

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



Fifty-fourth meeting of the Standing Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 2-6 October 2006

Interpretation and implementation of the Convention

Species trade and conservation issues

Sturgeons and paddlefish

REPORT OF THE SECRETARIAT

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.

Database on trade in sturgeon specimens

2. At its 53rd meeting (Geneva, June – July 2005), the Standing Committee agreed to a suggestion from the representative of Europe (Germany) that the enforcement questions related to sturgeon and paddlefish trade could be addressed by the European Union Enforcement Group. The Committee also requested to be presented with further information on trade in sturgeons and paddlefish.
3. A sturgeon and paddlefish trade enforcement workshop took place in Brussels from 27 to 29 June 2006. In view of the possible need to discuss the matter in closed session, details are reported in document SC54 Doc. 38.
4. At its 13th meeting (Bangkok, 2004), the Conference of the Parties adopted the following Decisions:
 - 13.44 *In consultation with the CITES Secretariat and relevant experts, interested Parties should undertake an assessment of the technical and legal feasibility to establish a database concerning trade in sturgeon specimens subject to annual quotas as outlined in Resolution Conf. 12.7 (Rev. CoP13). This database would be updated regularly and could include, pending needs identified under the assessment, information on species, specimens, volumes exported as well as the status of export quotas, the country, date of issuance and number of export permits and re-export certificates that are sent to the CITES Secretariat by relevant Parties.*
 - 13.45 *Pending the results of the assessment referred to in Decision 13.44, and subject to the availability of funds, the interested Parties may submit a proposal for a pilot project on the provision of a database, for consideration by the Standing Committee at its 54th meeting.*
 - 13.46 *In accordance with the Standing Committee's decision regarding the proposal referred to in Decision 13.45, the Parties concerned should report on the outcome of this pilot project and its recommendations at the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.*
5. On behalf of the Parties, the Secretariat instigated discussions with UNEP-WCMC to determine their capacity to create such a database. UNEP-WCMC subsequently established a database to help track

trade in caviar and the Secretariat is grateful to the European Commission for agreeing that such work can be conducted under its contract with UNEP-WCMC.

6. Reference to such a mechanism was made in Notification to the Parties No. 2005/053 of 1 September 2005. However, the submission to the Secretariat of copies of permits and certificates that have been issued to authorize trade in caviar remains very irregular. The Secretariat took the opportunity of the international meeting on illegal trade in caviar held by the European Commission from 27 to 29 June 2006 to remind relevant Parties about this issue.
7. The UNEP-WCMC database has great potential for monitoring the use of export quotas but should also help identify the fraudulent use of permits, which has been a common feature of illicit trade in caviar. However, the Secretariat cannot over-emphasize the importance of the routine and regular submission of copies of permits and certificates for caviar. Without the information from such documents, the database and tracking of trade cannot be effective.

Implementation of Resolution Conf. 12.7 (Rev. CoP13)

