

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

Interpretation and implementation of the Convention

Compliance and enforcement

NATIONAL REPORTS

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.

Submission of national reports

2. At its 55th meeting (The Hague, June 2007), the Standing Committee did not have time to consider and decide upon the recommendation made in document SC55 Doc. 16 on National reports. The recommendation concerned a potential suspension of trade regarding Djibouti, Dominica, Eritrea, Grenada, Rwanda and Seychelles for their failure to submit annual reports for three consecutive years.
3. A Standing Committee postal procedure was initiated in October 2007 to address those SC55 agenda items that had not been considered in June 2007. During this procedure, the Secretariat advised Committee members that Eritrea and Grenada had submitted their missing reports which meant that only four Parties remained affected by the recommendation. Two Committee members expressed concern about deciding on a compliance measure without first giving those Parties an opportunity to be heard. Having sympathy for these views, the Secretariat offered to withdraw its recommendation and postpone consideration of the matter until the present meeting. There was no objection to this proposed course of action.
4. In April 2008, the Seychelles submitted its missing reports for the period 2002-2007.
5. As the deadline for submission of the 2006 annual report was 31 October 2007, the Secretariat's records now show that Djibouti, Dominica and Rwanda have failed, without having provided adequate justification, to provide annual reports for four consecutive years.
6. The Secretariat's records also show that the following Parties have failed, without providing adequate justification, to provide annual reports for three consecutive years (i.e. the period 2004-2006): Belize, the Central African Republic, Guinea, Kazakhstan, Lesotho, Nepal, the Syrian Arab Republic and Vanuatu.
7. Mauritania (see Notification to the Parties No. 2003/027 of 6 May 2003) and Somalia (see Notification to the Parties No. 2006/074 of 14 December 2006) remain subject to a recommendation to suspend trade for the failure to submit annual reports. Mauritania, however, has submitted a biennial report for 2006-2007 and has indicated its intention to submit its missing annual reports in the near future.
8. The Secretariat has sent and will continue to send reminders to Parties that have one or more missing national reports. It also encourages fulfilment of the Convention's reporting obligations and provides related advice whenever it has the opportunity to meet face-to-face with CITES authorities.

Submission levels for national reports, particularly biennial reports, could nevertheless be improved. The Secretariat would therefore welcome any suggestions or assistance that members of the Standing Committee might be able to provide to ensure better awareness of and compliance with CITES reporting obligations

Harmonization of knowledge management and reporting

9. At its 14th meeting (CoP14, The Hague, 2007), the Conference of the Parties also adopted Decision 14.38 as follows:

The Secretariat shall:

- a) *continue to collaborate with the secretariats of other biodiversity-related conventions, UNEP and other bodies in order to facilitate the harmonization of knowledge management and reporting;*
- b) *identify additional ways to reduce the reporting burden on Parties, inter alia, in the context of its ongoing review of the Resolutions and Decisions of the Conference of the Parties, its support to the Standing Committee on electronic permitting and its work with IUCN or other organizations to compile and analyse CITES-related reports; and*
- c) *report at the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties on the results of this work.*

Although there is no requirement under Decision 14.38 to report to the Standing Committee, the Secretariat considered that it might be useful for Committee members to be aware of key developments concerning the harmonization of knowledge management and reporting that have occurred since CoP14. The two areas of activity are linked because national reports are the primary means by which MEA-related knowledge is gathered and it is this knowledge that then must be managed as effectively and efficiently as possible.

