CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA
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Sixty-sixth meeting of the Standing Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 11-15 January 2016

Interpretation and implementation of the Convention

Trade control and traceability

ELECTRONIC PERMITTING: REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP

1. This document has been submitted by Switzerland, as Chair of the Standing Committee Working Group on Information Technologies and Electronic Systems.[*]

2. At its 16th meeting (CoP16, Bangkok, 2014), the Conference of the Parties adopted Decision 16.54 on Electronic Permitting, directed to the Standing Committee, as follows:

    The Standing Committee shall extend the mandate of its Working Group on Information Technologies and Electronic Systems in order for it to perform the following tasks:

    a) *collaborate with the CITES Secretariat in the drafting of funding proposals related to the development of CITES e-permitting systems;*

    b) *work with the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business, the World Customs Organization and other relevant organizations to ensure that CITES e-permits are aligned with international trade standards and norms;*

    c) *collaborate with the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre to further develop the Electronic Permit Information eXchange to act as a clearing-house of CITES e-permits and certificates and to offer Parties in developing regions a ready-to-use electronic CITES permitting system;*

    d) *work with the CITES Secretariat to ensure that the CITES toolkit is updated as necessary; and*

    e) *support the participation in the Working Group of developing countries party to CITES.*

3. At the time of writing, the membership of the Working Group on Information Technologies and Electronic Systems includes Switzerland as the Chair, and Belarus, Brazil, Canada, Czech Republic, France, Guatemala, Japan, Mexico, Monaco, Philippines, Portugal, Singapore, South Africa, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Viet Nam, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC) and the World Customs Organization and the American Watch Association (AWA). The International Plant Protection Convention has voiced interest in joining as an observer.

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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.*

<u>Funding proposals related to the development of CITES e-permitting systems</u>

4.   The Chair of the Working Group with the assistance of the Secretariat continues to reach out to potential donors, including the private sector, in an effort to secure financial support to developing countries wishing to implement CITES electronic permitting systems.

5.   The Chair of the Working Group and the Secretariat have also initiated discussions with ministries responsible for the development of national Single Windows[1] to see if assistance is available to CITES Management Authorities to develop CITES e-permitting systems. The new systems would then be included in Single Window environments. Examples of such collaboration include Brazil, where the Management Authority is a member of the committee implementing the Brazilian Single Window, and Mozambique, which began discussions with the company SGS which is tasked by the government to administer its Single Window, to develop a CITES e-permitting system for inclusion in the national Single Window.

6.   Notification no. 2015/056 informed Parties on the completion of a project funded by Belgium, France and Switzerland with the assistance of the Secretariat and UNEP-WCMC to develop web services[2]. These new web services allow Parties to extract, inter alia, species' scientific and common names and the relevant Appendix number from the CITES Checklist[3] directly into national CITES checklists or CITES electronic permits and certificates. Moreover, the CITES Checklist and Species+ can now act as master databases. Parties to CITES, Customs officials or others involved in work related to the Convention can now update national CITES checklists in a timely manner, thereby avoiding duplication of effort, reducing mistakes in nomenclature, and ensuring that information on CITES permits and certificates is correct. Information on these web services is available from the UNEP-WCMC website[4].

7.   Switzerland is also supporting to further develop UNEP-WCMC's Electronic Permit Information Exchange (EPIX) system to act as a central registry and conduit of CITES permits and certificates. Such a central registry would facilitate validation of CITES permit data by CITES Authorities and Customs officials and function as a conduit for the exchange of permit information and electronic permits between e-permitting systems developed by parties. Switzerland encourages other Parties to also support and participate in the project.

<u>The French and Swiss project to make CITES trade fully electronic</u>

8.   Customs and the CITES Management Authorities of France and Switzerland are developing web services that will allow the exchange of electronic permits between the electronic permitting systems of the two countries. This pilot project will ascertain the possibility of implementing fully paperless import and export procedures and integration into the respective national Single Window environments. France and Switzerland are planning to make this pilot project functional in the course of 2016.

<u>Collaboration with relevant organizations</u>

9.   Close collaboration continues with the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT), particularly with regard on how the development of traceability systems for CITES-listed species can be aligned with work related to CITES e-permitting systems. More information on discussions with UN/CEFACT on the possible development of standards to support traceability systems is available in document SC66 Doc. 34.1.

