

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

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Forty-second meeting of the Standing Committee  
Lisbon (Portugal), 28 September-1 October 1999

Implementation of the Convention in individual countries

SMUGGLING OF SPECIMENS OF CITES-LISTED SPECIES BY DIPLOMATS

1. Over the course of the past two years, persons claiming to have diplomatic status as citizens of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea have been intercepted in transit on at least four occasions in control of large shipments of ivory. One of these incidents was at an airport in Paris, France and two were at an airport in Moscow, Russian Federation. In all three cases, the shipments have weighed several hundred kilograms.
2. Customs officials seized the ivory in all three cases but no prosecutions followed since, on each occasion, the person involved claimed diplomatic immunity.
3. In July 1999, the Secretariat sent a Diplomatic Note to the embassy of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in Switzerland, expressing its concern over these incidents and asking for its assistance to combat illicit trade in ivory. The Secretariat has not received a response from the embassy.
4. During its mission to Kenya, to investigate elephant poaching and illicit trade in ivory, the Secretariat learned of the most recent, fourth, incident.
5. On 30 August 1999, a man in possession of a diplomatic passport issued by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was the subject of a routine check by enforcement officials as he was in transit at Nairobi's international airport. He was found to have baggage that included 14 metal trunks containing 188 pieces of raw ivory. The total weight amounted to 689 kg.
6. The Secretariat commends the Kenyan authorities for the discovery of the shipment and for their subsequent efforts to prosecute the person involved.
7. All of the shipments that have come to the attention of the Secretariat are of a weight that clearly indicates they were of a commercial nature. Intelligence obtained by the Kenya Wildlife Service, and by the Secretariat during its inspection of the fourth seizure, has been passed to Interpol, the World Customs Organization and appropriate Parties that may have the opportunity to intercept any further shipments.
8. These incidents are further evidence of the abuse of privileges by some diplomats. The Secretariat is aware of other incidents of a similar nature, albeit involving considerably smaller quantities and not all related to ivory.
9. Noting the concerns expressed by the Standing Committee at its 40<sup>th</sup> meeting and its desire that all Parties be reminded of the provisions of Decision 10.34, the Secretariat wishes to bring these incidents to the attention of the Committee.
10. The Secretary General of CITES intends to meet with the Ambassador to Switzerland of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to discuss the seizures.