

CITES
THE CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN WILD ANIMALS AND PLANTS¹
STRATEGIC VISION THROUGH 2005

**No wild animal or plant species should become or remain subject
to unsustainable exploitation because of international trade**

Purpose

**TO ENSURE THAT NO SPECIES OF WILD FAUNA OR FLORA BECOMES OR REMAINS
SUBJECT TO UNSUSTAINABLE EXPLOITATION BECAUSE OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

The purpose of the Strategic Plan is to improve the working of the Convention so that international trade in wild plants and animals is increasingly and consistently conducted at sustainable levels. Where uncertainty remains as to whether trade is sustainable, the precautionary principle will prevail as the ultimate safeguard. However a successful outcome of the implementation of the Strategic Plan will be reducing the requirement to bring the precautionary principle into play.

The Strategic Plan recognizes that sustainable harvest and trade in wild animals and plants can make a major contribution to securing the broader and not incompatible objectives of sustainable development and bio-diversity conservation. However, it also recognizes that the Convention must continue to ensure that proper trade mechanisms are put in place. Such mechanisms depend upon availability of and access to reliable scientific data and to information generated by effective monitoring systems to counter over-exploitation. However, information by itself is not enough. Such trade mechanisms also require strong national capacity backed by good co-operation at national, regional and global levels.

To achieve this purpose, seven goals have been identified as the key components of the Strategic Plan. It is important to realize that the successful achievement of Goal 7, allied to Goal 5, will greatly enhance the achievement of Goals 1, 2, 3 and 4. Securing a strong financial basis must therefore be given a major effort, notwithstanding the importance of the other goals.

- 1. Enhance the capacity of each Party** to implement the Convention.
- 2. Strengthen the scientific basis** of decision-making processes.
- 3. Eliminate illegal international trade** in wild animals and plants.
- 4. Promote greater understanding** of the Convention.
- 5. Increase cooperation and conclude strategic alliances** with international stakeholders.
- 6. Progress toward full global membership.**
- 7. Provide the Convention with an improved and secure financial and administrative basis.**

Introduction

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) was signed on 3 March 1973. The Convention resulted from an expression of concern by the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development in Stockholm, Sweden concerning the rate at which the world's wild animals and plants were being threatened by unregulated international

¹ *The official name of the treaty is the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.*

trade. Drafts of what became the Washington Convention or CITES were sent to governments by the World Conservation Union (IUCN) in 1967, 1969 and 1971. The final draft, after review by governments, General Agreements on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and others, was discussed at a Plenipotentiary Conference in Washington, D.C., United States of America. At its conclusion, twenty-one of the eighty countries represented at the Conference signed the Convention. Requiring ten countries to ratify, the Convention entered into force on 1 July 1975.

In the intervening twenty-five years, the number of countries that have acceded to the Convention has continued to increase. With more than 140 Parties, CITES is regarded widely as one of the most important legal international conservation instruments. During this period, the Conference of the Parties has shown itself to be capable of adapting to changing circumstances and, through Conference Resolutions, has demonstrated an ability to construct practical solutions to increasingly complex wildlife trade problems. For example, the Parties have adopted “ranching” and other control techniques such as annual quotas for managing the harvesting of some Appendix I-listed species at levels that do not threaten their conservation status. In 1994 the Conference of the Parties identified the information requirements necessary to extend the ranching concept for specific application to marine turtles.

More recently, proposals to amend the appendices to the Convention have become increasingly complex and sensitive. As a result, the 8th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (Kyoto, 1992) initiated a process to review the “Berne Criteria” that had been in place since 1976 and were proving to be too general and inadequate. This resulted in the adoption of new and more objective, scientifically-based criteria to guide amendments to Appendices I and II. In adopting the new criteria, the Parties recognized the increasing acceptance, by the international community, to apply the precautionary principle to the decision-making process. Accordingly, its application is embraced in considerations involving the transfer of species from Appendix I to Appendix II. When the new criteria were adopted in 1994, the Parties, as an expression of the need for a flexible approach to CITES implementation, agreed to incorporate a review process into the new criteria. This process has commenced, and will strengthen further the scientific basis of the decision-making process for amending the appendices to the Convention.

The 9th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (Fort Lauderdale, 1994) commissioned a review of the Convention’s effectiveness. The principal purpose of the review was to evaluate the extent to which the Convention had achieved its objectives, the progress made since CITES came into being and, most importantly, to identify deficiencies and requirements necessary to strengthen the Convention and help plan for the future. At its 10 meeting, the Conference agreed to an Action Plan for implementing certain findings and recommendations of the review. A central finding was the need for a Strategic Plan.

