

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

ANNUAL REPORTS ON RANCHING OPERATIONS

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.

Background

2. At its third meeting (New Delhi, 1981), the Conference of the Parties adopted Resolution Conf. 3.15 (Ranching), which established special criteria for the transfer of populations from Appendix I to Appendix II for ranching purposes. It was replaced at the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (Harare, 1997) by Resolution Conf. 10.18 (Ranching and trade in ranched specimens), which was itself replaced at the 11th meeting (Gigiri, 2000) by Resolution Conf. 11.16 (Ranching and trade in ranched specimens of species transferred from Appendix I to Appendix II).
3. In Resolution Conf. 11.16, in paragraph a) under *Regarding monitoring and reporting in relation to species transferred from Appendix I to Appendix II for ranching*, the Conference of the Parties recommends that each Party that has made a successful proposal to transfer a population of a species from Appendix I to Appendix II, for ranching purposes, should submit to the Secretariat annual reports on all relevant aspects of the approved ranching operation, and include any new information on the following:
  - i) *the status of the wild population concerned;*
  - ii) *the number of specimens (eggs, young or adults) taken annually from the wild;*
  - iii) *an estimate of the percentage of the production of the wild population that is taken for the ranching operation;*
  - iv) *the number of animals released and their survival rates estimated on the basis of surveys and tagging programmes, if any;*
  - v) *the mortality rate in captivity and causes of such mortality;*
  - vi) *production, sales and exports of products; and*
  - vii) *conservation programmes and scientific experiments carried out in relation to the ranching operation or the wild population concerned.*

4. In the same section of Resolution Conf. 11.16, in paragraphs b) and c), the Conference of the Parties recommends that:

*with the consent of the Standing Committee and the Party concerned, the Secretariat should have the option to visit and examine a ranching operation wherever circumstances require it to do so; and*

*where the Secretariat reports failure to comply with this Resolution, and the Standing Committee and the Party concerned fail to resolve the matter satisfactorily, the Standing Committee may, after full consultation with the Party concerned, request the Depositary Government to prepare a proposal to transfer the population concerned back to Appendix I.*

#### Reports received in 2006

5. The 14 countries listed in the table below have made successful proposals to transfer populations of Appendix-I species to Appendix II for ranching purposes, in accordance with one of the above-mentioned Resolutions. None of these countries has provided reports annually. In the first months of 2006, the Secretariat wrote to the Parties concerned to remind them of the recommendation to submit an annual report. The table indicates which countries had provided a report by the beginning of August 2006. The reports that were received in 2006 have been placed on the CITES website under Resources/National reports.

| Party        | Species                     | Year of transfer from Appendix I to Appendix II | Report received in 2006 |
|--------------|-----------------------------|---|-------------------------|
| Argentina    | <i>Caiman latirostris</i>   | CoP10, 1997                                     | Yes (July 2006)         |
| Botswana     | <i>Crocodylus niloticus</i> | CoP7, 1989                                      | Yes (August 2006)       |
| Cuba         | <i>Crocodylus acutus</i>    | CoP13, 2004                                     | Yes (July 2006)         |
| Ecuador      | <i>Melanosuchus niger</i>   | CoP9, 1994                                      | No                      |
| Ethiopia     | <i>Crocodylus niloticus</i> | CoP8, 1992                                      | No                      |
| Indonesia    | <i>Crocodylus porosus</i>   | CoP9, 1994                                      | Yes (July 2006)         |
| Kenya        | <i>Crocodylus niloticus</i> | CoP8, 1992                                      | Yes (May 2006)          |
| Madagascar   | <i>Crocodylus niloticus</i> | CoP10, 1997                                     | Yes (May 2006)          |
| Malawi       | <i>Crocodylus niloticus</i> | CoP7, 1989                                      | No                      |
| Mozambique   | <i>Crocodylus niloticus</i> | CoP7, 1989                                      | No                      |
| South Africa | <i>Crocodylus niloticus</i> | CoP9, 1994                                      | No                      |
| Uganda       | <i>Crocodylus niloticus</i> | CoP10, 1997                                     | No                      |
| Zambia       | <i>Crocodylus niloticus</i> | CoP7, 1989                                      | Yes (June 2006)         |
| Zimbabwe     | <i>Crocodylus niloticus</i> | CoP4, 1983                                      | Yes (May 2006)          |

