

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

Sixty-fifth meeting of the Standing Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 7-11 July 2014

Interpretation and implementation of the Convention

Species trade and conservation

TIBETAN ANTELOPE

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.
2. Resolution Conf. 11.8 (Rev. CoP13) on *Conservation of and control of trade in the Tibetan antelope*, directs the Standing Committee as follows:

DIRECTS: ...

- b) the Standing Committee to undertake a regular review of the enforcement measures taken by the Parties in eliminating the illicit trade in Tibetan antelope products on the basis of the Secretariat's report, and to report the results at each meeting of the Conference of the Parties.*
3. At the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP16, Bangkok, 2013), the Standing Committee and the Secretariat recommended, in a document submitted to Parties, that the above-mentioned paragraph should be deleted¹. This recommendation was based on reports of a considerable reduction in poaching levels of Tibetan antelopes from the serious levels of the late 1990s and early 2000s, and that population levels of the Tibetan antelope had risen as a result of anti-poaching efforts in China. The same document also stated that the Secretariat had received very limited information on poaching of, and trade in, Tibetan antelopes.
4. However, at CoP16 the Secretariat reported orally that it had been informed by China that significant seizures had taken place in 2013. Consequently the Secretariat withdrew its recommendation to delete paragraph b), under 'DIRECTS', from Resolution Conf. 11.8 (Rev. CoP13).² China provided further details of the seizures, noting that a follow-up investigation was taking place in cooperation with Nepal. In addition, it proposed two draft decisions on the "Tibetan antelope (*Pantholops hodgsonii*)", which were adopted by the Conference of the Parties, as follows:

Directed to the Parties

- 16.93 All Parties should immediately bring every seizure of illegal Tibetan antelope wool and its products made within its territory to the attention of authorities in countries of origin, transit and destination, as applicable, and to the attention of the Secretariat. Information on the seizure should be accompanied by available associated information, to enable follow-up investigations to take place. The progress of follow-up investigations should also be reported to the Secretariat.*

¹ <http://www.cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/cop/16/doc/E16-55.pdf>

² <http://www.cites.org/sites/default/files/common/cop/16/sum/E-CoP16-Com-II-Rec-11.pdf>

Directed to the Secretariat

16.94 *The Secretariat shall report information on seizures made and on the progress of investigations referred to in Decision 16.93 at the 65th meeting of the Standing Committee.*

5. As a result of Decision 16.94, the Secretariat issued Notification to the Parties No. 2013/060 of 18 December 2013,³ inviting Parties to provide information on any seizures, in accordance with Decision 16.93. A limited number of reports were received from Greece, Spain and Switzerland.
6. Greece reported that no seizures of illegal Tibetan antelope wool or products had been made in the country since January 2013. Spain also reported that it had not detected any cases of illegal trade in Tibetan antelope wool or products since 1999. Switzerland, however, reported that trade in shawls containing shahtoosh fibres continued to present a problem in Europe, but that the nature of this trade had changed in a significant way. Since the beginning of 2011, Swiss authorities had seized 49 shawls containing shahtoosh fibres, including a seizure of 17 shawls during a law-enforcement operation conducted by Swiss Customs authorities and the Swiss CITES Management Authority (MA) in January 2014. Switzerland further reported that the seized shahtoosh shawls found in the current market were different from shawls traditionally traded. They came in different colours, with and without embroidery, and in sizes different from the more commonly seen measurement of about 100cm x 200cm. In addition, the MA of Switzerland highlighted that these shawls contained a high percentage of cashmere fibres along with shahtoosh fibres, and that this was reflected in the price at which they were offered. Shahtoosh fibres in shawls were found for sale at a price of between 500 and 1000 Swiss francs, which enabled a wider range of people to purchase them, and it was thus not limited to the high-end luxury market. Identifying shahtoosh fibres in shawls is made more difficult if they are mixed with cashmere fibres. Switzerland reported that several investigations were ongoing in the country at the time of submitting its report to the Secretariat (January 2014). The MA of Switzerland reported that it had been in contact with India, as the primary country of origin of the seized shawls, as well as with Italy and Germany, as recommended by Decision 16.93.
7. The MA of Switzerland communicated information on the new trend, including pictures of the seized shawls, to national law enforcement agencies in the European Union through the EU-TWIX database.⁴ At the same time, the Secretariat made this information and pictures available to the law enforcement community through the CITES Enforcement Authorities Forum.⁵
8. In August 2013, the CITES MA of China informed the Secretariat that it had conducted field studies in Qinghai and Tibet on the poaching of and illegal trade in Tibetan antelope, together with representatives of Chinese Customs authorities and the forest police. It was further reported that the results of these field studies indicated that no poaching or smuggling of Tibetan antelope had occurred in that area in the previous year, and that the wild population of Tibetan antelope appeared to have increased since the 1990s. According to the CITES MA of China, the shahtoosh confiscated in Nepal, as reported at CoP16, could have originated from stockpiles accumulated in the previous decade, as well as from recent, occasional small-scale poaching events. The CITES MA of China further reported that China and Nepal had agreed to increase joint efforts to combat the illegal wildlife trade, and that delegates from the State Forestry Administration of China and Nepal's Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation had met from 28 to 30 August 2013 in Kathmandu, Nepal, to discuss cooperation in controlling the illicit wildlife trade along the border between China and Nepal.
9. The Secretariat has been in contact with the authorities in Nepal regarding the large-scale seizure of shahtoosh in Nepal in early 2013, as reported at CoP16. Information received in April 2014 indicated that the case was still being investigated.

³ <http://cites.org/sites/default/files/notif/E-Notif-2013-060.pdf>

⁴ <http://www.eutwix.org/>

⁵ <http://cites.org/eng/user>

Recommendations

10. The Secretariat recommends that the Standing Committee:

- a) remind Parties of the need to continue to implement Decision 16.93 and to report information on seizures made and on the progress of investigations to the Secretariat by 30 April 2015;
- b) request the Secretariat to evaluate the reports submitted by Parties in accordance with Decision 16.93, and to report its findings and recommendations at the 66th meeting of the Standing Committee (SC66); and
- c) reconsider, at SC66, the recommendation to delete paragraph b), under 'DIRECTS', of Resolution Conf. 11.8 (Rev. CoP13).