

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

Forty-fifth meeting of the Standing Committee
Paris (France), 19-22 June 2001

Interpretation and implementation of the Convention

SIGNIFICANT TRADE IN SPECIMENS OF APPENDIX-II SPECIES

1. The Secretariat has received a response from China concerning the recommendations regarding *Acipenser schrencki* and *Huso dauricus*.
2. Regarding primary recommendation 1, the Management Authority of China has responded that it can not accept a reduction of catch and export quotas for 2001. Detailed information was provided on the current status of sturgeon stocks in the Amur River. Stock assessments are done in collaboration with the Russian Federation under a bilateral fisheries agreement, and are based on catch per unit effort (CPUE). No information was provided about the frequency of the survey programme or the degree of collaboration between China and the Russian Federation concerning quota setting. Information on catches from 1994 to 2000 in China seems to indicate that stocks have not recently declined, but the information was not provided separately for the two species concerned. (Comparable information was also not provided by the Russian Federation.) Despite confidence in the current system, China intends to improve stock assessments and monitoring systems further and welcomes the support of the FAO as well as financial assistance from other bodies for this work.
3. Regarding primary recommendation 2, comprehensive information was provided on existing measures in legislation to control harvesting. Information provided on enforcement was not detailed, but commitments were made to improve control measures, inspection procedures and enforcement schemes, and record and report cases of illegal fishing and trade. China and the Russian Federation have concluded an agreement on sturgeon fisheries in the Amur River, but information about the nature of the agreement and its contribution to sturgeon conservation at basin level was not provided. China has, however, committed itself to participate in the development of regional conservation strategies and action plans, thereby complying with this recommendation.
4. Regarding primary recommendation 3, comprehensive information was provided on existing measures to control exports. China has established a labelling system and will implement the universal labelling system established through Resolution Conf. 11.13 from 2001 onwards. Export documents will be copied to the Secretariat and standard terminology will be used, thereby complying with this recommendation.
5. Regarding primary recommendation 4, China acknowledges the importance of the identification of stocks and specimens in trade and mentioned that considerable work has already been done in this regard. China will participate in collaborative schemes as recommended, thereby complying with this recommendation.
6. In general, the Secretariat concludes that there is evidence to suggest that sturgeon stocks are relatively stable in the Amur River (after a major historical decline), and that legal

harvests and exports are adequately controlled. Some parts of the populations may be declining while others are stable or increasing. It appears that not enough is known about the complex distribution and population structure of both species in the Amur River. There seems to be a tendency to treat stocks fished by the two countries in different parts of the same river as different stocks, but the biological basis for this approach, and the conservation consequences are not clear. The degree of collaboration on stock assessments and quota setting between China and the Russian Federation is unclear. These two issues should be addressed in the development of the conservation strategy which China (and the Russian Federation) has agreed to undertake.

7. The Secretariat believes that China has complied with the primary recommendations in all respects except agreeing to a reduction in quotas. The Secretariat is not convinced that any quota reductions can be justified if adequate harvest and export controls are in place and stocks are stable. It is unfortunate that much less information has been provided by the Russian Federation concerning their fisheries in the same drainage system, and until comparable information has been provided, a certain degree of concern should remain over the management of this shared system. Such concern can, however, be addressed through the implementation of recommendations relating to cooperative management and conservation planning, which both Parties have agreed to implement.
8. The Secretariat therefore proposes no further action until the expiry of the 12-month period for implementing the secondary recommendations of the Animals Committee (February 2002 and thus before the next spring harvest season), provided that no further harvesting is done in 2001.