With this Strategic Plan, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention has mapped the Convention’s direction as it enters the new millennium. The plan forms the basis for the Convention’s participation in the wider international nature conservation arena as developed since the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro and includes issues such as:

- stewardship of natural resources and their use at sustainable levels;
- safeguarding of wildlife as integral to the global ecosystem on which all life depends;
- need for deeper understanding of the cultural and economic issues at play in producer and consumer countries; and
- wider involvement of civic society in the development of conservation policies and practices.

Strategic Plan

This Plan presents the Convention’s Strategic vision as it enters the new millennium. It clearly focuses on a limited number of priority goals and objectives deemed critical to meeting the Convention’s purpose to ensure that no species of wild fauna or flora becomes or remains subject to

unsustainable exploitation because of international trade. If actively pursued, this Plan will bring the Convention's purpose closer to reality by the year 2005.

Goal 1: ENHANCE THE CAPACITY OF EACH PARTY TO IMPLEMENT THE CONVENTION

The effectiveness of the Convention depends on a co-ordinated process of implementation that guarantees, in the long term, the achievement by all Parties of the Convention's purpose and objectives outlined in this Strategic Plan. The need for a co-ordinated process has grown as the Convention faces up to trade issues involving species that often fall beyond the direct reach of the management and scientific authorities. Also, it is recognized that for trade to be based on sustainable use, social and economic incentives are needed to bring local communities and local authorities into partnership with government under an appropriate legislative, policy and financial framework.

Therefore enhanced capacity at the national level means improving the following:

- agency capacity and co-operation;
- policy formulation;
- community, local authority and Government partnerships;
- direct benefit and revenue derivation;
- information on which decisions are based; and
- national legislation and law enforcement capability.

These improvements, in turn, should enable better management of wild animals and plants, and thus reduce the need to include species in CITES appendix listings. It is also important to consider the potential of regional co-ordination and collaboration for national capacity building efforts.

Objective 1.1

To assist in the development of appropriate national legislation and policies that encourage the adoption and implementation of social and economic incentives allied to legal instruments that promote and regulate sustainable management of and trade in wild animals and plants.

Objective 1.2

To strengthen the administrative, management and scientific capacity of Parties by improving the co-ordination of management and scientific authorities with other national agencies responsible for wild animals and plants.

Objective 1.3

To encourage Parties to strengthen their enforcement capacity and improve co-ordination among management authorities, other agencies (e.g. police, customs and quarantine), and the judiciary.

Objective 1.4

To facilitate development of appropriate technologies and information management systems to enhance the collection and exchange of information, including data bases in regard to species and trade, as well as information in regard to CITES decisions and procedures, etc.

Objective 1.5

To use the organizations specializing in supporting the Convention to assist the Secretariat and Parties in building national capacities and to facilitate improved access to and management of data bases.

Objective 1.6

To ensure that all parties have at least one designated Scientific Authority.

Objective 1.7

To increase the effectiveness of the Scientific Authorities of the Parties.

Objective 1.8

To encourage Parties to develop and implement effective conservation plans for the recovery of species, leading to their ultimate deletion from the appendices.

Objective 1.9

To encourage the proper funding for CITES implementation and enforcement by Parties, including the adoption of national mechanisms that have resource users make a greater contribution to such funding.

Objective 1.10

To fully use the potential of regional co-ordination and collaboration in capacity building efforts.

Goal 2: STRENGTHEN THE SCIENTIFIC BASIS OF THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

The work associated with effective implementation of the Convention entails not only the efficient conduct of business at meetings of the Conference of the Parties and its Committees, but also, and perhaps more importantly, the day-to-day implementation activities of Parties. While other factors may come into play in these arenas, they do not override the need for sound, science-based decisions in all areas of the Convention's application and at all levels of its implementation.

Increasingly, the Conference of the Parties is required to address and resolve difficult, complex trade and management issues involving species that are economically important resources. Within the context of the need for non-detriment findings, the Convention is grounded in sound biological principles. This view was reaffirmed by the 9th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (Fort Lauderdale, 1994) with the adoption of new criteria for amending Appendices I and II. In this regard, practical follow-up action to enhance the conservation and recovery of taxa included in Appendix I remains an important element of the Convention to be implemented effectively. Continued strengthening of the treaty's scientific basis is critical to the continued success of the Convention and its relevance as a major international instrument to ensure that wild animals and plants subject to international trade are used at levels that are sustainable by the wild populations.