10.   The Secretariat has also met with the World Customs Organization (WCO) to discuss revisions to the WCO Data Model and how such revisions could impact on CITES e-permitting systems. These meetings were held on the margins of the WCO Joint Regional Risk Management Workshop, which was held in Malacca, Malaysia from 6 -10 April 2015 and the APEC Workshop on Wildlife Trafficking-Related Customs

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[1]   *A Single Window is defined as a facility that allows parties involved in trade and transport to lodge standardized information and documents with a single entry point to fulfil all import, export, and transit-related regulatory requirements. If information is electronic, then individual data elements should only be submitted once (UN/CEFACT recommendation no. 33 establishing a Single Window to enhance the efficient exchange of information between trade and government.*
http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/cefact/recommendations/rec33/rec33_trd352e.pdf)

[2]   *Web services are software systems designed to support interoperable machine to machine interaction over a network.*

[3]   *See: http://checklist.cites.org*

[4]   *See: http://api.speciesplus.net/*

Best Practices which was held from 22-23 August 2015 in Cebu, Philippines, where the Secretariat was invited to speak on the development of CITES e-permitting systems.

11. Meetings have also been held with the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) to discuss possible collaboration, particularly with regard to development of electronic trade certificates and permits. IPPC Is developing a voluntary system for the electronic exchange of phytosanitary certificates which has many parallels to the work on CITES e-permitting systems. For example, IPPC is discussing the possible development of a central hub to facilitate the exchange of e-phyto certificates, work that arguably could be of interest to CITES Parties particularly in the context of discussion to develop EPIX (Electronic Permit Information eXchange) as described below.

12. Discussions continue with UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Centre Work (UNEP-WCMC) on the development of EPIX to assist Parties to exchange CITES permits and certificates and to provide Customs with a means to add information to e-permits. EPIX will be developed in the future as the central hub for the exchange of permits in the French Swiss project to ascertain the feasibility of making CITES trade fully electronic as described above. Furthermore, discussions on EPIX may benefit from the lessons learned in the IPPC project to develop a central hub.

13. Of special interest is the joint project with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) to integrate guidelines found in the CITES e-permitting toolkit with the Automated SYstem for CUstoms Data (ASYCUDA)[5]. The project will develop a CITES specific module in ASYCUDA and also a ready to use CITES e-permitting systems for use by developing countries. ASYCUDA is aligned with standards guiding the development of Single Window environments and, currently, is used in over 90 developing countries, The provision of a CITES specific ASYCUDA module and ready to use CITES e-permitting system should assist greatly those developing countries wishing to automate their procedures to issue and receive CITES permits and certificates.

Ensuring that the CITES toolkit is updated as necessary

14. The Secretariat monitors, and participates when appropriate, in discussions of the Data Model Project Team (DMPT) which is the technical body managing the WCO Data Model. By closely monitoring the work of the DMPT, the Secretariat ensures that revisions and updates to the WCO Data Model do not impact negatively on CITES e-permitting systems. Participation by the Secretariat in the DMPT also ensures that any revisions to Resolution 12.3 (Rev. CoP16) on *Permits and certificates* can be reflected in the WCO Data Model.

Recommendations

15. The Standing Committee is invited to consider the information provided in this report.

16. The Standing Committee is also invited to consider:

a) A recommendation that the Conference of the Parties at its 17th meeting request the Standing Committee to extend the mandate of the Working Group on Information Technologies and Electronic Systems to work in collaboration with the CITES Secretariat to:

    i) Further develop the Electronic Permit Information eXchange (EPIX) as a central registry of CITES permits and certificates to facilitate validation of CITES permit data by CITES Authorities and Customs officials;

    ii) Work with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), in collaboration with the Secretariat, to continue development of and assist CITES Parties, through the establishment of joint projects, to use the CITES module in ASYCUDA;

    iii) Develop joint capacity building programmes with the International Trade Centre (ITC), the World Bank, the World Customs Organization (WCO) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) in the context of the Agreement on Trade Facilitation;

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[5] *ASYCUDA was developed by UNCTAD and is a computerised Customs management system which covers most foreign trade procedures. The system handles manifests and customs declarations, accounting procedures, transit and suspense procedures.For more information on ASYCUDA, see: http://www.asycuda.org/*

iv) Work with the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) in the development of electronic trade documentation and learn from IPPC's efforts to develop an electronic phytosanitary certificate which is based on UN/CEFACT standards;

v) Publish the results and lessons learned of the pilot project by France and Switzerland to make CITES trade fully electronic on the CITES website;

vi) Communicate with national lead ministries responsible for the development of Single Window environments to raise awareness of CITES and to ascertain the availability of financial support to assist CITES Management Authorities to develop CITES e-permitting systems;

vii) Monitor work related to the development of traceability systems for specimens of CITES-listed species to facilitate their harmonization with CITES permits and certificates; and

viii) Continue to work with work with the UN/CEFACT and the WCO and other relevant organizations to ensure that CITES e-permitting toolkit continues to be aligned with international trade standards and norms;.