

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



Fifty-eighth meeting of the Standing Committee  
Geneva (Switzerland), 6-10 July 2009

Compliance and enforcement

Review of Significant Trade

DISTRIBUTION AND STATUS OF THE BELUGA POPULATIONS  
IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

1. This document has been submitted by the Russian Federation\*.
2. **The basis of this document development:** Recommendations of the 24th CITES Animal Committee to include the beluga (*Huso huso*) into the Review Significant Trade (AC24 WG Doc. 1).
3. **Status of the beluga populations in the Russian Federation and cross-border countries (Caspian region countries):** There are two beluga populations in the Russian Federation. It is necessary to underline that beluga is only predator from among Caspian and Azov Sea sturgeon and that is why this species has never establish generation so strong as Russian sturgeon and Stellate sturgeon.
4. Nowadays Azov Sea beluga population has depression state. They are caught negligibly and all fishes are used for only restocking purposes. We would like to underline that 99 % of the stocks beluga in the Azov Sea is formed from fingerlings which are released from Azov region hatcheries. It is returned good result. For example, three beluga females (mean weight about 250 kg) were caught for restocking purposes only in the Don river (the river, which is run into the Azov Sea).
5. The stock status of the Caspian Sea beluga population more sustainable than Azov Sea one. The main reasons of it are: enough high level of the beluga spawning into the Ural river (the Kazakhstan) and good feeding conditions in the North part of the Caspian Sea (the Russian Federation) and in the South part (the Turkmenistan). Now, fishery politics of the Russian Federation in the Caspian region is focused on the overly cautious approach to the fish resources use, including beluga stock. As a result of it, now we use all mature beluga only for restocking purposes (if they are not good for it we can use it for the export purposes). This approach let us to release into the Caspian Sea a score of million beluga fingerlings between 2003 and 2008. According to some experts it is let to catch 4-5 thousands tons of beluga in the future.
6. We would like to underline, that restocking of the Caspian Sea beluga population is the top target not only the Russian Federation, but all Caspian region countries (Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan), which are joined by the Commission on Aquatic Bioresources of the Caspian Sea. All Caspian countries, which are the main exporter beluga countries, make significant contribution into sustainable use and restocking of the beluga to the 1960-1980 stock level.

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\* *The geographical designations employed in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the CITES Secretariat or the United Nations Environment Programme concerning the legal status of any country, territory, or area, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The responsibility for the contents of the document rests exclusively with its author.*

7. We consider that it is necessary to review more information to include species into the Review Significant Trade than it is ordered by Resolution Conf. 12.8 (Rev. CoP13). Certainly, information about trade level of species is important, but it is can not reproduce stock status without some special scientific date (spawning level, total number of fishes, spawning stock, abundant year-class and so on).

#### Recommendations

8. Russian Federation considers necessary to create the special Working Group on the review 24th Animal Committee recommendation about including of the *Huso huso* into the Review Significant Trade at the 58th Standing Committee. We propose to review scientific information on the beluga stock status from the range States, which are the main exporters traditionally (Russia, Iran, Kazakhstan). We consider to drop the range States opinion whilst discussion about beluga is the serious precedent to establish the conflict situations during review the issue like this.
9. Russian Federation proposes to discuss the possibility of the Resolution Conf. 12.8 (Rev. CoP13) amendment. We consider it is necessary to take into account scientific information whilst including species into the process of significant trade review.