

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

Regional matters

Reports of regional representatives

OCEANIA

The attached report for Oceania has been submitted by Australia*. As it was received by the Secretariat after the deadline for submission of documents, it is provided herewith in English only, the language in which it was submitted.

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Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)

SC58 Regional Report – Oceania

- Australia
- Fiji
- New Zealand
- Palau
- Papua New Guinea
- Samoa
- Solomon Islands
- Vanuatu



Australian Government

Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts

This regional report has been prepared by the CITES Management Authority of Australia, as Oceania regional representative to the CITES Standing Committee. The report covers the inter-sessional period from SC57 to date. All CITES Parties in the region were consulted and, where possible, have provided input on the activities of their CITES Management and Scientific Authorities. Please direct all comments or enquiries to:

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1. Introduction

This report outlines the activities undertaken by the Parties of the Oceania region to implement and enforce CITES during the period between the Fifty-seventh Meeting of the Standing Committee (14 – 18 July 2008) to date.

Australia, as the CITES regional representative for Oceania to the Standing Committee, has prepared this report on behalf of the Parties of the Oceania region – Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

2. Fiji

Capacity Development on CITES Enforcement

The Fiji Island CITES Management Authority (FICMA) has for the first time in 2008 been provided with a budget by the Government for CITES related work in Fiji. Under this funding various programs were implemented to improve compliance and enforcement of the Endangered and Protected Species (EPS) Act 2002.

A series of capacity building workshops was conducted nationwide targeting Customs and Quarantine officers with the aim of strengthening their roles in wildlife trade at the border, more specifically on their roles as authorised officers under the EPS Act. A total of 47 attended CITES enforcement training and were awarded certificates in recognition of their participation. Similarly, a capacity building program was successfully carried out for enforcement officers of the Fiji Police Force, Fiji Navy, Forestry Department and the Fisheries Department. A total of 47 officers attended the nationwide training.

Both capacity development programs were done in partnership with enforcement officers from various sectors who either had attended CITES workshops/training in the region or are involved in CITES enforcement in the country. As a result, CITES enforcement is being presented in all enforcement programs organised by our partners.

Education and Awareness

In 2008, a total of 305 companies engaged in the trade in species listed under the EPS Act were made aware of the CITES domestic legislation (EPS Act) and informed about the registration and permitting requirements under the Act. A media awareness campaign through television and newspapers was also carried out to prepare traders to comply with the requirements under the legislation.

The World Customs Day celebrations in Fiji saw combined efforts by the Ministry of Environment and the Fiji Islands Customs Authority in creating nationwide awareness on customs and environment issues specifically on the protection of Fiji's natural resources through CITES implementation. The production of various awareness and educational materials and media awareness were the key features of the program. It also marked the beginning of an important partnership between the government and non-government organisations which we hope to strengthen in the near future.

Non-detrimental findings on corals

For the first time, the Fiji CITES Management Authority (FICMA), through government funding, commissioned a non-detrimental finding (NDF) on coral for the Aquarium Fiji Fish and Walt Smith International extraction areas. Local experts from the Fisheries Department (FD) and a group of scientists from the University of the South Pacific (USP) in Suva were engaged to undertake this important work. A guideline was developed for this NDF undertaking. The NDF contributed to the establishment of the coral export quotas for 2009.

Quota

The quotas for all CITES listed products, such as *physeter catodon*, live corals and live rocks or coral rocks (*Sclerantinia* species) were reduced by 25% in 2007. The quota is reviewed annually by the Fiji Islands CITES Scientific Council (FICSC) and FICMA.

3. New Zealand

Implementation tools

Refinement of the CITES Database that came into operation in January 2007 is continuing in order to improve information-gathering and reporting under the Convention. Re-design and improvement of New Zealand CITES permits is also underway. This should be complete in mid-2009.

Education and awareness activities

The CITES information cabinet at Wellington airport was upgraded in July 2008, with assistance from an interpretive display specialist. Upgrading of displays in Auckland and Christchurch airports is planned for late 2009 or early 2010.

CITES brochures and other awareness documents are in the process of being revised, updated and re-published. This should be complete by end-2009.

Content on the Department of Conservation (DOC) CITES website is being updated and expanded, and will be online in mid-2009.

DOC is in the process of creating a restricted-access resource website for our CITES border control agents. Technical requirements allowing, various CITES training and resource materials will be available online to border control agents.

In January 2009, DOC and the New Zealand Wildlife Enforcement Group had displays for International Customs Day events held in Wellington and Auckland. The theme for this year was “Customs and the environment: Protecting our natural heritage”. DOC and WEG displayed numerous items seized under domestic CITES legislation, which attracted many onlookers at both events.