8. Concerning the implementation of Resolution Conf. 12.7 (Rev. CoP13) (Conservation of and trade in sturgeons and paddlefish), 2006 was the first quota year for which the revised version of this Resolution was fully applied. Whilst most countries having joint responsibility for shared stocks of sturgeon and paddlefish under the terms of that Resolution submitted their catch and export quotas on time, the supporting information provided often did not comply with the terms of the Resolution. In particular, in some cases it was not clear that the catch and export quotas proposed were based on the status of the stocks, nor that they had taken account of illegal offtake from the stocks. The Secretariat made every attempt to assist the countries concerned in providing this information but unfortunately this could not be accomplished in all cases. Consequently, it announced through Notification to the Parties No. 2006/024 of 11 April 2006 that export quotas would not be published for some species from shared stocks for 2006 and that therefore, in accordance with the Resolution, importing Parties were recommended not to accept the import of any specimens of these species from those stocks. The Secretariat has already begun discussions with the exporting countries concerned in order to avoid a similar situation in 2007.
9. Resolution Conf. 12.7 (Rev. CoP13) also urges range States of shared stocks to cooperate with the Secretariat to implement, on a three-year cycle beginning in 2006, an evaluation by appropriate experts of the implementation of the regional conservation strategy and monitoring regime for stocks of Acipenseriformes species. Such regional conservation strategy and monitoring regimes exist for all shared stocks of the North-West Black Sea and lower Danube River, the Caspian Sea and the Amur River, and are posted on the CITES website. The Secretariat has commenced preparatory work for these evaluations. Following a request from the Secretariat, the Animals Committee has appointed one of its regional representatives for Asia (Mr Pourkazemi) as a contact point on the Committee for this evaluation.
10. With respect to the Caspian Sea shared stocks, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is about to launch a two-year technical cooperation programme with Caspian littoral States focused on the sturgeon fishery, with a budget of USD 400,000. The Secretariat is hopeful that this project can incorporate a review of the existing regional conservation strategy and monitoring regime.
11. The Secretariat participated in a meeting of the range States of the North-West Black Sea and Lower Danube shared stock which was held in Sărulești, Romania, from 21 to 22 June 2006. This meeting discussed the evaluation of the 'Regional Strategy for the Conservation and Sustainable Management of Sturgeon Populations of the NW Black Sea and Lower Danube River in accordance with CITES', concluded by Bulgaria, Rumania, Serbia and Montenegro and Ukraine in November 2003. A preliminary round-table discussion indicated that Bulgaria and Romania in particular, had progressed in implementing certain actions under the regional strategy. Institutionalizing regional collaboration and ensuring effective communication remained problematic, whilst for some proposed activities the necessary resources were lacking. The costs of and possible support for implementing the regional strategy and monitoring regime needed to be better analysed. The participants agreed that the evaluation should be conducted in collaboration with the range States, be useful to them, and be

forward-looking and constructive. It should preferably be conducted by a small team of the region's sturgeons experts (for instance one or two per range State), assisted by experts from FAO and the CITES Secretariat, involving field visits combined with desktop reviews of available reports and information. If at all possible, the evaluation should be concluded before catch and export quotas are to be established for 2007. The results would include a report for dissemination to the range States and publication on the CITES website with targeted regional and national recommendations.

12. The Secretariat will commence an evaluation of the Regional Strategies on Conservation Population of *Acipenser schrenckii* and *Huso dauricus* and Sustainable Development in Heilongjiang (Amur) River later in 2006.

Review of Significant Trade in Acipenseriformes

13. At its 45th meeting (Paris, June 2001), the Standing Committee, in the context of the Review of Significant Trade, agreed on a comprehensive range of actions concerning the conservation and management of and trade in specimens of sturgeons from the Black Sea, Amur River and Caspian Sea. A series of deadlines were set for the implementation of these actions by the countries concerned.
14. The Secretariat informed the Committee at its 46th meeting (Geneva, March 2002) that the relevant Parties had satisfactorily implemented the actions specified by the first two deadlines. The Secretariat provided its assessment of compliance with the remaining deadline at the 47th meeting of the Committee (Santiago, November 2002) (document SC47 Doc. 11). The Secretariat concluded that the countries had substantially complied with the recommendations by the last deadline. Nevertheless, as further improvements in a number of fields were required, the Standing Committee agreed to extend by a further 12 months the deadline for the implementation of certain actions that were dependent on support from external agencies, i.e. until 31 December 2003, to allow for technical inputs from experts and to provide further incentives for the implementation of the priority actions concerning stock assessments and quotas.
15. This deadline was extended by the Committee at its 50th (Geneva, March 2004), 51st (Bangkok, October 2004) and 53rd meetings. The Committee sought further information on compliance with the recommendations it had made at SC45 in 2001. A summary of the recommendations made and previous conclusions by the Committee is attached as an Annex to this document. It appears to the Secretariat that only two recommendations were indicated as 'dependent on support from external agencies' and hence subject to an extension. These recommendations are shaded in the Annex. They concern the development of conservation strategies and action plans for the management and conservation of Acipenseriformes and requests for assistance concerning the management of hatcheries. Since the recommendations were made by the Standing Committee, the Conference of the Parties (initially in 2002 with Resolution Conf. 12.7), has made the existence of a regional conservation strategy and monitoring regime for stocks of Acipenseriformes species a prerequisite for the publication of export quotas. As explained above, regional conservation strategy and monitoring regimes exist for all shared stocks and their implementation is being evaluated on a three-year cycle beginning in 2006. The Standing Committee recommendation on this subject has therefore been overtaken by events. With respect to the FAO advice on hatcheries, the Secretariat understands that, as instructed, the Parties concerned have sought such advice where appropriate.
16. At SC45, the Standing Committee, under the Review of Significant Trade, recommended a suspension of all imports of specimens of *Acipenser gueldenstaedtii*, *A. nudiiventris*, *A. stellatus* and *Huso huso* from the Caspian Sea stocks of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation and Turkmenistan if the Secretariat was not able to verify that these countries had implemented the recommendations in the Annex to this document. The Secretariat recommends that, in view of the developments described in the preceding paragraphs and the extensive new provisions concerning the conservation of and trade in sturgeons and paddlefish in Resolution Conf. 12.7 (Rev. CoP13), the Standing Committee withdraw this recommendation.

