

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

Interpretation and implementation of the Convention

Compliance and enforcement

GATHERING AND ANALYSIS OF DATA ON ILLEGAL TRADE

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.
2. At its 15th meeting (CoP15, Doha, 2010), the Conference of the Parties adopted the following Decisions:

Directed to the Secretariat

15.42 *The Secretariat shall establish an illegal trade database working group to:*

- a) *design and implement a database to be used by the Parties and the Secretariat for the gathering and analysis of data related to illegal trade in specimens of CITES-listed species;*
- b) *seek external funding to enable the group to conduct its activities, assisted by a relevant consultant if appropriate; and*
- c) *report to the Standing Committee at its 61st and 62nd meetings on the progress of the working group.*

Directed to the Standing Committee

15.43 *The Standing Committee shall consider the reports of the Secretariat and also consider:*

- a) *endorsing any relevant recommendation or measure that could be implemented prior to the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP16); or*
- b) *requesting the Secretariat to prepare a report for consideration at CoP16.*

3. A brief meeting of interested Parties and organizations was convened by the Secretariat during CoP15 and a working group was subsequently established with the following members: Canada, Israel, New Zealand, United States of America, the European Union, INTERPOL, the World Customs Organization, UNEP-WCMC, Environmental Investigation Agency and TRAFFIC. Israel subsequently withdrew from the group after its delegate retired from the CITES Management Authority. The group has been chaired by a Customs official from France.
4. The group has conducted its discussions by email and these have focused on such issues as the possible structure of a database, the type of information it would contain, how information would be submitted, and how such a database would be maintained.
5. In early 2011, the Chair of the group prepared a questionnaire, which was circulated to members. He collated the views that had been obtained through this exercise and these are summarized in the attached

Annex (in English only). It will be seen that there are a range of opinions on the various issues that would need to be decided, should a database be established.

6. The Secretariat wishes to express its sincere appreciation to the members of the working group and, particularly, its Chair. However, at this stage, it believes that the appropriate next step is for the Standing Committee to consider some fundamental matters that the Secretariat believes require to be addressed before further progress can be made.
7. Human resources would be required to administer and maintain a database on illegal trade, regardless of the nature of such a database. The Secretariat currently has no capacity to take on such work. Although there are organizations represented in the working group which might consider undertaking such work, they would not do so free-of-charge.
8. The Secretariat questions whether it is appropriate to ask the working group to continue into a next phase, which would logically be to look in more detail at the design and practical operation of a database, unless confidence exists that the Parties will commit to making the necessary funds available to establish and maintain a database, or pay a relevant organization to do so.
9. The Secretariat is conscious that previous attempts to maintain an illegal trade database in-house were not successful. This was partly due to insufficient human resources, but equally because the submission of data was very haphazard and inconsistent, rendering analysis of the data almost meaningless. INTERPOL and the World Customs Organization face similar difficulties in their attempts to collate information relating to illegal trade in wildlife.
10. The Secretariat would welcome guidance from the Standing Committee on how it believes this matter should be progressed. The Committee may wish its Working Group on Special Reporting Requirements to consider the issue. In the meantime, the Secretariat will request the Chair of the Working Group on the Gathering and Analysis of Data on Illegal Trade to postpone its further deliberations.