, the kind cooperation of the Parties and observers and the solid support of the Secretariat. These are the first meetings of the Committees post CoP19, which tend to be less demanding than the meetings of the Animals and Plants Committees just before a CoP. The Secretariat is of the view that these extraordinary times call for finding innovative solutions that will ensure progress of the work of the Convention. Based on the experiences of other multilateral environmental agreements and related entities, the Secretariat believes that in these circumstances AC31 and PC25 could be held in an online format which would allow the Committees to maintain momentum in their work towards CoP19.

## Assessment of online meeting services for CITES online meeting needs

### Requirements: functionalities needed

- Different categories of participants with different functions (interventions, speaking order, etc.). If possible, 3 categories:
  - Staff (Secretariat and Chair)
  - Members
  - Observers (Parties/others)
- Allow attendance of members to be visible (for quorum purposes)
- Active discussion among participants
- Use of shared screen
- Recording of the sessions
- Simultaneous interpretation (English, French, Spanish)

### Comparison of platforms

	Zoom Webinar Add-on	GotoWebinar	Cisco Webex Online Learning	Interprefy	Interactio Remote Meeting
<b>URL</b>	<a href="http://zoom.us">http://zoom.us</a>	<a href="https://www.gotomeeting.com/en-gb/webinar">https://www.gotomeeting.com/en-gb/webinar</a>	<a href="https://www.webex.com/">https://www.webex.com/</a>	<a href="https://interprefy.com/">https://interprefy.com/</a>	<a href="https://interactio.io/">https://interactio.io/</a>
<b>Company location</b>	USA	USA	USA	Switzerland	Lithuania
<b>Use case</b>	IWC Scientific Council meeting in May 2020 (100+ participants)	CBD meetings in Mar/Apr 2020 (20-50 participants): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Biosafety RA AHTEG</li> <li>• Cartagena Protocol Compliance Committee</li> <li>• Cartagena Protocol Liaison Group</li> <li>• Nagoya Protocol Compliance Committee</li> </ul>	UNEP briefing to the Committee on Permanent Representatives (100+ participants)	ITU, WTO Has exclusive partnership with CIGC	European Commission, European Parliament

<b>Participant capacity</b>	Up to 100-10.000 (depends on price package)	Up to 1,000 (depends on price package)	Up to 1,000	Up to 300 delegates and up to 1,500 observers per language	Up to 1,000
<b>Participation limitations</b>	Blocked in UAE. Unavailable in Cuba, Iran, North Korea, Sudan, Syria due to U.S. export control restrictions. (can connect using VPN, or using international phone dial-in)	Unavailable in Cuba, Iran, North Korea, Sudan, Syria and the Crimea region of the Ukraine due to U.S. export control restrictions. (can connect using VPN, or using international phone dial-in)	Unavailable in Cuba, Iran, North Korea, Sudan, Syria and the Crimea region of the Ukraine due to U.S. export control restrictions. (alternative connection options are available)	None known. (Ad hoc firewall issues may occur, so testing is essential)	Blocked in China except for Shanghai and HK SAR Occasional limitations in Russia and Dubai but workarounds are possible
<b>Category of participants</b>	3 categories <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Host/co-host</li> <li>• Panelists</li> <li>• Attendees (silent, chat function can be enabled or disabled)</li> </ul>	2 categories <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendee</li> <li>• Staff (organizers, presenters, panelists)</li> </ul>	<i>To be confirmed</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chairperson (up to 3)</li> <li>• Delegates</li> <li>• Observer (silent, but chat function can be enabled or disabled)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moderator</li> <li>• Participant</li> <li>• Viewer (silent, not chat)</li> </ul>
<b>Attendance rate of members visible?</b>	No (disabled as of 2 April due to security/privacy concerns)	Yes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendance rate visible on dashboard</li> </ul>	Yes Attendance rate visible on dashboard	No (only delegates who are present are visible)	Yes (attendance of individuals shown, but not as a % rate)
<b>Active discussion among participants</b>	Yes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants raise hand</li> </ul> Automatic ordering of hand raised	Yes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants raise hand</li> </ul>	Yes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants raise hand</li> <li>• Automatic ordering of hand raised</li> </ul>	Yes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants raise hand</li> <li>• Automatic ordering of hand raised</li> </ul>	Yes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants raise hand</li> </ul>
<b>Use of shared screen</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Breakout “rooms” for in-session WG</b>	Yes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Available using the Zoom meeting package</li> </ul>	Yes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Available using the “GotoTraining” sister package</li> </ul>	Yes	No breakout rooms integrated into the session but can be delivered as separate meetings	Yes
<b>Recording of sessions</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes (audio and visual, can be separate or edited version by language)	Yes (audio only for now, may include video by July)



<b>Simultaneous interpretation</b>	Yes (as part of the business package. IWC to use it at the Scientific Council meeting in May 2020)	No	No	Yes	Yes
<b>Chat window</b>	Yes	Yes (can select everyone, Staff only or privately to individuals)	Yes (can select everyone, Staff only or privately to individuals)	Yes (public or one-on-one)	Yes (public or one-on-one)
<b>Other functions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Q&amp;A session for attendees (can be separated from the Chat function)</li> <li>• Due to recent security incidents, the company has been addressing the concerns very rapidly (according to IWC)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Timer</li> <li>• Attentiveness</li> <li>• Polls</li> <li>• Document attachments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Timer</li> <li>• Attentiveness</li> <li>• Polls</li> </ul>	No phone dial-in option	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Polls</li> </ul> No phone dial-in option
<b>Supported OS versions</b>	<i>To be confirmed</i>	<i>To be confirmed</i>	<i>To be confirmed</i>	Windows 8 recommended but can support older version. Willing to test individual cases if necessary	<i>To be confirmed</i>
<b>Overall review</b>	Appears to be an interesting option, but the security improvements to be seen and the US embargo make it a significant disadvantage	No in-house interpretation available at the moment.	No in-house interpretation available at the moment.	Most attractive option so far – has been used by several international agencies. No known country restrictions. CIGG partnership is also a plus.	Appears to be an interesting option, with the exception of connectivity issues with China and UAE.