Review of Standing Committee recommendations and actions arising from the Animals Committee Review of Significant Trade in Acipenseriformes

Countries*	Species	Standing Committee recommendations	Deadline	Secretariat report	SC action
CASPIAN SEA					
Azerbaijan Kazakhstan Russian Federation and, where appropriate, Turkmenistan	<i>Acipenser gueldenstaedtii</i> , <i>Acipenser nudiiventris</i> , <i>Acipenser stellatus</i> , <i>Huso huso</i>	SC45 Summary Report Annex 2 Inform Secretariat of all stocks of specimens intended for export that are currently held from sturgeons harvested in the spring of 2001 only, indicating the amounts of all types of specimens for each species separately	20/07/2001	SC46 (oral report) Sufficient progress to justify the acceptance of catch and export quotas for 2002	SC46 Summary record Report noted, range States commended
		SC45 Summary Report Annex 2 Restrict further exports in 2001 to the amounts of stocks referred to above, provided that such amounts do not exceed the quotas published in Notification to the Parties No. 2001/005 and amendments to these quotas that the Secretariat has accepted based on the quotas established by the Commission on Aquatic Bioresources of the Caspian Sea	20/07/2001		
		SC45 Summary Report Annex 2 Suspend all commercial harvesting for the remainder of 2001 as a demonstration of their commitment to the long-term conservation and sustainable use of sturgeons	20/07/2001		
		SC45 Summary Report Annex 2 Facilitate the verification by the Secretariat of undertakings including the issuance of multi-entry visas to facilitate the work of the verification teams	20/07/2001		
		SC45 Summary Report Annex 2 Agree an appropriate mechanism for the establishment and implementation of a common policy for the conservation and utilization of sturgeon resources involving all countries exploiting sturgeons in the Caspian Sea, ¹ which shall be the	31/12/2001		

* Countries to which recommendations are addressed.

¹ Models to be considered should include any earlier agreement on these issues.

Countries*	Species	Standing Committee recommendations	Deadline	Secretariat report	SC action
		basis of coordinated management of shared sturgeon resources (including the establishment of catch and export quotas for 2002)			
		SC45 Summary Report Annex 2 Conduct a comprehensive survey of sturgeon stocks in the Caspian Sea involving representatives of all States that conduct commercial fishing of sturgeon in the Caspian Sea	31/12/2001		
		SC45 Summary Report Annex 2 Request Interpol to conduct an analysis of illegal trade in sturgeons, and request the CITES Secretariat, in collaboration with Interpol and WCO, to conduct a study of enforcement needs for implementing CITES and measures in national legislation aimed at combating illegal harvesting and trade	31/12/2001		
		SC45 Summary Report Annex 2 The failure to implement the recommendations in the three boxes above before the end of 2001 will result in the Secretariat not accepting any catch or export quotas for sturgeons from these countries for 2002	31/12/2001		
		SC45 Summary Report Annex 2 Establish a long-term survey programme as the basis for future management of sturgeon stocks in the Caspian Sea, incorporating up-to-date technology and techniques, and taking account of advice from FAO and other bodies as appropriate	20/06/2002	SC47 (SC47 Doc. 11) Action has been complied with	SC47 Summary report Noted need to: a) urge TACIS ¹ to direct funding within the next 12 months at the key aspects of the fishery management system outlined above, and specifically to provide funding for specialist technical input from, or in collaboration with FAO; b) arrange, in collaboration with TACIS, a meeting of the five Caspian States and FAO, TACIS and CITES, to agree on the following priority actions and on an action plan for their implementation:

¹ European Community programme concerning the provision of assistance to the partner States in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

Countries*	Species	Standing Committee recommendations	Deadline	Secretariat report	SC action
					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) the development of an internationally acceptable stock assessment and monitoring system; ii) the development of a transparent, robust and internationally acceptable method for deriving catch and export quotas from stock monitoring data; and c) continue having the CITES Secretariat review catch and export quotas before they are made public
		SC45 Summary Report Annex 2 Request FAO to provide advice concerning the operations of regional fishery management organizations, the management of shared fish resources and dealing with unregulated fisheries	20/06/2002	SC47 (SC47 Doc. 11) Action has been complied with – FAO responded that resources were not available at this stage	SC47 Summary report Noted a), b) and c) above
		SC45 Summary Report Annex 2 Adopt a collaborative basin-level management system for sturgeon fisheries in the Caspian Sea as the basis for sustainable commercial exports of sturgeons, taking into account the advice referred to above	20/06/2002	SC47 (SC47 Doc. 11) Forum for collaboration and decision-making established and intergovernmental framework agreement on the management of the sturgeon resource in the Caspian Sea developed	SC47 Summary report Noted a), b) and c) above
		SC45 Summary Report Annex 2 Significantly increase efforts to combat illegal harvesting and illegal trade, and to regulate domestic trade	20/06/2002	SC47 (SC47 Doc. 11) Increased efforts in law enforcement were confirmed but regulation of domestic markets remains a considerable challenge. Scope for improvement in targeting sources of illegal caviar seized in importing, re-exporting and transit countries	SC47 Summary report Noted a), b) and c) above
		SC45 Summary Report Annex 2 Make samples of sturgeon specimens available for DNA testing and established priorities for further research on the identification of sturgeon stocks	20/06/2002	SC47 (SC47 Doc. 11) Offered to make samples available	SC47 Summary report Noted a), b) and c) above

Countries*	Species	Standing Committee recommendations	Deadline	Secretariat report	SC action
		and specimens in trade			
		SC45 Summary Report Annex 2 Submit a funding proposal to the Global Environmental Fund, or other donors as appropriate, for the rehabilitation of sturgeon stocks, hatcheries and restocking programmes, and for support for stock assessments, marking systems, identification of specimens in trade, public awareness and enforcement	20/06/2002	SC47 (SC47 Doc. 11) Funding proposals developed for submission to GEF	SC47 Summary report Noted a), b) and c) above
		SC45 Summary Report Annex 2 Implement the caviar labelling system established in Resolution Conf. 11.13 for all exports	20/06/2002	SC47 (SC47 Doc. 11) Implemented	SC47 Summary report Noted a), b) and c) above
		SC45 Summary Report Annex 2 [from SC45 Doc. 12 Annex 1] <i>Regarding exports and export quotas</i> Develop adequate, science-based stock assessment and monitoring systems, as well as a mechanism to identify and regulate exports of legally obtained specimens of [the relevant sturgeon species in trade from each country]	20/06/2002	SC47 (SC47 Doc. 11) Action has been complied with	SC47 Summary report Noted a), b) and c) above
		SC45 Summary Report Annex 2 [from SC45 Doc. 12 Annex 1] <i>Regarding exports and export quotas</i> Develop and implement adequate control measures and inspection procedures to combat illegal harvesting of and trade in specimens of the sturgeon species in trade	20/06/2002	SC47 (SC47 Doc. 11) Increased efforts in law enforcement were confirmed but regulation of domestic markets remains a considerable challenge. Scope for improvement in targeting sources of illegal caviar seized in importing, re-exporting and transit countries	SC47 Summary report Noted a), b) and c) above
		SC45 Summary Report Annex 2 [from SC45 Doc. 12 Annex 1] <i>Regarding exports and export quotas</i> Base all catch and export quotas for [the relevant sturgeon species in trade from each country] on scientific stock assessments and monitoring systems using recognized methodologies	20/06/2002	SC47 (SC47 Doc. 11) Action has been complied with	SC47 Summary report Noted a), b) and c) above
		SC45 Summary Report Annex 2 [from SC45 Doc. 12 Annex 1] <i>Regarding exports and export quotas</i> Implement from 2001 onwards the recommended universal	20/06/2002	SC47 (SC47 Doc. 11) Implemented	SC47 Summary report Noted a), b) and c) above