Participation in CITES activities and projects

New Zealand is participating in various CITES Working Groups. New Zealand has provided input on the Review of Resolutions and Purpose Codes Working Groups, and has recently been nominated to be co-representative for Oceania on the Introduction from the Sea Working Group, as well as representative for Oceania on the Personal Effects Working Group.

Enforcement

The Wildlife Enforcement Group has obtained funding from the New Zealand Government to produce a series of species identification sheets for species identified in trade in the Oceania region. Design and production of the identification sheets is currently underway.

Review of domestic legislation implementing CITES

Minor changes to the Regulations of the Trade in Endangered Species Act 1989 were approved in late 2008 to increase fees, which had not been changed since 1991. Following this, it was decided that the entire Act will be subject to a comprehensive review in 2009. The purpose of this review is to ensure the legislation properly reflects the obligations under CITES and its Resolutions. The review is expected to be complete in 2010.

4. Palau

The change of government in Palau has limited CITES activity since SC57. Once the new government has been established and CITES staffing roles have been allocated, work will resume on developing CITES policies.

5. PNG

Legislation and Policy

Papua New Guinea complied with CITES Decision 14.25, by enacting domestic CITES implementing legislation; International Trade (Fauna and Flora) Amendment Act 2003. The International Trade (Fauna and Flora) Regulation was approved by the National Executive Council and was executed by Head of State in 2008. The Regulation came into effect in April 2009.

Workshops and meetings

1. A workshop on sustainable use of PNG's wildlife was convened in the town of Madang in January 2007.
2. A public awareness exercise on CITES, domestic government policies and regulations, as well as cross-border issues was undertaken in the border town of Vanimo, Sandaun Province in January 2008.
3. Various inter-agency meetings were held between Department of Environment and Conservation, and Forestry and Fisheries Authorities regarding development of management plans for Agarwood and Humphead wrasse.

CITES reports

Annual CITES reports for 2006 and 2007 were produced and submitted to the CITES Secretariat. Compilation of the CITES annual report for 2008 is underway.

Surveys/species inventory

Every year, in order to meet its CITES obligations for Crocodile skin trade, the PNG CITES Management Authority conducts two aerial nest count surveys of its two endemic

Crocodile species. The constant rise in helicopter hire cost has prompted PNG CITES Management Authority to consider reducing two surveys to one per year, conducted biennially, rather than annually.

Torres Strait compliance

The CITES Management Authorities of Australia and Papua New Guinea are currently collaborating on an approach to improve CITES compliance in trans-border trade in the Torres Strait. The Torres Strait separates the two countries, and is mostly inhabited by traditional communities.

6. Samoa

Samoa became a Party to CITES in February 2005. Samoa would benefit greatly from receiving assistance with establishing systems and procedures to administer CITES.

A number of areas need addressing, including:

- Provision of technical assistance to establish administrative, operational and implementation by the Samoan Management and Scientific Authorities; and
- capacity building in areas such as establishing non-detriment finding, reporting requirements, community awareness, and enforcement mechanisms.

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment is part of an in-house project run by the Samoa Law Commission. This project reviews the Ministry Laws/Legislations to see if they comply with the terms of International Environmental Conventions ratified by Samoa. CITES is one Convention that will be included for streamlining into the existing legislations and laws.

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, acting as the Scientific and Management Authority, issues permits to visitors and other people taking marine products (e.g. corals, sea shells) out of Samoa for souvenirs. A permit letter is issued by the Ministry of Natural, Resources and Environment to release these items through Customs and Quarantine for the destinations the visitors are heading for.

Samoa has emphasized control on national biodiversity collection and bio-prospecting through the improvement of related documents such as the Consent Application form, Permit and Guidelines. These will be further improved to reflect national CITES requirements.

National awareness programs on endangered species are also conducted mainly through workshops and dissemination of printed materials. In 2008 the Ministry of Revenue, Customs department commemorated the Customs Day focusing on the CITES convention issues of border controls for small island countries.

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment in collaboration with the Customs Department will be coordinating workshops to raise awareness within the ministries focused on border control decisions and monitoring related to CITES goods.

7. Solomon Islands

No input provided

8. Vanuatu

Education and awareness activities

Since SC54, Vanuatu has been taking steps to increase the awareness of CITES-related issues around the nation. In spite of the limited technical assistance and human resources at its disposal, the CITES Management Authority, the Vanuatu Environment Unit, has been proactive in its approach to the education and awareness of the residents and communities of Vanuatu with regards to CITES-related issues.