## **Draft guidance for the application of the Rules of Procedure (RoP) of the Animals and Plants Committees to online meetings**

The following guidance highlights the issues where some adaptation to the current RoP, as adopted at AC31 and PC24 in July 2018, is needed in order for the rules to be applicable to online meetings.

Online meetings are those held via an online platform where the participants are not physically present at any meeting venue but connected via the Internet.

The guidance focuses on the provisions of the RoP where the application in an online setting may raise questions; where nothing is indicated in the guidance, the current RoPs are applicable to online meetings without any adaptation.

This draft guidance may need to be revised once a choice for an online meeting service is made.

### Application of the Rules of Procedure to online meetings of the CITES AC/PC

#### **Representation and attendance (Rules 1-4)**

Rule 1 – no adaptation needed. It is understood that presence in meetings means physical or online presence. The former through physical presence in a room in the physical space, the latter through a connection to a meeting held online.

Rules 2, 3 and 4 provide the rights for observers to take part in meetings of the Committees. These Rules are applied to a meeting of the AC/PC in an online setting in the following way:

Each observer can only be connected with one account at the time in the meeting; therefore, it must ensure that there is only one account connected to the meeting at any moment during the session.

**Observer Parties** shall be entitled to participate, provided that they indicate to the Secretariat through their CITES Management Authority their intention to participate at least **30 days** before the meeting.

**UN and its specialized agencies and non-Party States referred to in Rule 3** shall be entitled to participate in accordance with the provisions of that Rule.

**Observers covered by Rule 4**, shall be entitled to participate in accordance with the provisions in that Rule. Those admitted to the meeting may provide written statements prior to the meeting through the Secretariat for sharing with the Committee Members, indicating the agenda item to which the statement relates. Please note that given the time and technical constraints of the online sessions, the Chair may have to limit the number of speakers similarly to a physical meeting.

#### **Officers and the Secretariat (Rules 5-6)**

The Chair will preside the online meeting – either from his or her remote location or co-located with the Secretariat in Geneva. The Vice-Chair will assist the Chair from his or her remote location.

#### **Arrangement of the meeting (Rules 7-9)**

Notice of the AC31/PC25 meetings has been done in accordance with Rule 7.

Rule 8 on seating arrangements will not apply. The set-up of the screen of the meeting will depend on the technology used.

Rule 9 on working languages of the meeting will be applied. Simultaneous interpretation into the working languages of the plenary sessions of the meeting of AC and PC and the joint session will be provided through the online platform of choice.

### **Documents (Rules 10-11)**

Working documents and information documents should be submitted to the Secretariat in accordance with the Rules. Documents submitted will be made available on the CITES website.

Written statements submitted by observers will be treated as a special category under Rule 11 and posted on the information documents section of the website. They should be submitted at the latest 7 days before the meeting concerned.

### **Conflict of interest (Rule 12)**

The conflict of interest declaration must be submitted via email by Committee Members and Acting Members before the start of the meeting.

### **Rules of Order and debate (Rules 13-16)**

Rule 13 on quorum shall mean that at least six Regional Members or Acting Members from at least four regions are connected to the session during its duration. If a Member or Acting Member steps away from the meeting but leaving the device connected, he or she will be considered to be present in the meeting and count for the quorum.

If a Member or Acting Member is unwillingly disconnected for technical reasons, they should immediately alert the Secretariat (contact information will be provided in advance of the meeting) by an alternative means of communication and a technical solution should be found as soon as possible; the meeting will not be disrupted. The Member or Acting Member who were unwillingly disconnected from the meeting will be able to make their position known during the adoption of the executive summary of each session (see below).

If more Members or Acting Members are disconnected from the meeting for technical reasons, the Chair may decide to suspend or adjourn the session until the matter is resolved. Rule 20 of the RoP of the AC/PC allows the Chair to apply the Rules of Procedure of the Conference of the Parties, in this case Rule 18, paragraph 2 e).

Rule 14 will apply without any adaptation. However, in view of the time zone constraints and the duration of the online meetings, the Chairs may need to propose time limits for speakers particularly for observers other than Members and Parties. Non-Party observers are therefore encouraged to submit written statements in advance of the meeting.

The way of expressing the desire to speak will depend on the technical solution selected for the meeting and will be explained and tested before the start of the meeting.

Rule 15 on decision-making will apply in the following way: The Committee will as far as possible take decisions by consensus. Silence will be taken as consensus. If the Committee fails to reach consensus, the

Chair or Members/Acting Members from at least two regions may call for a vote. In case of a vote, Committee Members/Acting Members will be called upon one by one by the Chair in the order decided by the Chair. They will express their vote by orally stating yes, no or abstain. The decision shall be taken by simple majority of the Members/Acting Members expressing an affirmative or negative vote. In case of a tie, the motion shall be considered rejected.