Objective 2.1

To ensure that the Convention's appendices correctly reflect the conservation needs of species.

Objective 2.2

To ensure that decisions to amend the Convention's appendices are founded on sound and relevant scientific information that addresses agreed biological and trade criteria for such amendments.

Objective 2.3

To improve the scientific basis by which Scientific Authorities make non-detriment findings.

Objective 2.4

To encourage, guide and assist Parties to implement effective procedures for the recovery, conservation and management of species in the Convention's appendices.

Objective 2.5

To encourage further research, including research into innovative technologies relevant to CITES implementation and enforcement.

Objective 2.6

To encourage that the above objectives, and those under 2.4 and 2.5 in particular, are pursued where appropriate at the regional level.

Goal 3: ELIMINATE ILLEGAL INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN WILD ANIMALS AND PLANTS

The illegal trade in wild animals and plants is a major factor in the depletion of the world's natural resources in exchange for commercial gain. It undermines the conservation efforts of developing countries, affects the income of rural populations and has driven several species to the brink of extinction. Experience has shown that CITES enforcement would greatly benefit from a higher degree of co-ordination among the authorities and enforcement agencies within Parties. **[insert see below]**. Enforcement of the Convention is primarily a matter of national competence, but bilateral, regional and global co-operation is elementary in the combat against illegal international trade. As for a number of other CITES goals, the need for regional co-operation to combat wildlife crime is particularly obvious. The involvement of the WCO and ICPO-Interpol in enforcement questions is further clearly essential.

Objective 3.1

To promote a high degree of co-operation, co-ordination and collaboration among national and international law enforcement agencies.

Objective 3.2

To stimulate bilateral, regional and global efforts to combat illegal international trade in wild animals and plants.

Objective 3.3

To encourage the development of effective regional co-operative efforts, particularly among countries with common borders.

Objective 3.4

To encourage mutual technical assistance in enforcement matters.

Goal 4: TO PROMOTE GREATER UNDERSTANDING OF THE CONVENTION

To ensure better implementation of CITES, public support and participation must be enhanced through continuous educational processes that recognize not only the existence of the Convention but also its beneficial contribution to conservation through sustainable trade management.

Efforts are necessary, both at a national and international level, to provide accurate information about the aims and function of the Convention. Educational materials, written in simple language appropriate to local usage, would highlight the Convention's positive achievements to the conservation of animals and plants.

Involvement of local communities, NGO's, relevant trade associations, the scientific community and civic society is essential to reduce the still widespread misunderstanding of the Convention, and the misinformation that, when circulated, can undermine effective implementation of the Convention.

Objective 4.1

To strengthen partnership with national and international NGO's .

Objective 4.2

To strengthen alliance with relevant local communities, consumer groups, traders and trade associations.

Objective 4.3

To promote greater awareness by and co-operation with the scientific community.

Objective 4.4

To stimulate production and dissemination of informative materials to a broad public at a local, national, and regional level by using culturally relevant examples.

Goal 5: INCREASE CO-OPERATION AND CONCLUDE STRATEGIC ALLIANCES WITH INTERNATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS

The Convention states that the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) shall provide a Secretariat. Therefore, the maintenance of an optimal working relationship with UNEP is critical for the proper administration of the Convention. Additionally, the Governing Council of UNEP at its 20th session (Nairobi, 1999) has noted the importance of promoting interlinkages among multilateral environmental conventions and international processes in an effort to better focus international policy-making. It calls upon Parties to give due consideration to ways and means to strengthen coherent interlinkages among relevant conventions. Numerous linkages also exist between the aims of CITES and those of other multilateral environmental agreements. Specifically the missions of CBD and CITES are closely related, thus necessitating a high degree of co-operation and synergy. Co-operation and co-ordination with species management conventions and agreements such as ICCAT and IWC are equally important.

CITES implementation and enforcement depends to a large degree on efficient border, trade and sales controls. The involvement of WCO and Interpol in this respect is crucial. A number of international organisations such as IUCN and WCMC have a wealth of scientific and technical information at their disposal and continue to increase this knowledge through research programmes, as well as the update and maintenance of extensive databases. Again close co-operation with those organisations is essential for an efficient distribution of responsibilities. Finally as CITES mainly achieves its conservation objectives through trade measures, it is important to ensure the recognition, acceptance and compatibility of such measures with WTO and GATT.

Objective 5.1

To ensure an optimal working relationship with UNEP, as well as close co-ordination and synergy with the CBD and other relevant multilateral environmental agreements.

