

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



Sixty-sixth meeting of the Standing Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 11-15 January 2016

Interpretation and implementation of the Convention

Species trade and conservation

SNAKE TRADE AND CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT

This document has been prepared by the working group on snake trade and conservation management on the basis of two meetings held at the margins of SC66 and in relation to items 54.1, 54.2 and 34.2, and submitted at the request of the Standing Committee at its fourth session.

Report of the working group on snake trade and conservation management

Participants:

- Switzerland (Chair), China, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Viet Nam, United States of America, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Animal Welfare Institute, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Kering, Responsible Ecosystem Sourcing Platform (RESP), Species Survival Network
- Concerning the draft Resolution contained in document SC66 Doc. 54.2, the Working Group invites the SC to consider the revised draft Resolution contained in the Annex 1 to this report for submission at CoP17. The proposed revisions are shown as underlined text.
- Concerning the Animals Committee's recommendations contained in paragraphs 10 and 23 of document SC66 Doc. 54.1, and the elements for a draft decision contained in document SC66 Doc. 54.2, the SC is invited to consider the draft decisions contained in the Annex 2 for submission at CoP17.
- Concerning Decision 16.106, the SC is invited to extend the Decision as contained in Annex 2 to this report and to direct the Secretariat to communicate individually with Asian Parties to invite them to report on the status of the implementation this Decision.
- Concerning document SC66 Doc. 34.2, the working group invites the SC to note the report by Mexico, and in particular its contribution to the discussions of the implementation of Decision 16.105.

Resolution on the conservation, sustainable use of and trade in snakes

AWARE that certain species of snakes are successfully bred in captivity, collected from the wild and traded in high numbers in and outside range States, *inter alia* to supply the demand for use as food, skins, traditional medicine, and for the pet trade;

AWARE that the harvesting of snakes, and in the case of some species the initial processing of their skins and other body parts, is of economic importance and contributes important revenue to local communities;

ACKNOWLEDGING that unregulated or unsustainable trade in snakes can pose significant threats to wild populations, and that international cooperation is needed to address these threats urgently;

OBSERVING that the collection of snakes is carried out through an extensive informal network of trappers, hunters and middlemen, and that collection efforts and trade volumes are considerable, especially in Asia;

ACKNOWLEDGING Resolution Conf. 10.16 (Rev.) on Specimens of animal species bred in captivity;

ACKNOWLEDGING Resolution Conf. 12.10 (Rev. CoP15) on the Registration of operations that breed Appendix-I animal species in captivity for commercial purposes;

NOTING Resolution Conf. 14.7 (Rev. CoP15) on Management of nationally established export quotas;

NOTING Resolution Conf. 16.7 on NDFs and its concepts and non-binding guiding principles in considering whether trade would be detrimental to the survival of a species;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION

Regarding non-detriment findings (NDF)

ENCOURAGES range States that wish to export species of snakes listed in Appendix II to make use of available guidance, in particular the results of the Cancun workshop on NDFs in 2008, for making non-detriment findings for trade in snakes of wild origin, and guidance on other species as appropriate;

ENCOURAGES also Parties and stakeholders in snake conservation, sustainable use and trade to share their experiences and lessons learned with regard to making NDFs;

URGES Parties and the Secretariat to use the general NDF guidance contained in Resolution Conf. 16.7 in capacity-building workshops and relevant training materials;

Regarding management of wild snake populations

ENCOURAGES Parties to establish national harvest, trade and management policies for snake species;

INVITES Parties to identify those snake species that are impacted by international trade and, where appropriate, propose possible CITES listings and implement national management strategies including establishment of export and harvest quotas, size or season restrictions, among others, to further conservation of the species concerned;

ENCOURAGES all Parties to explore ways to enhance the participation of the private sector in the conservation of and sustainable use and trade in snake species;

ENCOURAGES Parties and stakeholders to increase public awareness of the ecosystem services provided by snakes, of the benefits and consequences of non-detrimental and legal trade and the threats to the survival of the species in the wild and livelihoods posed by illegal trade in snakes and their parts and derivatives;

Regarding monitoring and trade controls

ENCOURAGES Parties to use guidance developed for monitoring wild populations and controlling captive-breeding operations and other production systems;

ENCOURAGES Parties and stakeholders in snake conservation and trade to share their experiences and lessons learned with regard to the application of guidance developed for monitoring and controlling captive-breeding operations and other production systems;