Rule 16 on closed sessions will apply in the following way: If a motion for a closed session is carried, the Committee shall postpone the discussion of the item to a later session that will be closed to other observers than Parties. The Secretariat will assist the chairs during the closed sessions.

### **Working Groups (Rule 17)**

Inter-sessional working groups (WGs) may be established by the Committees in accordance with Rule 17. Non-Party observers wishing to take part in such inter-sessional WGs will be invited to communicate their interest in advance of the meeting in a manner that will be indicated by the Secretariat.

In-session WGs are not foreseen by the Chairs given the limited time available for each session.

### **Executive summary and summary record (Rule 18)**

The executive summary of each session will be prepared by the Secretariat for the endorsement by the Committee before the closure of the meeting, as per Rule 18. However, they will be expanded to contain the main points of the discussion, the participants in the discussion as well as the decisions made by the Committee at each session.

### **Procedure for intersessional decision-making (Rule 19) and Final Provisions (Rules 20-21)**

These provisions will not be adapted for the meeting in an online setting.

**Proposed handling and organization of agenda items for AC31, PC25 and the joint session of  
AC31/PC25**

1. The Secretariat reviewed the provisional agendas for AC31 and PC25, and grouped the items in four clusters:
  - (1) Items to note or agree to by consensus
  - (2) Items for the establishment of intersessional Working Groups
  - (3) Items for which some discussion may be needed or that may require more complicated Terms of Reference for intersessional working groups; and items that need to come to conclusion for communication to SC73
  - (4) Items that may require a longer discussion. These are the Review of Significant Trade and captive breeding-related issues. It is proposed that the online meeting sessions for both processes focus on the selection of a limited number of new species/country combinations following CoP18.
  
2. For the **Review of Significant Trade** in specimens of Appendix-II species [Resolution Conf. 12.8 (Rev. CoP18)], the following agenda items are to be considered:
  - Overview of the Review of Significant Trade: to be noted [Group (1)]
  - Species selected following CoP16 and CoP17: to be discussed intersessionally [Group (3)]
    - *These cases involve range States that have reported on the implementation of recommendations, or for which deadlines have passed. As per Stage 4 of Resolution Conf. 12.8 (Rev. CoP18), the Secretariat has to determine whether the recommendations have been implemented, following timely intersessional consultation with members of the Animals or Plants Committee through the Chairs. The Animals and Plants Committees can agree on timeframes and arrangements for these consultations.*
  - Species selected following CoP18: to be agreed [Group (4)]
    - *It is proposed to prepare this work in advance as much as possible. The Secretariat will work closely with UNEP-WCMC and the Committee Chairs to propose a preselected shortlist of [around 15] potential candidate species/country combinations for further consideration. This shortlist can be discussed among Committee members and a final list agreed. This information will be published in advance of the meeting. Parties included in this shortlist will be notified in advance to give them an opportunity to respond. Comments and inputs from Parties and observers could, to the extent possible, be collected in advance.*
  
3. For the **Review of trade in animal specimens reported as produced in captivity** [Resolution Conf. 17.7 and Decision 18.176] and the selection of new cases, it is proposed that the Secretariat, UNEP-WCMC, Species 360 and the Animals Committee develop a draft list of around 15 potential candidate species/country combinations prior to the meeting. This shortlist will be discussed among Animal Committee members and draft questions to be put to the Parties concerned will be prepared for consideration. This information will be published in advance of the meeting. Parties included in this shortlist will be notified in advance to give them an opportunity to respond. For ongoing

country/species cases, the Secretariat will consult the Animals Committee intersessionally through its Chair, as provided in Stage 4 of Resolution Conf. 17.7.

4. Any shortlists of species/country combinations developed prior to the meetings, resulting from the consultative work described in paragraphs 2 and 3 above, would be published in advance, and Parties included would be notified directly and invited to respond.
5. The Secretariat believes that with good advance preparation; targeted, well-structured agendas that clearly articulate for each agenda item the proposed handling and desired outputs; and a very strict working programme, it would seem feasible to cover the items on the agendas of both meetings. This could be accomplished in four 3-hour sessions for AC31; three 3-hour sessions for PC25 and one 3-hour joint session. The working programmes for the meetings will take into account these proposed timeframes and sessions.
6. The Secretariat proposes to produce an annotated agenda prior to the meetings, indicating for each agenda item, *inter alia*, what type of decisions are expected to be made, and how the item is proposed to be covered in the online meeting.
7. The table below shows the proposed clustering in four 'groups' of the items that are currently included in the *provisional agendas* of AC31 and PC25. [Note: The grouping by the Secretariat, in consultation with the AC and PC Chairs, of the current AC31 and PC25 agenda items under these four headings are subject to further adjustments by the Animals and Plants Committee Chairs.]

