CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA
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Fifty-third meeting of the Standing Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 27 June-1 July 2005

Interpretation and implementation of the Convention

CONSERVATION OF AND TRADE IN GREAT APES

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.

Background

2. At its 13th meeting (CoP13, Bangkok, 2004), the Conference of the Parties adopted Resolution Conf. 13.4 (Conservation of and trade in great apes), which directs the Standing Committee to:

    a) *review the implementation of this Resolution at each of its regular meetings on the basis of the Secretariat's reports;*

    b) *consider other measures such as technical missions, organized in cooperation with GRASP and other appropriate partnerships, followed by political missions if necessary; and*

    c) *report at each meeting of the Conference of the Parties on the implementation of this Resolution, with any recommendations for further action.*

3. In its previous work with regard to species-specific issues, the Standing Committee agreed that the most effective way in which to undertake reviews, as referred to in paragraph 2 b) above, would be to rely upon regional representatives, the Parties, the Secretariat or other relevant organizations to bring to its attention matters of concern. This appeared to be more productive than seeking specific reports from range and consumer States. The Secretariat has followed this approach for the 53rd meeting of the Standing Committee and will continue to do so unless directed otherwise.

4. During CoP13 the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland announced that it wished to donate the sum of GBP 20,000 to fund any technical missions relating to great apes that the Standing Committee might wish to consider.

5. The amount of legal trade in great apes is very limited and it is the illicit trade for the purposes of bushmeat, the exotic pet trade and the unlawful acquisition by 'zoos' or places of public entertainment that poses the greatest threat. Whilst clearly of greater importance for the long-term conservation of these species, other issues such as habitat loss or disturbance from humans are not issues to be addressed by CITES.

Recent activities

6. GRASP (the Great Ape Survival Project) was initially a United Nations Environment Programme initiative but is now administered jointly by UNEP and UNESCO. An intergovernmental meeting is planned for September 2005, where it is hoped that Governments, especially of great ape range States, will become more formally involved in the project, which is currently primarily a partnership between UN agencies and non-governmental organizations. The CITES Secretariat currently represents other multilateral environmental agreements on GRASP's interim executive committee.

7. The CITES Secretariat believes that a technical mission in relation to great apes could be one way in which CITES might contribute to the conservation of these species. However, owing to its current workload, it has only been able to engage in tentative discussions on this subject with the GRASP

Secretariat on what form such a mission might take. It may be best to focus on matters, such as border control or other measures to combat illegal trade, where the CITES Secretariat could most effectively contribute its expertise.

8. During discussions with the GRASP Secretariat, the CITES Secretariat has highlighted what appears to be a significant and highly-organized trade in orangutans, illustrated by ongoing investigations in countries such as Cambodia and Thailand to which animals have been illegally imported and trained to engage in performances for public entertainment. There would appear to be scope to target the removal from the wild of orangutans and their subsequent smuggling to such destinations.

<u>Recommendation</u>

9. The Secretariat recommends that the Standing Committee consider measures that might usefully be undertaken in cooperation with GRASP and other appropriate partnerships to ensure the conservation of great apes.