

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

REPORT OF THE SECRETARIAT AND THE ANIMALS COMMITTEE

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat and the Animals Committee.*
2. At its 16th meeting (CoP16, Bangkok, 2013), the Conference of the Parties adopted a number of interconnected decisions on *Snake trade and conservation management (Serpentes spp.)*, as follows:

Directed to the Secretariat

16.102 *The CITES Secretariat shall, where appropriate in consultation with the Standing Committee:*

- a) *subject to external funding, hire independent consultants in liaison with local scientists, and local research and academic institutions to:*
 - i) *undertake a study of production systems for Asian snakes listed in CITES Appendix II and the use of source codes; and develop guidance to assist Parties in monitoring and controlling captive-breeding operations and other production systems, including information to assess their biological feasibility and, where possible, economic viability (i.e. whether it is financially viable for commercial facilities to produce and export specimens as permitted by national authorities);*
 - ii) *compile information and develop guidance that can assist Parties in the making of non-detriment findings, management systems for wild populations and the establishment of export quotas for Appendix-II snake species in trade, by undertaking relevant research, consulting with relevant experts, examining suitable examples and case-studies, and building on the results of the International Expert Workshop on CITES Non-Detriment Findings (Cancún, 2008) and recommendations on the making of non-detriment findings from the Conference of the Parties;*
 - iii) *undertake a study of one or more high-value snake species in the pet trade (e.g. unique colour or morphological forms, or range-restricted endemics) to determine the impacts on wild populations of legal and illegal harvest for international trade, and to provide information required for making non-detriment findings for trade in these species; and propose actions to enforce the Convention as it relates to trade in these species; and*

* *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.*

- iv) *undertake a study on methodologies to differentiate between wild and captive-bred CITES-listed snakes in trade, including parts and derivatives, ensuring that the work is carried out in line with recommendations of the Standing Committee concerning source;*
- b) *issue a Notification to the Parties encouraging Parties to engage with interested institutions to investigate the possibility of forensic identification of specimens of CITES-listed snakes in trade, and requesting Parties to inform the Secretariat about the results of such engagement;*
- c) *inform Parties of the results of the International Trade Centre (ITC) study on trade in python snakes in Asia, the UNCTAD Biotrade Initiative's Working Group on reptile skin sourcing, when these become available, and other relevant studies and information;*
- d) *present the outcomes of the activities mentioned in paragraphs a) and b) above, together with its recommendations, to the Animals Committee for review at its 27th or, as appropriate, 28th meeting, and make the final results available on the CITES website following review and approval by the Standing Committee pursuant to Decision 16.105;*
- e) *issue a Notification to the Parties requesting Asian Parties to report on their implementation of Decision 16.106 to the Secretariat, and submit a compilation of this information and its recommendations for consideration by the Standing Committee at its 65th meeting; and*
- f) *subject to external funding, conduct one or more interdisciplinary workshops for CITES and other relevant authorities and stakeholders of range States of Asian snake species in international trade on:*
 - i) *the use of guidance for monitoring and controlling captive-breeding operations and other production systems, as agreed by the Standing Committee pursuant to Decision 16.105;*
 - ii) *the use of guidance for making non-detriment findings and establishing export quotas for Appendix-II snake species in trade; and*
- g) *report on the results of these activities to the Standing Committee before the 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP17).*

Directed to the Animals Committee

16.103 *The Animals Committee shall:*

- a) *review the results of the activities indicated in Decision 16.102, paragraphs a) to c), as well as the results of the ITC study and other relevant studies on trade in python snakes in Asia and UNCTAD Biotrade Initiative's Working Group on reptile skin sourcing, when available; and, based on these studies and reports, develop guidance and recommendations for consideration by the Standing Committee;*
- b) *examine the study undertaken by the UNCTAD Biotrade initiative's Working Group on reptile skin sourcing mentioned in Decision 16.102, paragraph c), and any other relevant available information concerning:*
 - i) *existing marking and tracing systems and, where relevant, accompanying certification schemes of all kinds (and not necessarily limited to those currently in use for trade in wild species), which could provide best practices that might be applicable to snakes;*
 - ii) *a traceability system to confirm the legal origin of snake skins; and*
 - iii) *the economic feasibility of current technologies to implement such a traceability and marking system;*
- c) *advise the Standing Committee on the feasibility of implementing such a traceability system for snakes; and*
- d) *report on the status of this work at the 65th and 66th meetings of the Standing Committee.*