**GROUP (1): ITEMS TO NOTE OR AGREE BY CONSENSUS**

Animals Committee (AC31)	Plants committee (PC25)	Joint Session of AC31 and PC24 <sup>1</sup>	Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opening</li> <li>• Confirmation of the election of the Chair and Vice-Chair</li> <li>• Declaration of conflict of interest</li> <li>• Rules of Procedure</li> <li>• Agenda</li> <li>• Working programme</li> <li>• Admission of observers</li> <li>• Animals Committee strategic planning for 2020-2022 (CoP18-CoP19)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Resolutions and Decisions directed to the Animals Committee</li> <li>○ Animals Committee workplan</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Joint CITES-CMS African Carnivores Initiative [Decision 18.58]</li> <li>• Quotas for leopard hunting trophies [<b>Decisions 18.167 and 18.168</b>]?</li> <li>• Review of Significant Trade in specimens of Appendix-II species [<b>Resolution Conf. 12.8 (Rev. CoP18)</b>]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opening</li> <li>• Confirmation of the election of the Chair and Vice-Chair</li> <li>• Declaration of conflict of interest</li> <li>• Rules of Procedure</li> <li>• Agenda</li> <li>• Working programme</li> <li>• Admission of observers</li> <li>• Plants Committee strategic planning for 2020-2022 (CoP18-CoP19)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Resolutions and Decisions directed to the Plants Committee</li> <li>○ Plants Committee work plan</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Tree species programme [<b>Decision 18.15</b>]</li> <li>• CITES and Forests: A consolidated approach</li> <li>• Cooperation with the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation [<b>Resolution Conf. 16.5 and Decision 18.50</b>]</li> <li>• Review of Significant Trade in specimens of Appendix-II species</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) *</li> <li>• Periodic Review of species included in Appendices I and II * [<b>Resolution Conf. 14.8 (Rev. CoP17)</b>]</li> <li>• Annotations * [<b>Decision 16.162 (Rev. CoP18)</b>]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>No discussions or significant interventions expected</i></li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> The items that are common to the AC31 and PC25 agendas are marked with an asterisk (\*), and to be addressed in a joint session.

<b>Animals Committee (AC31)</b>	<b>Plants committee (PC25)</b>	<b>Joint Session of AC31 and PC24<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Notes</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Overview of the Review of Significant Trade</li> <li>• Banggai cardinalfish (<i>Pterapogon kauderni</i>) [<b>Decision 18.265</b>]</li> <li>• Queen conch (<i>Strombus gigas</i>) [<b>Decision 18.276</b>]</li> <li>• Titicaca water frog (<i>Telmatobius culeus</i>) [<b>Decision 18.284</b>]</li> <li>• Regional reports</li> <li>• Any other business</li> <li>• Time and venue of the 32nd meeting of the Animals Committee</li> <li>• Closing remarks</li> </ul>	<p><b>[Resolution Conf. 12.8 (Rev. CoP18)]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Overview of the Review of Significant Trade</li> <li>• Guidance on the term ‘artificially propagated’ [<b>Decision 18.178</b>]</li> <li>• Report of the nomenclature specialist [<b>Resolution Conf. 12.11 (Rev. CoP18)</b>]</li> <li>• Regional reports</li> <li>• Any other business</li> <li>• Time and venue of the 26th meeting of the Plants Committee</li> <li>• Closing remarks</li> </ul>		

**GROUP (2): ITEMS FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF INTERSESSIONAL WGs**

<b>Animals Committee (AC31)</b>	<b>Plants committee (PC25)</b>	<b>Joint Session of AC31 and PC24<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Notes</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification and traceability of sturgeons and paddlefish (<i>Acipenseriformes</i> spp.) [<b>Decision 16.137 (Rev. CoP18)</b>]</li> <li>• Definition of the term ‘appropriate and acceptable destinations’ [<b>Decision 18.155</b>]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specimens grown from wild-collected seeds or spores that are deemed to be artificially propagated [<b>Decision 18.180</b>]</li> <li>• Identification of timber and other wood products [<b>Decision 18.140</b>]</li> <li>• Agarwood-producing taxa (<i>Aquilaria</i> spp. and <i>Gyrinops</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity-building * [<b>Decision 18.40</b>]</li> <li>• Non-detriment findings * [<b>Resolution Conf. 16.7 (Rev. CoP17) and Decisions 18.132 and 18.133</b>]</li> <li>• Specimens produced through biotechnology * [<b>Decision 18.148</b>]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documents need to contain clear Terms of Reference for intersessional working groups, preferably agreed with the Committees beforehand.</li> <li>• The modalities for joining working groups will be highlighted in the guidance on the implementation of the Rules of Procedure.</li> </ul>

<sup>2</sup> The items that are common to the AC31 and PC25 agendas are marked with an asterisk (\*), and to be addressed in a joint session.



Animals Committee (AC31)	Plants committee (PC25)	Joint Session of AC31 and PC24 <sup>2</sup>	Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• West African vultures (Accipitridae spp.) [<b>Decision 18.190 and 18.191</b>]</li> <li>• Conservation of amphibians (Amphibia spp.) [<b>Decision 18.195</b>]</li> <li>• Eels (<i>Anguilla</i> spp.) [<b>Decisions 18.197 to 18.200</b>]</li> <li>• Seahorses (<i>Hippocampus</i> spp.) [<b>Decision 18.232</b>]</li> <li>• Pangolins (<i>Manis</i> spp.) [<b>Decision 18.243</b>] Plus other decisions</li> <li>• African lions (<i>Panthera leo</i>) [<b>Decision 18.247</b>]</li> <li>• Songbird trade and conservation management (Passeriformes) [<b>Decision 18.257</b>]</li> <li>• Saiga antelope (<i>Saiga</i> spp.) [<b>Decision 18.272</b>]</li> <li>• Tortoises and freshwater turtles (Testudines spp.) [<b>Decision 18.291</b>]</li> <li>• Marine ornamental fishes [<b>Decision 18.297</b>]</li> </ul>	<p>spp.) [<b>Resolution Conf. 16.10 and Decision 18.203</b>]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boswellia trees (<i>Boswellia</i> spp.) [<b>Decision 18.205</b>]</li> <li>• Rosewood tree species [Leguminosae (Fabaceae)] [<b>Decision 18.236</b>]</li> <li>• African cherry (<i>Prunus africana</i>) [<b>Decision 18.260</b>]</li> <li>• African tree species [<b>Decision 17.302</b>]</li> <li>• Neotropical tree species [<b>Decision 18.299</b>]</li> <li>• Trade in medicinal and aromatic plant species [<b>Decision 18.302</b>]</li> <li>• Production of a CITES Checklist for <i>Dalbergia</i> spp. [<b>Decision 18.308</b>]</li> <li>• Annotation #15 [<b>Decision 18.321</b>]</li> <li>• Products containing specimens of Appendix-II orchids [<b>Decision 18.329</b>]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification materials * [<b>Decision 18.137</b>]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The composition of each working group needs to take account of Rule 17.1</i></li> </ul>