ENCOURAGES range States to apply methodologies for differentiating wild and captive-bred specimens of CITES-listed snakes in trade;

URGES Parties to enhance and increase enforcement efforts with regard to existing legislation as a matter of urgency;

URGES Parties with trade in snake parts and derivatives to enhance efforts to better regulate such trade;

URGES Parties to enhance cooperation amongst wildlife-law enforcement agencies at national and international levels concerning control of trade in snakes, and between enforcement agencies and national CITES authorities;

ENCOURAGES Parties to test, and consider the introduction of innovative traceability and enforcement methods in range and consumer States and, as a matter of priority, to strengthen enforcement efforts;

URGES Parties that have snake captive-breeding or ranching facilities in their territories to engage in regular monitoring of such facilities, taking into account the origin of parental stock and whether they were obtained legally and without detriment to wild populations, as well as the practicality and capacity of producing the offspring claimed and for those facilities that breed Appendix I species to register those facilities with the CITES Secretariat in accordance with Resolution Conf. 12.10 (Rev. CoP15);

ENCOURAGES Parties to pursue the development and dissemination of forensic methods to assist Parties in the identification of snake parts and derivatives, and for examination of products labelled as containing parts and derivatives of snakes;

Regarding traceability systems for snake skins

Encourages Parties to share experiences in the use of traceability systems for specimens of CITES-listed snakes, including the use of identification technologies;

Encourages Parties to take into account lessons learned from projects on traceability implemented for other CITES-listed species;

RECOMMENDS

- a) That Parties, prior to the implementation of a traceability system for pythons skins, inventory and tag those skins and provide this information to the Secretariat as a baseline;
- b) That Parties ensure that the tagging method used distinguishes between skins of the initial stockpiles from skins harvested at later points in time;
- c) That Parties ensure that the inventory of the initial stockpiles contains information on the species concerned, the stage of processing of the skins (crust, dried, etc.) and the corresponding quantities and tag numbers, and also the year of harvest for skins newly entering the stockpiles;
- d) The traceability systems should commence as close to the point of harvest of the animal or production of the skin as possible. It should be made mandatory up to and including finished skins;
- e) The identification of skins should make use of devices that are tamper proof, affordable, uniquely serially numbered and contain the following minimum information: species, country of origin (where relevant regional code), year of harvest or production, unique serial number, source code or technologies that may accomplish the same requirements. In addition, Parties are encouraged to add other information they deem necessary;
- f) The Secretariat should compile such information on available identification technologies and projects to make them available to Parties;

- g) CALLS UPON governments and intergovernmental organizations, international aid agencies, non-governmental organizations, the industry and other donors to provide financial support and other assistance to implement this Resolution; and
- h) Encourages Parties to engage in the development of traceability systems and to explore ways to enhance the participation of the private sector and other stakeholders in this process.

Directed to Southeast Asian Parties

XX.XX RECOMMENDS Southeast Asian Parties engaged in the snake trade:

1. to verify the origin of animals traded between countries in the region;
2. to ensure the appropriate use of source codes.

Directed to Parties

XX.XX ENCOURAGES the following Parties, including:

1. Honduras to ensure that measures are in place to address poaching of, and illegal trade in, the Cayos Cochinos boa constrictor (*Boa constrictor imperator*);
2. Benin to implement the following measures for the Ball python (*Python regius*):
 - a) Design and implement a management program for the species;
 - b) Make non-detriment findings based on studies of the species, basic demographics, harvest and trade in the species; and
 - c) Strengthen national regulations relating to trade control and monitoring, including stricter control policies for production systems.
3. Ghana, Togo and Benin to implement the following measures for the Calabar ground boa (*Calabaria reinhardtii*):
 - a) Make non-detriment findings based on studies of the species, basic demographics, harvest and trade in the species; and
 - b) Improve systems to monitor harvest, captive breeding, and trade in the species;
4. Indonesia to improve enforcement of existing laws and take into account the recommendations provided in the document to more effectively regulate the collection of and trade in the populations of the wild green tree python (*Morelia viridis*) and the Boelen's python (*Morelia boeleni*); and
5. Honduras, Benin, Ghana, Togo and Indonesia to report to the Standing Committee at its 69th meeting on the implementation of the elements of this Decision.