NB: This table excludes Australia (for *Crocodylus porosus*) and the United Republic of Tanzania (for *Crocodylus niloticus*). Although these populations were transferred from Appendix I to II in accordance with Resolution Conf. 3.15, at the fifth and eighth meetings of the Conference of the Parties respectively (Buenos Aires, 1985; Kyoto, 1992), the Conference decided subsequently to maintain these population in Appendix II in accordance with the usual criteria (at CoP9 for Australia and at CoP11 for the United Republic of Tanzania).

## Issues to be considered

6. In practice, the procedures laid down in Resolution Conf. 11.16 and its predecessors for transferring species from Appendix I to Appendix II have only been applied to populations of crocodylians. In this regard, the Secretariat draws the attention of the Standing Committee to documents AC22 Doc. 12.2 and AC22 Inf. 2 on a review of crocodile ranching programmes, prepared by the IUCN/SSC Crocodile Specialist Group (CSG). They provide a useful overview of approved ranching programmes, noting that ranching of crocodylians is now a widespread management practice that has worked successfully in many countries with differing socio-economic levels, technical capabilities and crocodylian species. The review indicates that there is now considerable evidence to demonstrate that ranching, when applied to crocodylians, is not only an inherently 'safe' and robust form of sustainable utilization relative to wild harvest of adults, but also that conservation benefits for Appendix-I species can be derived through international trade if the wild harvest strategy employed is conservative, safe, strictly regulated and subject to reporting.
7. The review concludes that no Party complies fully with the reporting recommendations in Resolution Conf. 11.16, but that the utility of some information requirements is questionable given the increased experience with crocodile ranching while, even when provided, the information is rarely if ever used in any constructive way.
8. Regarding the reporting obligations of Parties, at its 22nd meeting (AC22, Lima, July 2006), the Animals Committee supported the following recommendations in document AC22 Doc. 12.2 and the amendments to Resolution Conf. 11.16 accordingly:
  - a) *Reduce and simplify the annual reporting requirements to the following:*
    - i) *Status of the wild population concerned (established by monitoring at an appropriate frequency and with sufficient precision to allow recognition of changes in population trend owing to ranching);*
    - ii) *Number of specimens (eggs, young or adults) taken annually from the wild; and*
    - iii) *Production and exports of products.*
  - b) *Upon request make the following information available to the CITES Secretariat:*
    - i) *Estimate of the percentage of the production of the wild population that is taken for the ranching operation;*
    - ii) *Number of animals released and their survival rates estimated on the basis of surveys and tagging programmes, if any;*
    - iii) *Mortality rate in captivity and causes of such mortality; and*
    - iv) *Conservation programmes and scientific experiments carried out in relation to the ranching operation or the wild population concerned.*
9. On the basis of the review by CSG, it appears that, in some countries, the approved ranching programmes have been far from successful, although the ranching activities do not seem to have negatively impacted the wild crocodylian populations in these countries. The programmes in Malawi and Uganda are described as effectively moribund, and in Ecuador as having failed both economically and from a CITES implementation perspective.
10. CSG's review states that generally, "nowhere has ranching been associated with or been alleged to be the cause of detrimental effects on wild populations of crocodylians". However, since the time that the review was undertaken in 2004, the CSG reported that information had come to light indicating that the implementation of Resolution Conf 11.16 and the administration and regulation of ranching in Madagascar was a cause for concern, and that the ranching of *Crocodylus niloticus* in Madagascar may be used to disguise or launder skins of adult crocodiles harvested from the wild. The CSG report and recent letters to the Secretariat by the Chairman of the CSG questioned *inter alia*

the lack of monitoring of wild crocodile populations, inadequate inspection of the ranching operations and problems in controlling the export of skins of crocodiles of wild and ranched origins. The CSG also offered suggestions on how the situation could be addressed.