16.104 *The Animals Committee shall, at its 27th meeting, consider the final IUCN red list assessments for Asian snake species and, if available, incorporate new information and data and make appropriate recommendations, including recommendations to the Standing Committee.*

Directed to the Standing Committee

16.105 *The Standing Committee shall:*

- a) *consider the reports and recommendations from the Animals Committee and the Secretariat provided in accordance with Decisions 16.102 and 16.103 and, as appropriate, the results of the ITC study on trade in python snakes in Asia, the UNCTAD Biotrade Initiative's Working Group on reptile skin sourcing, and any other relevant available information;*
- b) *examine the study undertaken by the UNCTAD Biotrade Initiative's Working Group on reptile skin sourcing, and any other relevant available information concerning:*
 - i) *the socio-economic implications of such a traceability system; and*
 - ii) *the potential costs of the system at all levels along the supply chain, from producers to consumers;*
- c) *make recommendations to the Parties, the Animals Committee and the Secretariat as appropriate; and*
- d) *report on the implementation of Decisions 16.102, 16.104 and 16.105 at CoP17, with recommendations for consideration by the Parties, if deemed necessary.*

Directed to Parties

16.106 *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 65th meeting of the Standing Committee, in compliance with Decision 16.102, paragraph e).*

16.107 *In order to support the sustainable use of Asian snakes, Parties are as necessary invited to:*

- a) *in the case of range States with shared CITES-listed species in trade, develop comparable, or as far as possible standardized non-detriment finding methodologies, including the establishment of quota setting systems; and*
- b) *establish voluntary conservative annual catch and export quotas for CITES-listed snake species in trade, and to communicate the export quotas to the Secretariat.*

Directed to ICCWC and ASEAN-WEN

16.108 *The International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICCWC) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Wildlife Enforcement Network (ASEAN-WEN) are encouraged to take note of the concerns about the illegal and unreported trade in snakes and their parts and derivatives, and to take these into account when developing work programmes and, if funding is available, undertaking relevant activities.*

3. At its 65th meeting (SC65, Geneva, July 2014), the Standing Committee agreed that the implementation of Decisions 16.102 to 16.108 would have to be further discussed at the 66th meeting of the Standing Committee (SC66).
4. This document focuses on the Decisions directed to the Secretariat and the Animals Committee. The Decisions directed to the Standing Committee are dealt with in the report of the Standing Committee Working Group on Snake Trade and Conservation Management (see document SC66 Doc. 54.2).

