

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



Sixty-first meeting of the Standing Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 15-19 August 2011

Administrative matters

Meetings of the Conference of the Parties

IMPROVING TRANSPARENCY OF VOTING DURING
MEETINGS OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

This document has been submitted by Hungary on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.*

* *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.*

Proposal by the European Union (EU) and its Member States for the 61st meeting of the CITES Standing Committee

Improving transparency of voting during meetings of the Conference of Parties

The EU and its Member States consider that voting during the 15th Conference of the Parties did not occur under conditions allowing sufficient transparency and accountability. This is due to a number of factors.

Among them, the EU and its Member States have identified two elements:

- the inability for Parties to check immediately after a vote how their vote has been recorded ;
- the frequent use of votes by secret ballot.

The EU and its Member States invite the Standing Committee to reflect upon and find ways to improve transparency of voting methods on those two points.

On the first point, the EU and its Member States consider that a new provision should be introduced in the Rules of Procedures of the Conference of the Parties. It should state that the individual votes of all Parties must be displayed on a screen for all participants to see immediately after a vote has taken place. The EU and its Member States also support the initiative by the Secretariat to include this requirement in the Statement of Requirement for all meetings of the CoP.

On the second point, the EU and its Member States would like to recall that the CoP decided in its Rules of Procedure¹ that votes by secret ballot "*shall not normally be used*" for issues other than election of officers and host countries. Despite this decision, an important number of votes were taken via secret ballots at the latest CoPs (especially at CoP15 where 14 votes were taken with via secret ballots). Since CoP9 in 1994, a vote can take place by secret ballot if a request for such procedure is seconded by 10 Representatives. It is a fact that voting by secret ballot has significantly increased after CoP9.

The EU and its Member States are concerned that the frequent use of vote by secret ballot results in deviating from the agreement by the CoP that they shall not normally be used for issues other than election of officers and host countries. The EU and its Member States also find that this is detrimental to the transparency of decisions adopted by the CoP. The promotion of transparency is one of the basic principles which should guide the Conference of the Parties in its approach, as laid down in the CITES Strategic Vision: 2008-2013.

Against this background, the EU and its Member States propose that the Standing Committee initiates a process to review the current provisions on secret ballots and their use and explore possible options to ensure that better transparency is ensured in future CoP voting.

EU Proposal by the EU and its Member States

At SC61, the EU and its Member States are therefore proposing that the Standing Committee:

- *recommends* to the CoP that, at its 16th meeting, a new provision is introduced in the Rules of Procedure of the CoP, as follows:

Rule 25 Methods of voting

1. The Conference shall normally vote through an electronic system or by show of hands, but any Representative may request a roll-call vote. The individual votes of all Parties shall be displayed on a screen for all participants to see immediately after a vote has taken place.
- instructs the Secretariat to provide a report for SC62 which recalls the rationale and history of the rules applying to votes by secret ballot within CITES CoPs and indicates how such votes have been used, and requests the Standing Committee, taking this report into account, to assess the situation at its 62nd

¹ Cf. Rule 25, paragraph 2

meeting and, if needed in order to improve voting transparency, propose to the Conference of the Parties amendments to the relevant provisions of the Rules of Procedure of the CoP.