Objective 5.2

To ensure close co-operation and co-ordination with other related Conventions, Agreements and associations (e.g. IWC, ITTO, IATA.)

Objective 5.3

To ensure the co-ordination of scientific and technical programmes, and the efficient distribution of responsibilities with relevant technical partners (e.g. IUCN, WCMC, and TRAFFIC.)

Objective 5.4

To ensure the continued recognition, acceptance and compatibility of CITES measures with provisions of GATT and WTO.

Goal 6: PROGRESS TOWARD FULL GLOBAL MEMBERSHIP

In order for the Convention to achieve its mission, as many countries as possible that are engaged in trade of wild animals and plants should become Parties. Although membership has grown steadily to more than 140 Parties, there are still countries that have not yet become CITES Party members.

The 1983 Gaborone amendment to Article XXI of the Convention envisions accession to the Convention of regional economic integration organizations to which Parties have transferred competence in areas of CITES implementation. To bring such organizations within the Convention, ratification of the amendment should progress and eligible organizations encouraged to join.

Objective 6.1

To secure at least 20 more Parties to the Convention by 2005 with a special focus on range countries of species subject to significant trade and important consumer countries of wild plants and animals, as well as countries located in regions with relatively low representation.

Objective 6.2

To encourage ratification of the 1983 Amendment to Article XXI of the Convention and the subsequent accession by eligible regional economic integration organizations.

Goal 7: PROVIDE THE CONVENTION WITH AN IMPROVED AND SECURE FINANCIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE BASIS

Successful implementation and enforcement of the Convention requires an appropriate level of funding, as well as a strong and professional Convention Secretariat. In addition to adequate support at the national level, there is continuing financial need to meet the requirements of operational effectiveness of the Convention, as well as the platform for international co-ordination and co-operation it is required to provide. Present funding barely covers the Convention's primary expenditures. Programme expenditure on capacity building, scientific research and other projects in support of the aims of the Convention largely depend on voluntary contributions by donors. This financial support is welcome, but if CITES is to continue to play a major role in species conservation, a more stable flow of financial resources is required.

Objective 7.1

To resolve the problems caused by late and inadequate contributions to the CITES Trust Fund.

Objective 7.2

To ensure that the decisions of the Conference of the Parties take full account of financial implications for the CITES Trust Fund.

Objective 7.3

To seek funding of the Convention's priorities from GEF.

Objective 7.4

To encourage additional voluntary contributions and to seek new ways of securing financial assistance from the donor community.

Objective 7.5

To encourage the exploration of new funding mechanisms that include financing programs with income generated from resource users.

Objective 7.6

To increase the level of realistic planning and forecasting, and to improve financial and implementation reporting.

Objective 7.7

To review and simplify, where possible, existing measures, procedures, mechanisms, and recommendations for the implementation of the Convention.

Objective 7.8

To ensure that the three working languages are treated equally in meetings of the Conference of the Parties and permanent committees.

Delivering the Strategic Plan Through the Action Plan

This Strategic Plan presents a cogent overview of the specific aims of the Convention through 2005. It outlines 7 specific goals to meet the Convention's mission, and identifies 38 specific objectives to be achieved to meet those goals. Once adopted, this broad framework is designed to provide a unified focus to the Parties in their implementation of the Convention, and as guidance to the Conference of the Parties and the Secretariat.

To effectively implement the Strategic Plan, a detailed Action Plan must be developed, outlining action items needed to achieve each objective and identifying responsible entities for their implementation. As part of the Strategic Planning process, the Secretariat has been tasked with development of a draft Action Plan to be considered as a companion document to this Strategic Plan. That document will present a matrix of action items by responsible entity and year to indicate what must be done to achieve each objective. The Action Plan will also serve as a basis for evaluating progress toward, and reporting results in achieving Strategic Plan goals.

Ultimate achievement of the goals of the Convention will depend upon the successful delivery of the Strategic Plan through Action Plans. It should be recognized that for the Strategic Planning process to successfully contribute to the achievement of the Convention, that process must be able to respond to the ever changing world. The Strategic Plan is not a static document. Therefore, the Convention must continue to evaluate progress and modify the Strategic Plan over time to adjust to change.

Glossary of Terms

CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
IATA	International Air Transport Association
ICCAT	International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna
ICPO-Interpol	International Criminal Police Organization: Interpol
ITTO	International Tropical Timber Organization
IUCN	World Conservation Union
IWC	International Whaling Commission
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
WCMC	World Conservation Monitoring Centre
WCO	World Customs Organization