

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

Reports

Reports of Regional Representatives

OCEANIA

This report was submitted by Australia. As it was received by the Secretariat some time after the deadline for submission of documents, it is provided herewith only in the language in which it was submitted.

REPORT PREPARED BY ANNE-MARIE DELAHUNT, AUSTRALIA

Parties in the Oceania region:

- Australia (regional representative)
- Fiji
- New Zealand
- Papua New Guinea
- Vanuatu.

Communication between Parties in the region

Wildlife law enforcement workshop in Australia

In November 2000 Australia hosted a conference for the purpose of promoting inter-agency cooperation and issues of mutual interest and concern in the area of wildlife enforcement. Wildlife enforcement officers and others from government and non-government organisations from throughout the Australasian region shared information and views on ways to achieve better wildlife protection outcomes. Over 30 government and international agencies were represented, including personnel from New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Czechoslovakia, Italy and the CITES Secretariat.

The conference:

- provided a forum for discussion of the enforcement of Australasian wildlife legislation;
- enabled discussion on current methods of gathering, analysing and disseminating information on breaches of wildlife legislation;
- enabled discussion on current procedures for investigating and prosecuting breaches of wildlife legislation; and
- formulated, for consideration by participating agencies, proposals to improve enforcement of wildlife legislation, including the further development of inter-agency cooperation and support.

Conference sessions provided information to wildlife officers regarding:

- current trends in wildlife trade;
- evidence handling procedures;
- traditional medicines;
- computer and Internet crime; and
- national investigation strategy.

Individual party initiatives

Australian legislative reform

In July 2000, the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) was enacted in Australia. It reformed, updated and consolidated Australia's environmental legislation, replacing several statutes in existence at the time. It is now planned to incorporate the provisions of the *Wildlife Protection (Regulation of Exports and Imports) Act 1982* (Wildlife Protection Act), through which Australia implements its obligations under CITES, into the EPBC Act. As part of this process, the opportunity is being taken to review the provisions of the Wildlife Protection Act, and to introduce a range of amendments aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the legislation.

New Zealand national meeting

A national meeting is to be held in New Zealand during June or July 2001, involving all CITES staff from the Management Authority and some border staff. The meeting will focus on training, new legislation, standardisation, information sharing and the establishment of a national electronic database.

Papua New Guinea organisation restructuring/program implementation

Following restructuring of the Office of Environmental Protection in 1999, two new positions have been created within the new organisational structure to ensure that planned national programs and activities for both CITES Management and Scientific Authorities are implemented. Officers will be appointed by June/July of this year.

The CITES Management Authority Technical Officer will be responsible for coordinating CITES related programs and activities within the implementing agency, other government agencies and institutions.

The CITES Scientific Authority Scientific Officer will be responsible for coordinating CITES Scientific Authority related programs in Papua New Guinea.

Capacity-building activities

Awareness raising

Fiji

The Fiji CITES Management Authority, the Department of Environment, has been discussing CITES issues with senior officers in Customs and Quarantine since 1997 and has identified the need to further improve levels of awareness and understanding of issues within these agencies. The Department of Environment is endeavouring to secure funding for an awareness workshop for officers at all levels in agencies including Customs and Quarantine. Fiji would greatly appreciate assistance with this project from the CITES Secretariat or any other potential donors.

The Department of Environment plans to undertake a program of training the trainers, who will then train officials of relevant institutions such as Customs and Quarantine. They urgently need assistance with this. Funds are needed to cover the program, including production of relevant materials, venue, transport, accommodation, meals and hiring of trainers/consultants.

New Zealand

The last twelve months saw the beginning of a vigorous public relations campaign designed to better inform the public on CITES and the aims of the Convention. The campaign has been based around Auckland International Airport, which deals with around 97% of New Zealand's CITES seizures, but will take on a more national focus over the next year. Public talks and a strong media focus have been adopted, along with additional training for boarder staff. Fact sheets have been produced to provide information on those CITES species that make up the majority of New Zealand's illegal imports and they are displayed at the Auckland Airport. During 2000, 4,361 seizures were made, with 38,564 items being seized and retained. Statistics have shown that a large percentage of these seizures were coral: of the 38,564 items, 54% was coral. A further 17% were of clams, mainly shells, with some meat also being confiscated. 20% of all seizures originated from Fiji, with a further 20% from Tonga, and 12% from the Cook Islands. Information has been provided to TRAFFIC Oceania to assist in developing a South Pacific CITES Souvenir research project, which will assess the issues involved in this type of trade.

Vanuatu

In 1998 Vanuatu produced a brochure and poster on CITES, which were distributed to relevant stakeholders such as Quarantine, airlines, Customs, hotels, restaurants and market vendors. These essentially consist of general information about the work of CITES as it applies to Vanuatu. In 1998 a two-day workshop was held with relevant government departments to introduce them to CITES requirements in Vanuatu.

Legislation (Papua New Guinea)

A legislative review of Papua New Guinea's national legislation was completed, with appropriate instruments submitted to legislators in 1998. It is anticipated that the national legislation will be ready to be enacted later this year.

Implementation difficulties encountered in the region

National legislation project (Fiji)

The environment legislation which Fiji planned to have enacted by April 2001 and which could have included provisions relating to subsidiary legislation on CITES, has been deferred due to reasons beyond Fiji's control. Fiji had however envisaged earlier in the year extracting provisions relating to CITES from an earlier Bill and enacting these separately. Enactment of CITES legislation by December 2001 had been included in the Fiji Department of Environment's corporate plan for 2001, but at this stage the Department does not think that in the present situation anything can be produced by the end of this year. The Department will nevertheless continue with the process and would appreciate technical assistance with this.

