

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

Fifty-third meeting of the Standing Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 27 June-1 July 2005

Strategic and administrative matters

Financial matters

SHIFTING THE FINANCIAL BURDEN TO THE TRADE

1. This document has been submitted by Israel.
2. Israel joins numerous Parties that express serious concern about the growth of the CITES budget and the need for 'containment'. Israel has seen its contribution to the CITES budget increase much more rapidly than its Management Authority's annual budget. Annual contributions consume an ever greater share of the Management Authority's financial resources.
3. A report on the CITES website indicates that "Annually, international wildlife trade is estimated to be worth billions of dollars". The CITES Trade Database reports that more than 112 million CITES whole specimens are traded legally every year. Clearly, wildlife trade is a very large industry and should be able to pay for its own regulation.
4. In 2004, the trade voluntarily contributed precisely USD 30,720 to CITES. This is less than 1 per cent of the CITES budget. At present, more than 99 per cent of the CITES budget is carried by the Parties and by conservation non-governmental organizations.
5. The wildlife trade is gaining an unfair benefit by having conservation pay for its regulation. The wildlife trade is mostly a luxury trade – exotic leathers, pet birds, etc. – which should pay for its own regulation. The share of tax money that citizens pay to government agencies for wildlife conservation should not be used to regulate a profit-oriented wildlife trade.
6. Consequently, Israel respectfully requests the CITES Standing Committee to initiate a new effort to investigate the various methods by which the burden of paying for the costs of the CITES budget can be shifted to the trade.
7. Israel would be pleased to participate in any group organized by the Standing Committee for this purpose. Such a group should investigate how other regulated commodities in international trade, such as pharmaceuticals, air transport and satellite communications, pay for their regulation. The group should explore how the wildlife trade can be brought to pay for its own regulation.
8. If, as the CITES website says, the wildlife trade is annually worth "billions of dollars", a very small assessment – even a mere 1 per cent – would produce a CITES budget that is more than double its present level. This would permit the Convention to expand its good work, and finance the various studies and meetings that are required to provide for the efficient and effective regulation of this industry.