

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



Intersessional work of the Standing Committee
2020-2021

INTRODUCTION FROM THE SEA OF SEI WHALES
(*BALAENOPTERA BOREALIS*) BY JAPAN:
UPDATE ON PROGRESS TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.

Background

2. At its [69th meeting](#) (SC69, Geneva, November 2017), the Standing Committee reviewed under Article XIII a case about Japan's introduction from the sea of specimens from the North Pacific population of sei whale (*Balaenoptera borealis*).
3. At SC71, the Committee agreed that the initial compliance matters had been addressed by Japan and were considered resolved. However, a new issue was raised regarding the existing stockpiles of sei whales meat and blubber specimens from the North Pacific population that had been introduced from the sea (IFS) prior to the agreement at SC70 that the IFS certificates had not been issued in compliance with Article III, paragraph 5 (c) of the Convention.
4. The Standing Committee requested Japan to report to the Secretariat 90 days before its 73rd meeting on the treatment of such specimens introduced before SC70, taking note of the Resolution Conf. 17.8 on *Disposal of illegally traded and confiscated specimens of CITES-listed species*.

Actions reported by Japan

5. On 7 July 2020, Japan informed the Secretariat that all the specimens of sei whale meat and blubber introduced prior to SC70 had been sold by the Institute of Cetacean Research (ICR) and distributed domestically.
6. Japan further reported that the proceeds of the sales of meat and blubber obtained in 2017 and before were recovered from ICR for the national treasury and appropriated for the costs of subsequent cetacean research programmes and the proceeds of 2018 were recovered from ICR for the national treasury.
7. Japan explained that it had taken note of the Resolution Conf. 17.8 on *Disposal of illegally traded and confiscated specimens of CITES-listed species*. Japan also explained that the national legislation of Japan does not allow of the retrospective confiscation of such specimens of meat and blubber, introduced with the prior grant of a certificate from the Management Authority and distributed into domestic markets. Japan also reiterated its commitment to follow the Standing Committee's recommendation not to issue any IFS certificate for sei whales from the North Pacific population except for biopsy samples obtained via non-lethal methods.

Conclusion

8. The Secretariat notes that Japan has submitted its report within the deadline initially scheduled for the 73rd meeting of the Standing Committee, before the meeting had to be postponed due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. At a future date, the Committee will be requested to consider whether any further action is necessary on sei whale specimens from the North Pacific population that were introduced under IFS certificates prior to SC70. At the same time, Japan declares it will not issue any new IFS certificate for sei whales from the North Pacific population except for biopsy samples obtained via non-lethal methods in compliance with Article III, paragraph 5 (c) of the Convention.