

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

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Sixty-second meeting of the Standing Committee  
Geneva (Switzerland), 23-27 July 2012

Strategic matters

CLIMATE CHANGE

1. This document has been submitted by the Chairs of the Animals Committee and Plants Committee, on behalf of the Committees, with the support of the Climate Change Working Group co-Chairs (the AC representative of North America and the United States of America)\*.
2. At the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (Doha, 2010), Parties adopted Decision 15.15 on climate change as follows:

***Directed to the Animals and Plants Committees***

*Given the implications of climate change for science-based decision-making, the Animals and Plants Committees shall identify the scientific aspects of the provisions of the Convention and of Resolutions of the Conference of the Parties that are actually or likely to be affected by climate change, report their findings, and make recommendations for further action in relation to the Convention and to Resolutions of the Conference of the Parties as appropriate, at the 62nd meeting of the Standing Committee.*

3. To this end, the technical committees established a Joint Intersessional Working Group on Climate Change (CCWG), after the 19th meeting of the Plants Committee (Geneva, April 2010) and the 25th meeting of the Animals Committee (Geneva, July 2010), with the following Terms of Reference:

To produce draft findings and recommendations for further action on the following provisions of the Convention and of Resolutions of the Conference of the Parties that are actually or likely to be affected by climate change:

- a) Species listings [Resolutions Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP15) and Conf. 9.25 (Rev. CoP15)];
- b) Non-detriment findings (Articles III and IV);
- c) Periodic Review of the Appendices (Resolution Conf. 14.8);
- d) Review of Significant Trade [Resolution Conf. 12.8 (Rev. CoP13), to the extent that this pertained to Article IV (non-detriment findings)];
- e) Quotas [Resolution Conf. 14.7 (Rev. CoP15)]; and
- f) Trade in alien invasive species [Resolution Conf. 13.10 (Rev. CoP14)].

The intersessional working group should report to the joint session of the Plants and Animals Committees (Dublin, March 2012).

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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.*

4. At the joint session of the 26th meeting of the Animals Committee and 20th meeting of the Plants Committee (Dublin, March 2012), the Committees reviewed and discussed the report of the CCWG and agreed on the following key findings:
- a) That the 6 science-based decision-making processes, referred to in paragraph 3, sub-paragraphs a) to f) of the present document, could generally be grouped into those that relate to species listings [Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP15) and Resolution Conf. 9.25 (Rev. CoP15)]; and those that relate to non-detriment findings (NDFs; Articles III and IV of the Convention). The other processes under consideration are nested within these: the Periodic Review is a way of re-examining the species listing decisions, and Quotas and the Review of Significant Trade process involve the making of NDFs. The Resolution on Trade in Alien Invasive Species [Resolution Conf. 13.10 (Rev. CoP14)] may, in some cases, be indirectly taken into consideration in relation to species listing decisions or NDFs. Grouping the CITES decision-making processes in this way can help organize thoughts about how to address climate change in the CITES context and can help ensure consistency in approach among the processes.
  - b) That the 6 processes could provide the scope to consider the impacts of climate change on species in trade, even if “climate change” is not explicitly mentioned. This means that the scientific decision-making framework developed within CITES is flexible enough to accommodate the consideration of climate change. The Committees noted that some CCWG members thought that further guidance would be useful to explicitly highlight the ways in which climate change may be taken into consideration, and that this guidance might take the form of a Resolution or other guidance on incorporating climate change science into CITES decision-making processes.
  - c) That the following are key points regarding climate change impacts:
    - i) climate change can include direct, indirect, and human-mediated impacts on plants and animals;
    - ii) climate change may have positive or negative repercussions;
    - iii) there may be changes in species distribution that change the list of range states for a species;
    - iv) the impact of climate change is expected to be highly variable; and
    - v) climate change impacts might exacerbate existing stressors or modify existing complex environmental, ecological and physiological processes.
  - d) That despite the wide range of possible climate change impacts for a particular species:
    - i) many intrinsic or extrinsic attributes that are expected to be altered or perturbed by climate change are already familiar to Parties. For instance, these include temperature-dependent sex ratios, scarification requirements prior to germination, and altered pollinator-prey-dispersal relationships.
    - ii) some impacts of climate change could affect “how CITES does business.” For instance, range state consultations that are required under these decision-making processes could include Parties that are not yet range states but that would be expected to become range states as a result of climate change impacts on habitat availability for species.
  - e) That there is a need for Parties to use the best available scientific information and to share expertise regarding climate change impacts in CITES scientific decision-making processes. To this end, several suggestions for actions could be taken to improve the access of Parties to available information on climate change, and to improve understanding of impacts of climate change on species within the CITES context, including:
    - i) Encourage Parties to actively engage and participate in existing mechanisms within CITES that provide opportunities for information sharing and discussion. These include but are not limited to activities and discussions as part of the Periodic Review and Significant Trade Review processes, review and evaluation of species amendment proposals and quotas, and development of training materials as well as guidance for the making of non-detriment findings.

- ii) Capacity-building workshops could provide additional opportunities for discussion and information-sharing about climate change as it relates to CITES decision-making and CITES species.
  - iii) Improve the search capability within the CITES website to allow improved access to CITES documents containing information on climate change or processes affected by climate change. For example, an improved ability to search periodic review results would enhance information-sharing among Parties in applying the provisions of Resolution Conf. 14.8. Global searches of CoP Summary records would be easier than multiple individual searches within each session, to facilitate research on decisions involving particular species or threat factors taken into consideration, which may include climate change.
  - iv) Create or identify a webpage of resources related to climate change, including peer-reviewed studies and scientific databases that may be of use in decision making by Parties. Such resources may be relevant in the context of the ongoing work of the Committees, including the Evaluation of the Review of Significant Trade. This could be accessed on the CITES website and, similar to the Wiki ID Manual, could be user-maintained and updated to minimize the need for additional monetary or personnel resources. It would be important, to ensure that these efforts are not duplicative, to consider a vetting process for information that might be included on such a site, and to ensure opportunities for response or comments to be made regarding resources posted to such a site.
  - v) The Committees noted that information from members of the CCWG regarding the scientific aspects of the provisions of the Convention and of Resolutions of the Conference of the Parties that are actually or likely to be affected by climate change, along with specific examples of CITES-listed species for which climate change impacts have been taken into consideration would be useful and can be made available for review and inclusion on this webpage of resources.
5. The Committees agreed that the current provisions of the Convention and of Resolutions of the Conference of the Parties were sufficiently comprehensive and flexible to take into account the implications of climate change for science-based decision-making, noting that some observers expressed the view that there was need for further work to develop guidance on incorporating climate change science into CITES decision-making processes.
6. The Committees welcomed an initiative led by UNEP-WCMC and partners, which are conducting an extensive literature review regarding the impacts of climate change on the population abundance of terrestrial vertebrates and plants, which may be relevant to the making of non-detriment findings as requested under Article IV of the Convention, and the adaptive management of many CITES-listed species. The information will be compiled in a database with abstracts of the relevant papers.
7. The Animals and Plants Committees submit the findings in paragraph 4 and conclusion in paragraph 5 of the present document, for consideration by the Standing Committee in fulfilment of Decision 15.15.