Vanuatu has been active in its promotion of CITES-listed species around the country, particularly in the nation's capital, Port Vila. The Department of Environment has contracted Radio Vanuatu to broadcast Environmental issues and updates on a weekly basis. This opportunity is used to disseminate information on CITES to the public.

The Department of Environment delivers CITES awareness sessions to schools and communities. The Department will be conducting workshops with the community on CITES. Funding is needed to facilitate visits to the communities and to see whether they have captured and applied the information.

The tourism industry is growing from the urban centres and stretching to the far north and south. Most of the commercial markets include selling of non-live endangered shells that require permits from the Department in order to be legally traded.

The Department is also planning to produce a DVD for wide distribution throughout Vanuatu to assist in effectively implementing the work of CITES in country.

Cooperation with other agencies

The CMA continues to work well with other relevant departments within the country such as Fisheries, Forestry, Vanuatu Quarantine and Inspection Services and Customs, where in-country training is conducted and information disseminated accordingly between the departments. The CMA works in conjunction with these departments to provide accurate information to targeted groups. The CMA is currently looking at expanding CITES advertisements, with tourists the specific target, by way of in-flight announcements on all in-coming international flights and producing DVDs (as mentioned above) as an effective means of communicating information to the communities around Vanuatu. Moreover the CMA is planning to visit schools to make awareness on CITES Implementation in country. Funding proposals are currently being drafted so as to finance this project.

Legislation and policy

The CMA regularly recruits volunteers to assist in implementing policy and conducting procedural review of CITES issues. Volunteers recently assisted with amendments to the International Trade on Flora and Fauna Act 1989. The Bill is being reviewed by stakeholders and will soon be submitted to the Parliament for final approval.

The Volunteers also assisted in producing 2005 annual reports, taking Vanuatu off the list for outstanding annual reporting. However Vanuatu is yet to produce annual reports for 2006, 2007 and 2008.

Vanuatu liaised with CITES authorities in Australia regarding advice on how to issue permits for species that are not CITES listed, but are endangered species in Vanuatu. And that was successfully done.

A Student was hired for 3 months to revive the database of Exports of Flora and Fauna for the past few years (from 2003 records). This data was able to produce a report for 2005 and also assisted the Fisheries Department in their Research section.

The Vanuatu Environment Unit (VEU) is largely responsible for the organisation of environment-themed events. For example, the VEU, together with other departments and NGOs, is organising community awareness, information sessions and exhibitions for World Environment Day, and there will be an emphasis on CITES, together with the importance of biodiversity for a sustainable ecological future.

While Vanuatu is doing all that it can to ensure that its obligations under CITES are being fulfilled and that the interests of the environment are of primary importance, funding and technical assistance will be very much appreciated to ensure that this can continue and indeed improve.

Constraints

- The department of Environment has limited funds to cater for CITES implementation in Vanuatu. In addition, donors do not take CITES as a priority for providing funds.
- Due to staffing issues, the Department of Environment does not have a dedicated CITES officer. The responsibilities of CITES Officer are undertaken by the Biodiversity Officer.
- No MOU exists between the VEU and CITES enforcement officers such as the Customs Officers, Quarantine and Police, to help control and monitor trade in CITES listed species at the borders. This is something that we would like to do in the near future. However, despite the absence of MOU, we have had a general understanding with the Wildlife enforcement agencies in Australia to control and monitor CITES species at the borders.
- There is great need for specific training on the work of CITES amongst the CITES enforcement officers at the borders such as the Customs, Quarantine and Police. This can be undertaken with assistance from SPREP.
- Lack of expertise in the identification of CITES listed species in the country.

9. Australia

Regional Customs training

The CITES Management Authority of Australia contributed to the Pacific Customs Management Programme (PCMP) hosted by Australian Customs and Border Protection Service and the Centre for Customs and Excise Studies in May 2008. Participants from Customs in the Pacific region attended the training initiative. Australian experiences were used as a case study of how relationships between agencies can help protect wildlife and strengthen regional capacity. Participants inspected wildlife specimens seized by Australian Customs and shared information on their own experiences with wildlife trade enforcement.

The CITES Management Authority of Australia presented a half-day training and awareness session to Customs representatives from the Pacific, South East, Central and Western Asia at the annual Customs International Executive Management Program (CIEMP) hosted by Australian Customs and Border Protection Service and the Centre for Customs and Excise Studies at the University of Canberra. The session, held in November 2008, addressed the global significance of wildlife trade, reinforced the important role of

enforcement in global initiatives, and helped to facilitate discussion about regional organisation and communication, significant taxa and enforcement strategies.