**GROUP (3): ITEMS FOR WHICH SOME DISCUSSION MAY BE NEEDED**  
**ITEMS WITH MORE COMPLICATED TORS FOR WORKING GROUPS THAT MAY WARRANT SOME DISCUSSION**  
ITEMS THAT REQUIRE COMMUNICATION TO SC73 (SHOWN IN BLUE)

Animals Committee (AC31)	Plants committee (PC25)	Joint Session of AC31 and PC24 <sup>3</sup>	Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Precious corals (Order Antipatharia and family Coralliidae) [Decision 17.192 (Rev. CoP18)]</li> <li>• Marine turtles (Cheloniidae spp. and Dermochelyidae spp.) [Decision 18.216]</li> <li>• Sharks and rays (Elasmobranchii spp.) [Resolution Conf. 12.6 (Rev. CoP18); Decisions 18.223 and 18.225]</li> <li>• Leopards (<i>Panthera pardus</i>) in Africa [Decision 18.255]</li> <li>• Review of Significant Trade in specimens of Appendix-II species [Resolution Conf. 12.8 (Rev. CoP18)] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Species selected following CoP16 - RST</li> <li>○ Species selected following CoP17 - RST</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Report of the specialist on zoological nomenclature [Resolution Conf. 12.11 (Rev. CoP18) and Decisions 17.312 (Rev. CoP18), 18.309 to 18.312, 18.315]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of Significant Trade in specimens of Appendix-II species [Resolution Conf. 12.8 (Rev. CoP18)] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Species selected following CoP16</li> <li>○ Species selected following CoP17</li> <li>○ Inclusion of <i>Pterocarpus erinaceus</i> from all range States in the Review of Significant Trade [Decision 18.92, paragraph b)]</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Malagasy palisanders and rosewoods (<i>Dalbergia</i> spp.) and ebonies (<i>Diospyros</i> spp.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Report of Madagascar on the implementation of Decision 18.96</li> <li>○ Report of the Secretariat on the implementation of Decision 18.99</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of CITES provisions related to trade in specimens of animals and plants not of wild source * [Decision 18.172]</li> <li>• CITES Strategic Vision * [Decision 18.25]</li> <li>• Appendix-I listed species * [Decision 18.29]</li> <li>• Appendix-III listings * [Decision 18.313]</li> <li>• Guidance for the publication of the Appendices * [Decision 18.331]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documents need to contain recommendations for SC73 that are as complete as possible. Pre-discussed with AC, or AC/PC, where feasible.</li> <li>• Documents need to contain clear ToRs for intersessional working groups, preferably agreed with the Committees beforehand.</li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup> The items that are common to the AC31 and PC25 agendas are marked with an asterisk (\*), and to be addressed in a joint session.

**GROUP (4): AC31 AND PC25 ITEMS THAT REQUIRE MORE DISCUSSION**

<b>Animals Committee (AC31)</b>	<b>Plants committee (PC25)</b>	<b>Joint Session of AC31 and PC24<sup>4</sup></b>	<i>Notes</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of Significant Trade in specimens of Appendix-II species [Resolution Conf. 12.8 (Rev. CoP18)]               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Species selected following CoP18</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Review of trade in animal specimens reported as produced in captivity [<b>Resolution Conf. 17.7 and Decision 18.176</b>]</li> <li>• Captive breeding of spiny tailed lizards [<b>Decision 18.175</b>]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of Significant Trade in specimens of Appendix-II species [Resolution Conf. 12.8 (Rev. CoP18)]               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Species selected following CoP18</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>It is proposed to prepare this work in advance as much as possible as described above.</i></li> </ul>

---

<sup>4</sup> The items that are common to the AC31 and PC25 agendas are marked with an asterisk (\*), and to be addressed in a joint session.

Details on cost estimates for online meetings and available funding<sup>5</sup>

1. Cost estimates for conducting online meetings for AC/PC:

Description	Estimated costs for online meetings (USD)
<b>Conference venue</b>	
- CICG, Geneva for CITES staff and interpreters only – <b>expected reduced cost but pending CICG inputs</b>	N/A
<b>Interpreters</b>	
- Restricted team	60,750
<b>Online meeting services with full simultaneous interpretation:</b>	
1. Interactio	12,856
2. Interprefy	20,796
<b>Compensation to sponsored members attending online meetings for communication &amp; additional costs to participate</b> (CITES Core Budget) - <b>pending guidance by UNEP on compliance with UN Financial Regulations and Rules</b>	
<b>Compensation to sponsored delegates attending online rather than physical meetings for communication &amp; additional costs to participate</b> (use criteria from Resolution Conf. 17.3 on <i>Sponsored Delegates Project</i> ): <b>pending guidance by UNEP on compliance with UN Financial Regulations and Rules</b>	N/A
<b>Total estimated costs:</b>	N/A

<sup>5</sup> The Standing Committee's Finance and Budget subCommittee will be informed and consulted on the proposed compensation and remuneration to sponsored members and delegates for communication & additional costs to participate.

