

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



Fifty-seventh meeting of the Standing Committee  
Geneva (Switzerland), 14-18 July 2008

Strategic and administrative matters

CLEARING HOUSE

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.
2. At its 50th meeting (Geneva, March 2004), the Standing Committee established its Clearing House to advise on how technical implementation issues should be dealt with. Its Terms of Reference, as agreed at that meeting, are provided in the Annex to the present document.
3. The Clearing House comprises two officials nominated by Parties and appointed by the Standing Committee. Its current members are Mr Colman O'Criodain (Ireland) and Mr Bruce Weissgold (United States of America).
4. Mr O'Criodain, who has been a member of the Clearing House since October 2004, ceased to be an official of the Government of Ireland in March 2008 and has therefore relinquished his membership. The Secretariat would like to take this opportunity to thank him for his excellent work.
5. At the present meeting, the Standing Committee should appoint a new member of the Clearing House.

## TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE CLEARING HOUSE

### GLOSSARY OF TERMS

#### General definition

**Clearing House** – two officials nominated by Parties and appointed by the Standing Committee to advise on the handling of technical implementation issues referred to the latter. These persons do not hold formal meetings and all business is handled by email or by telephone. They refer their recommendations to the Chairman of the Standing Committee for a final decision, in consultation with the Committee members if appropriate.

#### Category definitions

**Administrative issues** – issues for which a process or body is already in place, but which require oversight and support to bring to fruition. The action required will involve coordinating, organizing, liaising, supervising and facilitating actions to ensure progress. The desired outcome would usually be to improve the effectiveness of a particular procedure or process.

**Operational and technical issues** – issues that require consideration from a day-to-day management perspective and involve comparing, analysing, considering, applying and piloting possible procedures to ensure practicality. The desired outcome would usually be a tool or procedure.

**Policy issues** – issues that require resolution in the form of a universal definition or ruling that involves integrating, defining, clarifying or drafting texts to ensure clarity and consistency of the policy in question. The desired outcome would usually be a reference document.

**Scientific issues** – issues that require scientific input to ensure that the fundamental principles of the Convention are achieved in the most effective way. This will involve researching, reporting and advising on particular cases to ensure that decisions are scientifically-based. The desired outcome would usually be a report.

### REFERRAL PROCEDURE

1. An issue is referred to the Standing Committee by the Conference of the Parties, one of the permanent committees, a Party or the Secretariat.
2. The Chairman of the Standing Committee refers the issue to the Clearing house.
3. The Clearing House prepares the following for the Chairman of the Standing Committee:
  - a) a brief description (preferably less than one page) defining the problem by outlining:
    - i) the issues to be addressed;
    - ii) an analysis of the issue;
    - iii) the States, organizations or persons to be consulted or involved; and
    - iv) the desired outcome (e.g. a definition, a database or a register);
  - b)
    - i) a recommendation as to which CITES body should consider the issue in accordance with the implementation category definitions or other guidelines provided by the Chairman of the Standing Committee; or
    - ii) a recommendation to take no action, if given the possibility by the Chairman of the Standing Committee. The Clearing House may reach this conclusion if it determines that the issue is

trivial or that attempts to remedy it would have unacceptable consequences or are too costly; and

- c) In general, a referral that would be categorized as:
- i) administrative issues to be referred to the Secretariat;
  - ii) scientific issues to be referred to the Animals Committee, the Plants Committee and/or the Nomenclature Committee; or
  - iii) policy and operational and technical issues to be referred to the Chairman of the Standing Committee in the first instance, although the issue might ultimately require a working group or a decision of the Conference of the Parties to progress the issue.
4. The Chairman of the Standing Committee should consider the recommendations for referral to one of the CITES bodies. If the Chairman of the Standing Committee is in doubt regarding the referral, he should refer the issue back to the Clearing House for a more thorough analysis and a later submission to the next meeting of the Standing Committee for a final decision.
5. Issues referred by this process to a CITES body should be dealt with according to its practices and rules of procedure. For example, an ad hoc working group may be formed or the Secretariat may be requested to engage a consultant to address the issue.