Countries*	Species	Standing Committee recommendations	Deadline	Secretariat report	SC action
		caviar labelling system as outlined in Resolution Conf. 11.13 for all exports and re-exports of specimens of [the relevant sturgeon species in trade from each country]			
		SC45 Summary Report Annex 2 [from SC45 Doc. 12 Annex 1] [Regarding exports and export quotas] Participate in the development of regional conservation strategies and action plans for the management and conservation of Acipenseriformes species that will include provisions to ensure that all aspects of harvesting and trade are controlled over the long term. Such plans should <i>inter alia</i> cover the scientific basis for catch and export quotas, habitat conditions (including seasonal water flows), other fisheries with a by-catch of Acipenseriformes species; impact of pollution on sturgeon metabolism and reproduction rate; sturgeon restocking programmes; standardized methodology for the monitoring of populations and the reporting of catches; collection of data on population composition (sex ratio, age, etc.); revision of existing fisheries regulations, e.g. size limits, fishing seasons and grounds, and establishment of new regulations where needed; licensing of sturgeon fisheries and marketing of catch at landing sites; and level of the domestic market of sturgeon products and its regulation	20/06/2002	SC47 (SC47 Doc. 11) All littoral States have indicated their willingness to participate in the development of a conservation strategy and action plan. External assistance will be needed, however. For CITES purposes it is also possible to regard the current system of stock management through catch and export quotas as the most essential aspect of a conservation strategy. It will nevertheless be in the interest of the countries concerned to document formally a consensual strategy and action plan concerning this aspect, but also other elements outlined in the recommendation of the Animals Committee	SC47 Summary report Deadline for the implementation of the Committee's recommendations dependent on external agencies extended by a further 12 months
		SC45 Summary Report Annex 2 [from SC45 Doc. 12 Annex 1] <i>Regarding aquaculture</i> Provide the Secretariat with detailed information on aquaculture operations involving [the relevant sturgeon species] in their territories, namely: measures in place to ensure ongoing production and release of fingerlings from aquaculture operations for international trade, including information on the funding of aquaculture operations through exports; the number, names and location of approved or registered aquaculture operations and the annual production per operation; number and size (expressed as weight class) of fingerlings released per species per site per year;	20/06/2002	SC47 (SC47 Doc. 11) Expressed a strong commitment to maintain or expand stock enhancement programmes. Revenue from international trade in caviar is used to support stock enhancement. Detailed information on aquaculture operations and the species and quantities produced provided. Number and size of fingerlings released provided. Confirmation that it is against	SC47 Summary report Noted a), b) and c) above