XX.XX ENCOURAGES Parties, in particular:

1. Range States, importing countries, and other Parties to conduct more detailed assessments of those species indicated in Table 1 [of document AC28 Doc. 14.3], for which available information suggests that international trade is “likely to be a threat” (4 species) or “may be a threat” (29 species);
2. Range States:
 - a) to submit listing proposals for the 4 species categorized as “likely to be threatened by trade” and for the 3 species categorized as “may be threatened by trade” and have an IUCN status (CR, EN, VU), including: *Euprepiophis perlacea*, *Enhydryis longicauda*, and *Cryptelytrops rubeus*; and
 - b) to consider including the remaining species categorized as “may be threatened by trade” with listing in the Appendices;

3. Range States of *Popeia buniana* (Malaysia), *Popeia nebularis* (Malaysia), *Cryptelytrops kanburiensis* (Thailand and probably Myanmar) and *Orthriophis moellendorfi* (China and Vietnam)
 - a) to assess whether existing legislation, protected areas and current levels of trade are compatible with the conservation of these species in the wild; and
 - b) to evaluate the possible listing of these species under CITES (including Appendix III);
4. Parties and range States:
 - a) to compile more information on the exploitation levels (i.e. direct harvest and as by-catch) of freshwater and marine aquatic snakes subject to high volumes of international trade, including all species of Elapidae (*Hydrophis* spp., *Kerilia* spp., *Lapemis* spp., *Laticauda* spp., *Thalassophina* spp.) and Homalopsidae (*Enhydris* spp., *Erpeton* spp., *Homalopsis* spp.) indicated in Table 1 [of document AC28 Doc. 14.3];
 - b) to evaluate the possible listing of these species under CITES (including Appendix III);
5. Exporting countries and other Parties to put in place precautionary management measures, such as establishing closed areas/ seasons, daily seasonal catch quotas, restricting the use of certain types of fishing gear or imposing size-limits, and improved domestic monitoring and reporting mechanisms for aquatic (freshwater and marine) snakes, including all Elapidae and Homalopsidae species indicated in Table 1 [of document AC28 Doc. 14.3]; and
6. Parties to encourage research to improve the understanding of the ecology, biology and conservation needs of Asian snakes, *inter alia* through supporting relevant scientific institutions and promoting additional field studies.

- XX.XX Parties should eliminate the important illegal and unreported trade in specimens, whether live or parts and derivatives, of CITES-listed snake species by:
- a) ensuring that CITES permits and certificates are properly issued for trade in these specimens;
 - b) including information on trade in these specimens in their CITES annual reports;
 - c) ensuring that their annual reports are following the most recent version of the Guidelines for the preparation and submission of CITES annual reports, in compliance with Resolution Conf. 11.17 (Rev. CoP16);
 - d) examining their enforcement efforts regarding trade in these specimens to ensure that adequate steps are taken to deter and detect illegal and unreported trade;
 - e) undertaking education and outreach activities directed towards snake farms, buyers and sellers of live snakes, parts and derivatives, product manufacturers, shippers, brokers and staff from government agencies involved in controlling and monitoring this trade to ensure that snake specimens are traded in compliance with national laws and CITES provisions; and
 - f) in the case of Parties in Asia, reporting on their efforts in all of these areas to the Secretariat in time for its reporting for the 69th meeting of the Standing Committee, in compliance with Decision 16.102, paragraph e).

Directed to the Animals Committee

- XX.XX The Animals Committee shall continue to review the guidance on making non-detriment findings, prepared pursuant to Decision 16.102, paragraph a) ii), and new information provided on trade, sustainable use and conservation of snakes, and make recommendations to the Standing Committee as appropriate.

Directed to the Standing Committee

XX.XX The Standing Committee shall:

- a) consider the reports and recommendations from the Animals Committee in accordance with Decision XX.XX and any other relevant information;
- b) and make recommendation to the Parties, the Animals Committee and the Secretariat as appropriate; and
- c) report on the implementation of Decision XX.XX at COP18 with recommendations for consideration by the Parties, including revisions to Resolution Conf. 17.XX on the conservation, unsustainable use of and trade in snakes, if deemed necessary.

Directed to the Secretariat

XX.XX The Secretariat shall communicate individually with Asian Parties to invite them to report on the status of their implementation of Decision XX.XX.

XX.XX The Secretariat shall make any relevant information on trade, sustainable use and conservation of snakes available to Parties and the Animals Committee through the CITES website.