2. Details on available funds for AC/PC online meetings:

Description	Funding source available (USD): Core trust fund (CTL) / External trust fund (QTL)	
	CTL	QTL
<b>Conference venue</b>	37,800	-
<b>Interpreters</b>	70,000	-
<b>Travel &amp; DSA for sponsored AC/PC members</b>	52,800	-
<b>Travel &amp; DSA for nomenclature experts to AC or PC</b>	8,800	-
<b>Travel &amp; DSA for sponsored delegates (Sponsored Delegates Project)</b>	-	91,000
<b>Total available funding:</b>	<b>169,400</b>	<b>91,000</b>
<b>Compensation to sponsored members attending online meetings for communication &amp; additional costs to participate</b> (propose to use the funds available for travel & DSA for sponsored AC/PC members in the CITES Core Budget) <b>pending guidance by UNEP on compliance with UN Financial Regulations and Rules</b>	-	-
<b>Compensation to sponsored delegates attending online meetings for communication &amp; additional costs to participate</b> (propose to use the funds available for travel & DSA for SDP delegates using the criteria from Resolution Conf. 17.3 on <i>Sponsored Delegates Project</i> (9 days): <b>pending guidance by UNEP on compliance with UN Financial Regulations and Rules</b>	-	-



**Addendum**  
**to the Secretariat Proposal for the arrangements for the**  
**31st Meeting of the Animals Committee and 25th Meeting of the Plants Committee**

In the light of new developments and to respond to questions raised by AC/PC members/alternates and some members of the Standing Committee, the Secretariat hereby makes available further information regarding cancellation/postponement options and online meetings for AC31/PC25 to supplement the proposal of the CITES Secretariat circulated by the Standing Committee Chair on 1 May.

In view of the need to take a decision about AC31 and PC25 in case the Secretariat needs to work on logistical arrangements, including initiating procurement processes according to UN rules and regulations, scenarios are presented for the Standing Committee for their agreement.

**Scenario 1: Cancellation of the AC31/PC25 meetings in 2020** (equivalent to a 12-month postponement)

No intersessional working groups would be set up to avoid the difficulties voiced by AC/PC members of holding virtual discussions/exchanges by email, including lack of interpretation into the three languages of the Convention in intersessional working groups. AC31/PC25 meetings of a longer duration would be held in 2021 to compensate for the cancellation and cope with the volume of work.

Other intersessional meetings would take place as planned (SC73 and SC74) and CoP19 would take place in March 2022 in Costa Rica.

*Risk(s) associated with this scenario:*

Conservation-related risks: high. The implementation of decisions of CoP18 directed to the AC/PC to carry out scientific work would be delayed; the new cycle (post-CoP18) of Review of Significant Trade decisions postponed until 2021; if there is another emergency situation in 2021, there is little room for a “safety net” to fully carry out the work of the scientific bodies before CoP19.

COVID-19 pandemic related risks: low to medium. The COVID-2019 threat could continue into 2021, especially if a vaccine is not yet developed for mass distribution, according to recent scientific sources.

Financial risks: none. Funds from the savings of the 2020 meetings, could be transferred between financial years for the same activity if approved by the SC’s Financial and Budget Subcommittee.

**Scenario 2:** Postponement of the AC31/PC25 meetings until October 2020 (3-month delay)

The work of the AC/PC could be advanced by correspondence on Groups 1 and 2 agenda items (grouping suggested by the Secretariat in the 1 May proposal) until a two-day ‘mini’ AC31/PC25 meeting would be held on the weekend prior to SC73. Groups 3 and 4 agenda items would be discussed at this meeting. SC73, AC32/PC26, SC74 and CoP19 would take place as planned. (Agenda item groupings as per Annex 3 of the Secretariat’s proposal circulated on 1 May by the SC Chair – to be confirmed by the Committees)

*Risk(s) associated with this scenario:*

Conservation-related risks: low. Most of the CoP18 decisions directed to the Animals and Plants Committees would be initiated in the third and fourth quarters of 2020; however, the period between AC31/PC25 and AC32/PC26 would be reduced.

COVID-19 pandemic related risks: medium to high. Meetings in October 2020 could be threatened by (i) second waves of transmission; (ii) vaccine not yet available; (iii) continued border closures/quarantine measures for travelers arriving into Switzerland and upon return to their home countries; (iv) sanitary measures still in place to restrict large meetings in Switzerland; (v) limited availability of flights.

Financial risks: none. Funds approved in the 2020 budget for the meetings can be used for the “mini” AC31/PC25 meetings in October.

**Scenario 3:** Postponement of all intersessional meetings of the Convention up to CoP19 in Costa Rica in March 2022 (6 to 9-month delay of AC31/PC25)

This scenario is associated with the timetable below which allows maximum postponement dates while meeting the requirement that documents must be submitted 60 days before the start of the meeting concerned and allowing 30 days after each inter-sessional meeting to finalize documents resulting from the meeting in question:

Deadline for documents for **CoP19**: 5 October 2021

**SC74 meeting dates**: early September 2021

Document deadline for SC74: 1 July 2021

**AC32/PC26 meeting dates**: second half on May 2021

Document deadline for AC32/PC26: 15 March

**SC73 meeting dates**: mid-February 2021

Document deadline for SC73: 10 December 2020

**AC31/PC25 meeting dates**: early December 2020

Document deadline for AC31/PC25: 1 October 2020

*Risk(s) associated with this scenario:*

Conservation related risks: medium. The implementation of CoP18 decisions directed to the Animals and Plants Committees and the new cycle of RST decisions would be postponed until end of the 2020; postponement of subsequent intersessional meetings would also cause some delays in implementation.