Countries*	Species	Standing Committee recommendations	Deadline	Secretariat report	SC action
		research and monitoring systems to assess the success of introductions; measures to prevent unauthorized releases of captive-bred specimens or live imports; measures to prevent unauthorized hybridization of Acipenseriformes species in captivity		the national policy to release sturgeon hybrids or to introduce species from other basins and rivers in the Caspian Sea	
		SC45 Summary Report Annex 2 [from SC45 Doc. 12 Annex 1] <i>Regarding aquaculture</i> Request assistance from FAO concerning the management of hatcheries, where appropriate	20/06/2002	SC47 (SC47 Doc. 11) Action has been complied with – FAO responded that resources were not available at this stage	SC47 Summary report Deadline for the implementation of the Committee's recommendations dependent on external agencies extended by a further 12 months
		SC45 Summary Report Annex 2 [from SC45 Doc. 12 Annex 1] <i>Regarding the identification of stocks and specimens in trade</i> Participate, in consultation with the Secretariat, in the development of a universal DNA-based system for the identification of Acipenseriformes species which may include the collection of specimens from all stocks of Acipenseriformes species in its territory	20/06/2002	SC47 (SC47 Doc. 11) Offered to make samples available	SC47 Summary report Noted a), b) and c) above
BLACK SEA					
Bulgaria, Romania, Russian Federation	<i>Acipenser gueldenstaedtii</i> , <i>Acipenser nudiiventris</i> , <i>Acipenser stellatus</i> , <i>Huso huso</i>	SC45 Summary Report [and SC45 Doc. 12 Annex 1] Establish an agreement for the cooperative management of sturgeon fisheries in the Black Sea and implemented all other recommendations of the Animals Committee	28/02/2002	SC46 (oral report) Sufficient progress made to justify the acceptance of catch and export quotas for 2002	SC46 Summary report Report noted, range States commended
Georgia	<i>Acipenser gueldenstaedtii</i> , <i>Acipenser nudiiventris</i> , <i>Acipenser stellatus</i> , <i>Huso huso</i>	SC45 Summary Report No further action required provided that no exports or re-exports are authorized	None	No further action required	No further action required
Turkey	<i>Acipenser gueldenstaedtii</i> , <i>Acipenser nudiiventris</i> , <i>Acipenser stellatus</i> , <i>Huso huso</i>	SC45 Summary Report [and SC45 Doc. 12 Annex 1] Recommend to all Parties that no imports of specimens of these species be accepted from Turkey until it implements actions recommended	Immediate	SC46 (oral report) Turkey implemented all the recommendations in document SC45 Doc. 12 Note: Import suspension recommendation in effect from 10 August 2001 (Notification to	SC46 Summary report Noted that recommendations had been implemented and trade suspension lifted

Countries*	Species	Standing Committee recommendations	Deadline	Secretariat report	SC action
				the Parties No. 2001/056) to 9 April 2002 (Notification to the Parties No. 2002/021)	
Ukraine	<i>Acipenser gueldenstaedtii</i> , <i>Acipenser nudiiventris</i> , <i>Acipenser stellatus</i> , <i>Huso huso</i>	SC45 Summary Report [from SC45 Doc. 12 Annex 1] Establish zero export quota for all four species (excluding fertilized live eggs and live fish) and provide the Secretariat with detailed information on the measures in place to prevent illegal harvesting of sturgeons for domestic consumption and/or international trade	20/07/2001	SC46 (oral report) Sufficient progress made to justify the acceptance of catch and export quotas for 2002	SC46 Summary report Report noted, Ukraine commended
AZOV SEA					
Russian Federation	<i>Acipenser gueldenstaedtii</i> <i>Acipenser stellatus</i>	SC45 Summary Report [from SC45 Doc. 12 Annex 1] Export limit for 2001 should be 75 % of the amount specified in the export quotas published in Notification No. 2001/005, after deducting the amounts registered with the Secretariat as still remaining from the quotas for the year 2000	immediate	No further action required	No further action required
Ukraine	<i>Acipenser gueldenstaedtii</i> , <i>Acipenser nudiiventris</i> , <i>Acipenser stellatus</i> , <i>Huso huso</i>	SC45 Summary Report [from SC45 Doc. 12 Annex 1] Establish zero export quota for all four species (excluding fertilized live eggs and live fish) and provide the Secretariat with detailed information on the measures in place to prevent illegal harvesting of sturgeons for domestic consumption and/or international trade	20/07/2001	SC46 (oral report) Sturgeon stocks in the Azov Sea have not shown signs of a recovery but no further action required	SC46 Summary report Report noted, Ukraine commended
AMUR RIVER					
China Russian Federation	<i>Acipenser schrenckii</i> , <i>Huso dauricus</i>	SC45 Summary Report Annex 2 [from SC45 Doc. 12 Annex 1] Secondary recommendations of the Animals Committee [these are not specified in SC45 Doc. 12] to be implemented. No further action until deadline provided that no further harvesting is done in 2001	28/02/2002	SC46 (oral report) Sufficient progress made to justify the acceptance of catch and export quotas for 2002	SC46 Summary report Report noted, range States commended