

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

Forty-first meeting of the Standing Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 8-12 February 1999

Summary Report of the Meeting of the FAO *ad hoc* Expert Group
on Listing Criteria for Marine Species Under CITES
Cape Town, South Africa, 20 November 1998

Introduction

1. At the meeting of the COFI Sub-Committee on Fish Trade in Bremen (Germany, June 1998), concern was expressed that the general CITES criteria for amending the appendices might be inappropriate to deal with exploited and managed fisheries resources. The meeting strongly supported and adopted a proposal that FAO "*organize an ad hoc group to make suggestions on how a scientific review of the CITES criteria might be pursued.*"
2. The meeting of the *ad hoc* Expert Group was held in Cape Town on 20 November 1998 in accordance with the request from the COFI Sub-Committee on Fish Trade that FAO initiate a scientific review of the current CITES criteria for Appendix I and II listings of marine species subject to large-scale commercial harvesting.
3. The purpose of the meeting was to enable the FAO Secretariat to obtain technical comments on the proposal from a wide range of experts so that it can prepare an information paper for consideration at COFI 1999. The meeting studied the proposal made by the COFI Sub-Committee on Fish Trade to initiate the scientific review and suggested steps for an in-depth scientific review of criteria including if necessary, proposals for amendments to/or interpretations of the CITES criteria.

General Issues

5. The Expert Group identified a number of issues regarding the application of the existing CITES criteria and definitions for marine species that require rigorous review and subsequent modification or clarification. These issues include the following:
 - a) deficiency of case studies of the abundance and distribution of fish species subject to the threat (or probability) of extinction. The general principles of extinction of marine species are not well understood and not easily translated into criteria.
 - b) the relationship between the biological reference points commonly used in fisheries management, such as the biomass corresponding to the maximum sustainable yield (B_{MSY}) or the level of effort at which recruitment would theoretically collapse (F_{crash}), are not readily related to the quantitative guidelines provided under Annex 5 of CITES document Conf. 9.24.

Scope of Possible Revised Guidelines

6. The original request from the COFI Sub-Committee on Fish Trade was for a review of the current CITES criteria in the context of marine species subject to large-scale commercial harvest. The Group considered that the wording may be inappropriate in that difficulties could be encountered in determining whether a fishery meets the "large-scale" criterion or whether artisanal fisheries were not to be covered. It was tentatively agreed that "large-scale" referred to fisheries resulting in substantial removals from the stock and includes all fisheries involving international trade.
7. While the original concern was essentially for marine resources and fisheries, it was agreed that the criteria to be applied in determining whether or not a species or stock was threatened by harvesting would be similar for marine fisheries and large inland water bodies (inland seas and lakes).

A Suggested Process for Revising the Criteria

8. It was recognized by the Group that a revision of the CITES criteria required substantial scientific input but that it would also require a political process in view of the possible implications for trade. It was agreed that the process, if undertaken by FAO, could be to review the CITES criteria and definitions in relation to their potential application to fished stocks and to develop specific definitions, criteria and interpretations. All issues identified above need to be addressed fully and more issues would most probably be identified including a scientific approach to determining the threat of extinction.
9. If accepted by COFI, this process would require:
 - a) an initial meeting of experts in exploited marine resources to consider and debate the topic and to draft modifications and additions to the existing CITES criteria. This may require the preparation of specific papers (e.g. for particular types of resources or technical issues such as the relation between overfishing and extinction);
 - b) consideration of the draft proposals by a meeting of government technical representatives, open to NGOs and IGO. Industry representatives should be included in governmental delegations, if not international NGOs. Finalization of proposals to be considered by COFI;
 - c) consideration of the final proposals by COFI;
 - d) if agreed by COFI, submission of the FAO proposals to CITES through the CITES Standing Committee.
10. The timing of this process would have to take account the following calendar of meetings of both COFI and CITES:
 - a) CITES Standing Committee will meet in February 1999, before COFI and will consider the issue. The formal position of CITES could be expressed at COFI.
 - b) COFI will meet in February 1999 and will consider the from the sub-committee that met in Bremen (Germany, June 1998), together with a supplement covering the proposals prepared by the Secretariat, taking into account the recommendations of the meeting of the *ad hoc* Expert Group in Cape Town (South Africa, November 1998). COFI will establish its position in relation to the issue of the CITES criteria;

- c) During 1999, if so wished and as agreed by COFI, and assuming the necessary resources are identified, FAO should organize the review process leading to agreement on proposals for modifications and interpretations to be considered by COFI at its meeting in 2001. If endorsed by COFI, these proposals should be sent to the CITES Standing Committee in time for consideration at the 12th meeting of the Conference of the Parties, possibly in 2002.