Participation in CITES activities and projects

Australia has continued as the Oceania regional representative on the Standing Committee (SC) since CoP13. Ms Kerry Smith, Assistant Secretary, Wildlife Branch, welcomes the opportunity to represent the region in this capacity. Australia continues active participation in several working groups. These include:

- Finance and Budget Subcommittee
- CITES and Livelihoods
- Introduction from the sea
- Cooperation between Parties and promotion of multilateral measures.
- National Reports
- (in close cooperation with International Section/SPREP MEA reporting project)
- Purpose codes
- Electronic Permitting
- Trade in crocodylian specimens
- CITES Enforcement – Caviar

CITES Timber Officer

Australia funded the establishment of a CITES Timber Officer position within the CITES Secretariat in February 2008. The funding agreement expired in February 2009. Funding to continue the position is currently being sought from outside the region.

2009 Oceania CITES Capacity Building Workshop on Enforcement, Brisbane, Australia, 23-26 March 2009.

Australia funded and hosted the 2009 Oceania Capacity Building Workshop in Brisbane from 13 to 26 March 2009. The theme of the workshop was 'Enforcement'. The workshop implemented CITES CoP 14 Decision 14.14:

14.14 The Secretariat shall:

- a) seek funding to convene an enforcement-focused capacity-building workshop and regional meeting for the Oceania region before the 58th meeting of the Standing Committee, in order to improve regional implementation of the Convention; and
- b) subject to availability of funds, invite the Parties of the Oceania region, Party observers, non-party States and regional intergovernmental organizations as may be appropriate.

Attendees included regional Parties to CITES: Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea, New Zealand and Australia; some non-Parties namely Tonga; John Sellar from the CITES Secretariat, Customs representatives from Australia, New Zealand and Samoa, representatives from regional organisations including Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and TRAFFIC. The International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) delivered a lunchtime

presentation. The workshop addressed some of the key enforcement issues and challenges in the region and included sessions on CITES compliance and enforcement obligations, national approaches to compliance and enforcement, role of effective networks, role of education and awareness, role of enforcement agencies, group exercises and a Tour of the Container Examination Facility (CEF) at Brisbane port. John Sellar from the CITES Secretariat gave several CITES enforcement related presentations.

The workshop was followed by a Regional Meeting of Parties on 27 March 2009 chaired by Australia to discuss updates from SC57 and planning for SC58 and CoP 15.

Education and awareness activities

Since June 2008, Australia has targeted education, awareness and compliance activities toward industry specific areas such as Customs Brokers and Freight Forwarders, complementary medicines practitioners and traders, and has also undertaken education activities with Customs agencies and the general public. Australia has taken a two pronged approach, targeting stakeholders through advertising and media, and raising compliance and enforcement capacity within Australia and Oceania through education activities.

Initiatives include:

- Information booth at the 2008 Customs Brokers and Freight Forwarders Council of Australia (CBFCA) Annual Conference.
- Placements in all regional editions of the Pet Directory. A definitive resource for pet owners and suppliers in Australia.
- Information booth at the 2009 Australasian Acupuncture and Chinese Medicines Association Conference (AACMAC)
- Information booth at the 2009 Travelxpo (Sydney) – Targeting public awareness.
- Presentations on CITES enforcement given to Pacific Customs Management Forum (PCMP) 2008 and 2009 for regional Customs Officers.
- Presentation on CITES enforcement given to Customs International Executive Management Program (CIEMP) 2008 for Customs executives from the Pacific and Asian regions.
- Delivery of Customs Recruit and In-service training
- Delivery of AQIS Information Sessions
- Delivery of information session for DEWHA officers and graduates.
- Coordination of a bulk mail-out of promotional and information products to travel agents throughout Australia.

Wildlife Crimes Working Group

Australia has established a national Wildlife Crimes Working Group comprising Federal, State and Territory officials to facilitate collaboration and consistency in approaches to manage compliance issues relating to wildlife trade.

Review of National Legislation

On 31 October 2008 the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts commissioned an independent review of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act), the Australian Government's central piece of environmental legislation. Section 522A of the EPBC Act requires it to be reviewed every 10 years from its commencement. Australia implements CITES obligations under this Act.

This is the first review of the EPBC Act since its commencement on 16 July 2000. The review will assess the operation of the EPBC Act and the extent to which its objects have been achieved. The CITES Management Authority of Australia is providing input to the review process.

Permit Verification Scheme (PVS)

The Department conducted several PVS assessments since the last report.

Reporting

The 2007 Annual report was submitted to the Secretariat in early 2009.