10. In March 2008 the Secretariat participated in a Workshop on Knowledge Management among Biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), organized by the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre and UNEP's Division of Environmental Law and Conventions. Representatives of the Secretariats of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), CMS/Indian Ocean South-East Asian Marine Turtle Memorandum of Understanding, African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement, Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, Environmental Management Group and Countdown 2010 also attended.
11. Workshop participants agreed to launch the joint knowledge management Internet portal (www.InforMEA.org) at CBD CoP9. The portal will be further developed through the second phase of a knowledge management project but currently contains: the full text of MEA articles; decisions, resolutions and recommendations of MEA governing bodies; strategic planning documents; national focal point information; and lists of Parties.
12. CITES Parties should soon be able to test the English version of the online biennial report format. This online reporting tool was developed in consultation with UNEP-WCMC, using funds available under the knowledge management project. Further work is needed, however, to make the tool available in other CITES working languages and to link it to an effective analytical tool. Online reporting, using a common platform, nevertheless has the potential to reduce duplicative reporting, allow interoperability among different MEA national reports and enhance the sharing of data among biodiversity-related MEAs. Moreover, the online reporting tool can be used to generate additional online reporting forms.
13. Workshop participants decided that a new and more realistic concept of harmonized reporting needs to be conveyed to MEA Parties. In this connection, a paper on the pre-conditions for harmonization of reporting will be drafted by UNEP-WCMC and the final version of such a paper distributed by all MEA secretariats. A side event on harmonized reporting is also scheduled to take place at CBD CoP9.

Reduction of the reporting burden – special reports

14. At CoP14, the Conference of the Parties adopted Decision 14.37 which states that:

The Standing Committee, with the assistance of the Secretariat, the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre and IUCN – The World Conservation Union, shall undertake a review of the recommendations to Parties to provide special reports under the Convention, assess whether they have been or might be effectively incorporated into the annual and biennial reports and consider how the biennial report format might be revised to facilitate such incorporation. It shall report at the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties on its conclusions and recommendations.

15. The Standing Committee might wish to establish a working group, similar to the Working Group on Reporting Requirements that it established in 2003, to assist it in implementing Decision 14.37. Such a working group should have a designated chairman and might work primarily through electronic means.

16. The Secretariat understands that the European Commission, with the assistance of TRAFFIC International, is already studying and preparing recommendations for improving the current biennial report format.

Reduction of the reporting burden – trade in artificially propagated plants

17. During CoP14, the Conference also adopted a series of decisions aimed at reducing the reporting burden associated with trade in artificially propagated plants. The decisions were directed to the Secretariat, the Plants Committee and the Standing Committee, as follows:

14.39 The Secretariat shall, in consultation with the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre:

- a) conduct a survey of reporting practices of Parties relating to trade in artificially propagated plants of taxa included in Appendix II, e.g. regarding the degree of completeness and detail;*
- b) identify cases where the compilation of trade data pertaining to artificially propagated plants of taxa included in Appendix II has contributed to a significant extent to the detection of illegal trade or to any other analysis related to the conservation of wild flora;*
- c) taking into consideration the results of paragraphs a) and b) above, analyse the Convention text and Resolutions in order to identify binding and non-binding elements of reporting, with special emphasis on artificially propagated plants of taxa included in Appendix II. The Secretariat shall list options for streamlining such reporting; and*
- d) report on its findings to the Plants Committee prior to its 18th meeting.*

14.40 The Plants Committee shall consider the report of the Secretariat and assess the usefulness to its programme of work of reporting on trade in artificially propagated plants of taxa included in Appendix II. It shall report its findings to the Standing Committee at its 58th meeting.

14.41 The Standing Committee shall:

- a) taking into consideration the results of the Plants Committee's assessment, analyse in what manner, for which groups of plants, etc., such reporting could be streamlined, where appropriate; and*
- b) report on its findings at the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties and submit draft wording to amend Resolutions concerned, where appropriate.*

18. The Secretariat has had initial consultations with UNEP-WCMC and Switzerland regarding the implementation of Decision 14.39.

Recommendations

19. The Secretariat recommends that the Standing Committee, pursuant to Resolution Conf. 11.17 (Rev. CoP14) on National reports determine whether Belize, the Central African Republic, Djibouti, Dominica, Guinea, Kazakhstan, Lesotho, Nepal, Rwanda, the Syrian Arab Republic and Vanuatu have failed to provide annual reports for three consecutive years and without having provided adequate justification. If so determined, the Secretariat will issue a Notification recommending that Parties not authorize any trade in CITES-listed species with these Parties until they have provided the requisite number of reports.
20. The Secretariat also recommends that the Standing Committee establish a Working Group on Special Reporting Requirements and designate its chairman.