CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA
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Sixty-first meeting of the Standing Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 15-19 August 2011

National reports

NOTE OF THE MEETING OF THE CITES WORKING GROUP
ON SPECIAL REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.

The group met in the margins of the 61st meeting of the CITES Standing Committee at lunchtime on Wednesday 17 August 2011.

**Present**:    Australia, Canada, China, Kenya, Switzerland, UK (Chair), Secretariat, Species Survival Network.

**Apologies:**  Colombia, UNEP-WCMC.

## 1.   Welcome / introductions

The Chair and Secretariat welcomed the group. As this was the first meeting of the group members introduced themselves and their interests in the work of the group.

## 2.   Short scene setting

The Chair and Secretariat gave a short introduction to the work of the group, focussing on the need to keep reporting simple and focussed, to ensure the burden on Parties is minimised, and that the context of gathering data in reports should be that it will be used by Parties, Convention bodies or the Secretariat in taking forward the Convention's mandate, for example at specific meetings of CoP, SC, AC or PC. Links need to be made with other discussions about the Strategic Vision, CITES input to the Aichi targets, indicators to measure progress and conservation or sustainable use outcomes, illegal trade, and review of the guidelines and formats for preparing and submitting annual and biennial reports.

## 3.   What reports are Parties being asked to do

In advance of the meeting, to facilitate discussion, the UK had developed a spreadsheet of reporting requirements contained within the text of the Convention and associated Resolutions, Decisions and Notifications. This was intended to serve as a resource which to help the group see the breadth of requests for information by previous Conferences of the Parties.

The group found the summary useful, if a little daunting, as it indicates the breadth of reporting requirements that have arisen over the years. The Chair stressed this was preliminary work and might not be complete. The Secretariat explained that only about 27% of Parties had provided their 2007-2008 biennial report, and that a third of the annual reports for 2009 were late. By three years after an annual report deadline the response rate is nearly 100% as Parties wish to avoid the trade suspension that could be the result of not submitting annual reports for three consecutive years. The group reflected on the reasons for late submission or low submission rates, which include changes in personnel in Management Authorities (leading to loss of knowledge of what is required), capacity in states with few personnel, the absence of a computerized system and the difficulties of inputting details of permits into older computerized systems. Linkage with the e-permitting working group was made (Switzerland is chair of that working group), and the possibility that this offers to effectively automate the production of annual reports. There are some issues with improving and making more flexible the standardisation of measurement and descriptive terms, which might also help Parties which struggle to know how to complete the annual trade report – a suggestion of improvements in the current annual report guidelines was made.

Beyond the annual and biennial reports the response rate has in general been low, partly perhaps because many of the requirements are only one or two sentences in a multi-page decision. The group agreed that it would be useful to group the reports by the Parties to which they were directed, and the themes, species or concepts they were seeking information on. That would then enable a review by the group to recommend which should be kept, modified (e.g. combined) or dropped, and if they were to be kept or modified, what might be the best way to deliver the information – which might or might not be by asking for details from Parties. Summarising the reports in this way would allow development of a discussion document for consideration at SC62 which would enable Parties to take a view on which reporting requirements are a priority for Parties.

The group also queried whether the regional reports were of value and whether these could be even further streamlined (building on recent decisions taken in the Animals Committee), or possibly dropped. Regional reports are required for AC, PC, and SC – there might be an opportunity to streamline the three together.

## 4. Strategic Vision and Indicators

The group is tasked with providing recommendations on developing the Strategic Vision indicators. In advance of the meeting, to aid discussion, the UK had prepared two documents looking at what information on indicators the current biennial report format might be able to provide:

- A review of the Strategic Vision indicators linking with the biennial report format; and
- An annotated version of the Biennial Report format linking with the Strategic Vision indicators.

The group briefly discussed linkages and parallel work with the revision of the CITES Strategic Vision to align it with the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity agreed at CBD CoP10 in Nagoya, and the work which is also going on in parallel to develop outcome oriented indicators to measure progress towards achieving the Aichi Targets. The group agreed that it should review the mapping undertaken by the UK and use that as a way to identify what changes to the reporting format might be sensible, bearing in mind the need to keep reporting simple – e.g. by using tick-boxes, but also focussing on information that would be used.

The group agreed that it would be necessary to proceed in a stepwise fashion – to look at what is in the biennial report format now, and check the work done by the UK, to make suggestions for what might not be worth continuing to collect, and what tweaks might better reflect the questions which are behind the strategic vision indicators, and to look more closely at the details collated by UNEP-WCMC in document SC61 Inf.5, which contains an analysis of certain aspects of previous biennial reports.

Following this, the report format – and guidelines – would need to be revisited in the light of the discussions in the Strategic Vision working group, and outputs from CBD SBSTTA 15 and 16 which would be considering the indicators proposed by the CBD AHTEG on biodiversity indicators held in the UK in June 2011.

## 5. Recommendations and next steps

It is a little early to produce draft recommendations yet, but the group should be able to do so after the next phase of work.

The next steps are for members of the group to

a) review the spreadsheet of reporting requirements, and include more information if possible – e.g. on response rates;
b) do some grouping of reporting requirements contained in the spreadsheet;
c) discuss which requirements might be kept, modified, or dropped;
d) check the mapping of Strategic Vision indicators and the biennial report format; and
e) consider further what indicators might be produced, based on the report (SC61 Inf.5) produced by UNEP-WCMC.

The Working Group recommend its work be organized as follows, with these goals being addressed sequentially:

- Goal / Deliverable 1: review current requirements for reporting and prepare recommendations for termination/reform/continuation of these requirements for consideration by SC62;
- Goal / Deliverable 2: for report requirements that are suggested to be kept or reformed, prepare a proposal for integrating them, preferably into the biennial report format.
- Goal / Deliverable 3: provide recommendation(s) for process change for annual reports (e.g. through an e-permitting toolkit), and the possibility of developing an online tool for biennial reports after the content required has been clarified;

- Goal / Deliverable 4: address the requirement for Strategic Vision indicators and integration with work going on to develop indicators to measure progress with achievement of the Aichi Targets.

Following this it should be possible to prepare draft recommendations, and for consideration to be given to how best to revise the guidelines for both annual and biennial report formats. Subsequent consideration will depend on the progress of other working groups – especially the working group on revision of the Strategic Vision, the working group on illegal trade, the working group on e-permitting, and possibly other working groups.