11. Madagascar's ranching programme was confirmed to be of urgent concern during an informal meeting of the Secretariat, members of the Animals Committee from the African region, and representatives of Madagascar, South Africa, CSG and IWMC-World Conservation Trust in the sidelines of AC22. A number of measures were identified to improve the controls of the ranching operations and the wild harvest of crocodiles in Madagascar, including the following:

Concerning ranching

- The Management Authority (MA) and Scientific Authority (SA), with the assistance of independent experts, should audit the country's crocodile ranching operations in order to:
  - i) determine the quantities and sizes of skins held in stock;
  - ii) estimate the annual production potential of each operation;
  - iii) establish the future annual production and export capacity for the next three years; and
  - iv) establish annual export quotas for ranched skins that accurately and realistically reflect the annual production capacities.
- Each operation should be inspected regularly, for instance quarterly, during the next two years.
- All tags for crocodile skins should be collected by the MA with a view of issuing new ones, which should clearly differentiate between wild harvested and ranched skins; the issuance and application of these tags should be closely controlled by the MA so that operations can only purchase tags from the MA on the basis of demonstrated ranch production.
- Before issuing export permits for skins of *Crocodylus niloticus*, the MA and an independent expert should verify the number, size and markings of skins to be exported; once tagged for export, skins should be packed in containers that are sealed under supervision by the MA to prevent any substitution or adding of skins, and to ensure that the skins match those stated on the export permits.
- At the end of each calendar year, the MA, in the presence of an independent expert, should destroy all tags that were not used.
- The SA should examine the options to undertake within the next two year the research and population surveys that are required to implement the reporting recommendations under Resolution Conf. 11.16.
- The MA should obtain assistance from relevant experts and NGOs to review and improve its management of *Crocodylus niloticus* in Madagascar.
- The Secretariat should be advised about the new protocols for trade in crocodile skins from Madagascar so that Parties can be informed accordingly.

Concerning wild harvest

- The conservation status and distribution of *Crocodylus niloticus*, the occurrence of human/crocodile conflicts in Madagascar, and the relationship between current locations of wild harvests and conflict zones should be researched.
- The MA and the SA, in consultation with appropriate experts, should revise Madagascar's current policy for harvesting wild crocodiles, and develop a new and improved management strategy with a view to ensuring sustainability of the harvest, continuous monitoring of wild populations and adequate responses to human/crocodile conflicts.

- The current levels of harvest and export for skins of wild crocodiles should be maintained or, preferably, reduced until the surveys and the new management strategy are completed.
12. The Secretariat agrees that the measures indicated in paragraph 11 are timely and pertinent, and should be put in place as soon as possible. Furthermore, the Secretariat believes that the safety mechanism provided in Resolution Conf. 11.16, as outlined in paragraph 4 above, should be activated concerning Madagascar.
  13. The Secretariat reminds the Standing Committee that in the context of their implementation of Decision 13.68, the Animals and Plants Committees are currently evaluating production systems for specimens of CITES-listed species and determining under which source code each production system fits, including source code 'R' for 'ranching'. Additionally, they are considering the definition of 'ranching' within the context of existing CITES Resolutions, which may result in a proposal to revise Resolution Conf. 11.16. The Animals and Plants Committees are to submit a final report on this matter to the Conference of the Parties at its 14th meeting (CoP14), which may include a draft resolution.
  14. The Secretariat is of the opinion that in view of the narrow scope and limited utility of Resolution Conf. 11.16 in its current form, it might be worth considering incorporating relevant parts of it into Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP13) on criteria for amendment of Appendices I and II, and into a new resolution on production systems for specimens of CITES-listed species.

#### Recommendations

15. Because of the circumstances described in paragraphs 10 and 11 above, the Standing Committee is requested to give its consent to the Secretariat to visit and examine the ranching programme for *Crocodylus niloticus* in Madagascar. The Secretariat will be in contact with the CITES authorities in Madagascar to obtain their consent for this inspection.
16. The Standing Committee is invited to note the amendments to the reporting requirements in Resolution Conf. 11.16, as proposed by the Animals Committee and described in paragraph 8 above.
17. The Standing Committee should take note of the evaluation of production systems that is being undertaken by the Animals and Plants Committees for consideration at CoP14, which may result in significant changes to Resolution Conf. 11.16 or, as suggested by the Secretariat, its integration into other Resolutions.