Awareness raising and enforcement (Vanuatu)

Vanuatu has expressed a need for funding assistance to generate more awareness of CITES in Vanuatu and in the region. Vanuatu also recently experienced financial difficulties, which prevented a successful prosecution for illegal importation of elephant tusks from Africa. The prosecution case had to be abandoned because Vanuatu was unable to meet the cost of testing required to prove that the tusks were sourced post-CITES. They had already expended a significant component of their budget on forensic testing to establish the species of elephant, but this testing had not provided reliable age data.

Activities relating to particular species

Traditional medicine products (Australia)

Following CITES recommendations to eliminate the use of wild harvested endangered species in traditional medicines, Australia strengthened its controls over traditional medicines through the Wildlife Protection Act in 1999 and initiated a public awareness campaign.

The campaign involved hosting two symposia in 1999, in association with several universities and Traffic Oceania. Traditional medicine educators, practitioners and Commonwealth and State Government authorities were among the speakers. A further component of this campaign has been the production of a booklet titled *Wildlife Conservation and Traditional Medicines*, which is published in both English and Cantonese. The publication was developed through consultation with the Therapeutic Goods Administration and Traffic Oceania and is targeted at traditional medicine practitioners and users. 5,000 hard copies were printed in March 2000 and it will soon be available on the Internet.

Coral (Fiji)

Since the 11th CITES COP, Fiji has undertaken the following activities in relation to the global coral trade:

- The Department of Environment has conducted investigations of resource owners, coral harvesters, traders and others;
- The Department has expressed concern over the Fiji Fishery Division (which is the Department of Environment's scientific partner) authorising the issue of CITES permits for coral and *Tridacna* clams, but recording estimate figures rather than actual figures on the permit. The Fishery Division is experiencing human resource capacity problems. The Customs Department at Nadi International Airport does not verify the volume of commodity exported. Customs officials rely on permits issued by relevant authorities. In these cases, any coral or clam sent out of the country is not independently verified. Since mid-2000, Fiji Fishery Division has been able to provide actual volumes of corals and clams exported by each trader/company, but the figures recorded in the permits still need to be addressed.
- A paper on the subject was prepared for Cabinet's information. In April 2001 Fiji's caretaker government authorised the Department of the Environment to look for independent consultants, preferably from outside Fiji, to conduct an independent investigation into coral trade in Fiji. This will include, where required, scientific assessment and analysis of the impact of coral trade on coral reef ecosystems. Fiji would appreciate funding assistance with this project.
- In February 2001, the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and the Marine Aquarium Council (MAC) conducted a regional workshop in Nadi to:
 - i) assess the status of coral trade in the region; and
 - ii) introduce certification to representatives, which MAC is working on.

As a result, a new Fiji MAC has been formed, with the Department of Environment represented on it. The intention is to certify that all aspects/phases of the trade are being conducted in a sustainable manner.

Gaharu wood trade (Papua New Guinea)

Trade in Gaharu wood has emerged as a relatively recent problem in Papua New Guinea and the 'minor forest product sector' is not organised to deal with this type of trade. The bulk of this trade is illegal movement across the border with Indonesia. A particular enforcement difficulty is lack of scientific information for identification purposes.

Visits by Gaharu wood traders from neighbouring Malaysia and Indonesia into Papua New Guinea are having an impact on the trade, creating concerns about the sustainability of this resource and negative effects on the lives of some rural village communities.

The Papua New Guinea CITES Management Authority has raised concerns about the sustainability of this trade, with the Papua New Guinea Forest Service and has had consultation with the Papua New Guinea Forest Service, the Internal Revenue Commission and other government agencies to look at control measures for this trade. At a recent meeting, an interim interdepartmental committee decided to place a temporary ban on this trade until it has been established whether the species in use in Papua New Guinea is the CITES-listed *Aquilaria malaccensis*.

Papua New Guinea is seeking technical and financial support to be made available to Traffic Oceania for further scientific work to be done on medicinal plant trade in the Oceania region. Traffic Oceania in conjunction with WWF in Papua New Guinea is currently undertaking preliminary work on collecting scientific and trade information to assist Papua New Guinea with the identification for this species.

Papua New Guinea will require further scientific work and investigation to be done on this trade:

- to determine whether a proposal to list the entire genus *Aquilaria* on Appendix II is appropriate; and
- as very little is known about grading of the products, to support development of standard trade controls and guidelines for this trade.

Sea turtles (Fiji)

Fiji has extended its moratorium on the taking and sale of any turtle product, for a further five years. The moratorium was first declared for the period January 1995 to December 2000.

Swallow nest trade (Papua New Guinea)

Significant numbers of swallow nest traders are visiting Papua New Guinea's border areas and conducting illegal trade across the border. The Management Authority is looking at possible options for establishing this trade legally in Papua New Guinea to control illegal activities across the border. They will require some technical assistance for this.

Whales (Fiji)

Fiji supported the establishment of the a South Pacific Whale Sanctuary because establishment of the Sanctuary:

- would be consistent with the Precautionary Principle enshrined in Principle 15 of the Rio Declaration; and
- it would provide economic benefits to the region by supporting whale-watching businesses.

In a meeting in Apia, Samoa in April 2001, Fiji supported NZ and Australia in raising this issue once again at the next International Whaling Commission meeting in July 2001.

Other species (Fiji)

The Fiji Department of Environment has approached some academic staff at the University in Suva and others, regarding the identification of CITES-protected species present in Fiji. Their purpose is to find out more about the local status of some species, particularly in relation to trade.