

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



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

Interpretation and implementation of the Convention

Compliance and enforcement

E-COMMERCE OF SPECIMENS OF CITES-LISTED SPECIES

1. This document has been submitted by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, as Chair of the Working Group on E-commerce of Specimens of CITES-listed Species .
2. The Conference of the Parties, at its 15th meeting (Doha, 2010) amended Resolution Conf. 11.3 (Rev. CoP15) to:

RECOMMEND that Parties:

- a) *evaluate or develop their domestic measures to ensure that they are sufficient to address the challenges of controlling legal wildlife trade, investigating illegal wildlife trade and punishing the perpetrators, giving high priority to the offer for sale of specimens of species listed in Appendix I;*
- b) *establish, at the national level, a unit dedicated to investigating wildlife crime linked to the Internet or incorporate wildlife trade issues into existing units that investigate or monitor computer or cyber-crime; and*
- c) *establish at the national level a mechanism to coordinate the monitoring of Internet-related wildlife trade and to provide for the timely sharing between designated contact points in CITES Management and Enforcement Authorities of information that results from these activities;*

RECOMMEND further that Parties and Interpol:

- a) *submit information to the Secretariat on methodologies used by other agencies that may assist in the evaluation of mechanisms to regulate legal commerce of CITES-listed species via the Internet;*
- b) *ensure that sufficient resources are directed to the investigation and targeting of illegal Internet-related trade in specimens of CITES-listed species;*
- c) *use the data acquired during monitoring activities to establish strategies regarding enforcement, capacity building and public awareness; and*
- d) *consider ways in which funding may be provided for the establishment of a full-time position, dedicated to e-commerce aspects of wildlife crime, within the General Secretariat of Interpol. The responsibilities of such a position should include ensuring that all information or intelligence*

* *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.*

regarding e-commerce is consistently collected and disseminated to the relevant Enforcement Authorities designated by Parties.

3. It also adopted Decisions 15.57 and 15.58 on E-commerce of specimens of CITES-listed species which urged Parties and directed the Secretariat to:

15.57

- a) submit information to the CITES Secretariat on best practices and on websites adhering to codes of conduct for posting on the CITES website;*
- b) publish results of scientific research on correlations between use of the Internet and the rate of wildlife crime, and share these results with the CITES Secretariat;*
- c) assess the extent of and trends in commerce of CITES-listed species via the Internet and submit such information to the Secretariat for analysis; and*
- d) submit information to the CITES Secretariat for analysis on any changes in trade routes and methods of shipment that have been observed as a result of increased use of the Internet to promote trade in wildlife.*

15.58

- a) develop an Internet portal on the CITES website to compile, publish and disseminate information submitted by Parties and stakeholders related to e-commerce of CITES-listed species; and*
- b) write to Interpol encouraging it to establish a secure interactive website or electronic forum containing information and intelligence regarding Internet-related wildlife crime, capable of being updated in a 'real-time' manner by authorized contributors.*

4. At its 61st meeting (Geneva, 2011), the Standing Committee re-established the Working Group on E-commerce of Specimens of CITES-listed Species. At that meeting, the Standing Committee decided not to accept the recommendation to commission an independent report on the impact of e-commerce on trade of specimens of CITES-listed species, but invited Parties, international organizations and non-governmental organizations to submit studies and reports on e-commerce for review by the Working Group.
5. Following SC61 no studies or reports were submitted to the working group, and on 6 March 2012 the CITES Secretariat issued Notification no. 2012/019 on E-commerce of specimens of CITES-listed species to inform Parties that the Secretariat and the working group have not received the information requested under Decision 15.57 and by the Standing Committee. To date, by 25 May 2012, information has not been submitted to the Secretariat or to the working group since the issuance of the Notification.
6. In response to consultations on the future of the working group, four of its members responded indicating their belief that there was merit in it continuing. Their comments included:
- a) noting that the timing of notification 2012/019 coincided with work on national reports and the Animals and Plants Committees, and that with several pieces of work due in the near future there would be data and information for the working group to consider;
 - b) the suggestion that that Parties and NGOs represented on the working group should nominate enforcement officers to assist them and participate in the group to both bring forward their knowledge but also to offer their views and advice on data available to the group;
 - c) that the sparseness of data and information was in itself a reason for the working group to continue, to encourage the sharing of experiences and findings;
 - d) that the working group should also review Resolution Conf. 11.3 (Rev. CoP15) in the light of data or experiences made known to it; and

- e) initial consideration of specific questions, and possible proposals, relevant to identifying tools to monitor and tackle the use of the internet to make available CITES listed species and their derivatives via the internet.
- 7. With regard to Decision 15.58, the Secretariat announced the establishment of the Internet portal through Notification no. 2010/35, New sections on the CITES website on e-commerce and on the CITES e-permitting toolkit.
- 8. The Secretariat also wrote to Interpol on 17 February 2012 regarding the establishment of a secure interactive website or electronic forum. The reply from Interpol on 15 March 2012 suggested that the CITES Secretariat and the Interpol Environmental Crime Programme prepare a joint business plan to support this initiative. At this writing, discussions are underway regarding the development of such a business plan.

Recommendation

- 9. The Standing Committee may wish to consider extending the mandate of the Working Group and remind Parties and stakeholders to submit information on e-commerce of CITES-listed species for inclusion in the e-commerce web portal and consideration by the working group, specifically asking it to consider whether the scope and focus of Resolution Conf. 11.3 (Rev. CoP15) adequately addressed E-Commerce.