COVID-19 pandemic related risks: low to medium. AC31/PC25 in early December 2020 still could be threatened by (i) continued virus transmission; (ii) vaccine not yet available; (iii) continued border closures/quarantine measures for travelers arriving into Switzerland and upon return to their home countries; (iv) sanitary measures still in place to restrict large meetings in Switzerland; v) limited availability of flights.

CoP19 risks: medium. It is assumed in this scenario that all meetings will take place according to the timetable. However, if any of the meetings do not take place, the holding of CoP19 in Costa Rica in March 2022 could be threatened. This would have associated financial implications as outlined below.

Financial risks: high. This scenario would require that either additional funding is added to the core budget to meet the costs for all postponed meetings in other venues in Geneva (if these can be found in view of the closure of CIGC for renovations in the first half of 2021) or that Parties offer to host the postponed meetings.

It is estimated that a potential host Party would need to budget approximately 80,000 USD to host a 5-day meeting of the AC or PC. It is also estimated that a Party would need to budget approximately 180,000 USD for a Standing Committee meeting. This is in addition to the local costs of the venue and any amenities the host would wish to provide to the participants.

If CoP19 does not take place in Costa Rica in March 2022, a new host would have to be found or financing for the meeting in Geneva provided by Parties to carry out CoP19 as was done for CoP18, including voting system, technical support and security (approximate costs of CoP18 were around 1.1 million USD).

Risks to the functioning of the Secretariat: besides the additional pressures placed on the Secretariat team to be able to carry out its tasks within the tight schedule above, if CoP19 could not be held before 31 December 2022, when the approved 2019-2022 triennial budget expires, a maintenance budget for the first year in the new triennium 2023-2025 would be needed to cover staff salaries. However, there are no rules in the terms of reference as this has never been considered. Another option is use of the working capital reserve, which requires SC approval, to cover Secretariat salaries until a new budget is approved by the CoP.

(Note: the CBD Secretariat is currently considering options as their CoP is postponed until 2021 after their biennial budget expires.)

**Scenario 4:** AC31/PC25 would take place as online meetings on the original dates in July 2020 in line with the 1 May proposal of the Secretariat. All other intersessional meetings are carried out as planned.

*Risk(s) associated with this scenario:*

Conservation-related risks: None as the implementation of CoP18 decisions directed to the Animals and Plants Committees and the new cycle of RST decisions would begin after July 2020.

COVID-19 pandemic related risks: None as there is no travel involved.

Financial risks: None as the costs of the online meetings can be covered by the core budget available for the AC/PC meetings in 2020. Further, reimbursement (rates to be communicated by UNEP) can be made to members and observers from least developed countries to offset internet connection costs during the meeting.

Risks to fair, inclusive and equitable decision-making: low to medium. The Secretariat has followed guidance from the UN Secretary General and the UNEP Executive Director to support business continuity and multilateralism, as well as effectiveness of the United Nations, in a virtual setting during these unprecedented times. However, it is recognized that there are indeed risks related to lack of digital equity.

In this scenario, there may be limits to the number of observers that could intervene given the constraints on number of speakers, duration of the online meetings, connection capacity and time management by the Chairs. Participation in an online meeting therefore may not be equal to participation recorded in recent physical meetings:

	IGO/NGO Observers  (% of total delegate participation)	Party observers (% of delegates from each region)					
		Africa	Asia	CSAC	Europe	N. America	Oceania
AC27- AC30	44%	15%	35%	7%	28%	14%	1%
PC21- PC24	23%	16%	25%	7%	35%	16%	1%

There are also risks of: electrical cuts and/or internet disconnections during the meeting; unfavourable local conditions for some participants; and lack of access to internet/computer equipment where “stay at home” measures are in place; language challenges during the intersessional working group exchanges.

The above risks can be mitigated by putting in place the measures as outlined below; however, the risks cannot be eliminated completely.

#### Clarifications in the light of concerns manifested by AC/PC and some SC members so far:

In response to the comments already made and to mitigate the risks mentioned above, the Secretariat adds the following supplementary information:

- **Potential technical difficulties linked to a virtual meeting**
  - Geopolitical constraints: Without prejudging any procurement process, the Secretariat has identified two platforms that do not have geopolitical constraints and thus allow for access from any country in the world.



- Internet connection: The Secretariat can arrange for payment for access to increased internet bandwidth for Committee members and for Parties that are part of the processes under Resolution Conf. 12.8 (Rev. CoP18) and Resolution Conf. 17.7 (Rev. CoP18), should they request such support.
  - Internet disconnection during the meetings: Members could signal such issues to the Secretariat by phone message so that the Chair could take them into account and check the daily summary documents (see below) in case there was a disconnection and a delegate was not heard.
  - Interpretation: The Secretariat is focusing on platforms whose core business is remote interpretation (as opposed to online platforms that have only recently added simultaneous interpretation facilities). The Secretariat will contract the usual team of CITES-specialist interpreters.
  - Trial run: Several trial runs of the platform (with the Committee members and the interpreters) will take place prior to the meeting. As outlined in the annex, other organizations have successfully held virtual meetings using these providers.
  - Meeting hours: The hours of the meeting will change every day so that it would not always be the same members that need to connect outside business hours.
- **Transparency of decision-making**
    - The Secretariat will prepare within 24 hours of the end of a session a detailed executive summary in all 3 languages. Any error or omission can be corrected or added when the executive summary is adopted by the Committee.
- **Intersessional working groups:**
    - In a notification, the Secretariat will call on observers to express their interest in joining intersessional working groups of the AC and PC by sending an email to the Secretariat prior to the meeting. The Committees will approve the final membership and terms of reference of the working group during the online meeting.
    - To facilitate intersessional work, savings on the budget of the AC and PC could be spent on translations for intersessional working groups.
- **Participation of observers**
    - Observers may send comments on the meetings' documents in advance of the meetings to be able to share scientific information with the members.
    - In accordance with Rule 14, the Chair may extend the right to speak to any participant concordant with the needs and constraints of the meeting.
    - The Secretariat will create a dedicated location on the CITES website where it will publish the observers' interventions.
    - Observers will, as usual, be able to participate in intersessional working groups that will be established – in line with Rule 17.

Herein are listed several international meetings taking place online, which were brought to the attention to the Secretariat. The Secretariat has participated in some of the meetings and gathered information from several organisations in order to apply their experiences to address challenges. Many other international meetings in other fields have also been held or are planned; notably in the present circumstances the World Health Organization’s 73rd World Health Assembly will take place as a *de minimis* meeting online from 18–19 May.

APRIL			
9	Twelfth meeting of the Open-ended Working	Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes	<a href="http://www.basel.int/Portals/4/docreport/OEWG-12bureauteleconferencereport_9.April.2020.pdf">http://www.basel.int/Portals/4/docreport/OEWG-12bureauteleconferencereport_9.April.2020.pdf</a>
14-17	International Monetary Fund / World Bank Group Spring Meetings 2020	International Monetary Fund / World Bank Group	<a href="https://meetings.imf.org/en/2020/Spring">https://meetings.imf.org/en/2020/Spring</a>
15-17	17th meeting of the Compliance Committee under the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety	Convention on Biological Diversity	<a href="https://www.cbd.int/meetings/CPCC-17">https://www.cbd.int/meetings/CPCC-17</a>
20 - 23	14th meeting of the Liaison Group on the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety	Convention on Biological Diversity	<a href="https://www.cbd.int/meetings/CP-LG-2020-01">https://www.cbd.int/meetings/CP-LG-2020-01</a>
30-3	Meeting of the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Risk Assessment	Convention on Biological Diversity	<a href="https://www.cbd.int/meetings/CP-RARM-AHTEG-2020-01">https://www.cbd.int/meetings/CP-RARM-AHTEG-2020-01</a>
May			
13-14	21st Meeting of the Mediterranean Commission for Sustainable Development Steering Committee	Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean	<a href="https://medblueconomyplatform.org/vkc/event/21st-meeting-of-the-mcsd-steering-committee-teleconference-ceed3f97f/#gsc.tab=0">https://medblueconomyplatform.org/vkc/event/21st-meeting-of-the-mcsd-steering-committee-teleconference-ceed3f97f/#gsc.tab=0</a>
21	Committee of Permanent Representatives Subcommittee meeting	UNEP	<a href="https://www.unenvironment.org/events/subcommittee-meetings/committee-permanent-representatives-subcommittee-meeting-33">https://www.unenvironment.org/events/subcommittee-meetings/committee-permanent-representatives-subcommittee-meeting-33</a>

26-29	6th International Symposium on Knowledge and Capacity for the Water Sector	Institute for Water Education under the auspices of UNESCO	<a href="http://capdevsymposium.un-ihe.org/covid-19-symposium-goes-online">http://capdevsymposium.un-ihe.org/covid-19-symposium-goes-online</a>
June			
9	COP-10 Bureau meeting	Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade	<a href="http://www.basel.int/Secretariat/MeetingsCalendar/tabid/2574/Default.aspx">http://www.basel.int/Secretariat/MeetingsCalendar/tabid/2574/Default.aspx</a>
10	COP-10 Bureau meeting	Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants	<a href="http://chm.pops.int/TheConvention/ConferenceoftheParties/Bureau/COP10Bureau2020/Overview/tabid/8268/Default.aspx">http://chm.pops.int/TheConvention/ConferenceoftheParties/Bureau/COP10Bureau2020/Overview/tabid/8268/Default.aspx</a>
14-15	2nd Environment Deputies Meeting	G-20	<a href="https://g20.org/en/media/Documents/Host%20Year%20Calendar%2005.06.20.pdf">https://g20.org/en/media/Documents/Host%20Year%20Calendar%2005.06.20.pdf</a>
23-25	The 3rd Meeting of the COBSEA Working Group on Marine Litter	UNEP	<a href="https://www.unenvironment.org/cobsea/news/statement/upcoming-events-2020">https://www.unenvironment.org/cobsea/news/statement/upcoming-events-2020</a>
29-3 July	Fourteenth meeting of the Implementation and Compliance Committee	Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes	<a href="http://www.basel.int/TheConvention/ImplementationComplianceCommittee/Meetings/ICC14/Overview/tabid/8289/Default.aspx">http://www.basel.int/TheConvention/ImplementationComplianceCommittee/Meetings/ICC14/Overview/tabid/8289/Default.aspx</a>