Decision 16.102

5. Concerning the four studies mentioned in Decision 16.102, paragraph a), the Secretariat, with generous funding from Switzerland and the European Union, concluded contracts with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the Boa and Python Specialist Group of the Species Survival Commission of IUCN (IUCN-SSC) to undertake these studies.
6. Pursuant to Decision 16.102, paragraph a), i), the IUCN-SSC Boa and Python Specialist Group produced an assessment of the commercial production of CITES-listed snake species in Viet Nam and China. The study examines closed cycle production systems and makes recommendations for their improvement and the future management of CITES-listed snakes entering trade. The synopsis of the study can be found in [Annex 1](#) to document AC28 Doc. 14.1. The complete study is available as information document [AC28 Inf. 1](#).
7. Pursuant to Decision 16.102, paragraph a), ii), the IUCN-SSC Boa and Python Specialist Group compiled information and produced guidance on making non-detriment findings for trade in snakes. The summary report of the study can be found in [Annex 2](#) to document AC28 Doc. 14.1. The complete study is available as information documents [AC28 Inf. 2](#) and [AC28 Inf. 3](#).
8. Pursuant to Decision 16.102, paragraph a), iii), the IUCN-SSC Boa and Python Specialist Group produced an assessment of the impact of the pet trade on five snake species included in Appendix II. The study summarizes the general context and impact of the pet trade on CITES Appendix II-listed snake species and outlines key findings, conclusions and recommendations for each of the five snake species discussed. The summary report of the study can be found in [Annex 3](#) to document AC28 Doc. 14.1. The complete study is available as information documents [AC28 Inf. 4](#), [AC28 Inf. 5](#), [AC28 Inf. 6](#), [AC28 Inf. 7](#) and [AC28 Inf. 8](#).
9. Pursuant to Decision 16.102, paragraph a), iv), the IUCN-SSC Boa and Python Specialist Group produced a study on methodologies for differentiating between wild and captive-bred CITES-listed snakes. The study describes available methods, examines their potential limitations and discusses their utility and applicability for snakes in trade. The synopsis of the study can be found in [Annex 4](#) to document AC28 Doc. 14.1. The complete study is available as information document [AC28 Inf. 9](#).
10. Concerning the studies on the commercial production of CITES-listed snake species in Viet Nam and China [Decision 16.102, paragraph a), i)] and on the impact of the pet trade on five snake species included in Appendix II [Decision 16.102, paragraph a), iii)], the Animals Committee, at its 28th meeting (AC28, Tel Aviv, August 2015), invited the Standing Committee to:
 - a) recommend that Southeast Asian countries engaged in the snake trade endeavour to verify the origin of animals traded between countries in the region and to ensure the appropriate use of source codes;
 - b) encourage Honduras to ensure that measures are in place to address poaching of, and illegal trade in, the Cayos Cochinos boa constrictor (*Boa constrictor imperator*);
 - c) encourage Benin to implement the following measures for the Ball python (*Python regius*):

- i) Design and implement a management program for the species;
 - ii) Make non-detriment findings based on studies of the species, basic demographics, harvest and trade in the species;
 - iii) Strengthen national regulations relating to trade control and monitoring, including stricter control policies for production systems.
- d) encourage Ghana, Togo and Benin to implement the following measures for the Calabar ground boa (*Calabaria reinhardtii*):
- i) Make non-detriment findings based on studies of the species, basic demographics, harvest and trade in the species;
 - ii) Improve systems to monitor harvest, captive breeding, and trade in the species.
- e) invite 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
- f) invite Parties affected by the above recommendations to report to the Standing Committee at its 69th meeting.
11. Concerning the study on guidance on making non-detriment findings for trade in snakes [Decision 16.102, paragraph a), ii)], the Animals Committee recommended that the draft guidance be reviewed by the Animals Committee in advance of, and at its 29th meeting.
12. Concerning the study on methodologies for differentiating between wild and captive-bred CITES-listed snakes [Decision 16.102, paragraph a), iv)], the Animals Committee took note of the study and invited Parties to make use of the information contained in the study with a view to enhancing opportunities to better differentiate between wild and captive-bred CITES-listed snakes in trade. The Animals Committee further draws the attention of the Standing Committee to this study, as it may be important from an implementation and enforcement perspective.
13. In compliance with the instructions in Decision 16.102, paragraph b), the Secretariat issued Notification to the Parties [No. 2014/024](#) of 2 June 2014, which encouraged Parties to engage with interested institutions to investigate the possibility of forensic identification of specimens of CITES-listed snakes in trade, and requested Parties to inform the Secretariat about the results of such engagement. At the time of writing of the present document (November 2015), no such information from Parties had been received by the Secretariat.
14. Concerning the studies referred to in Decision 16.102, paragraph c), the Secretariat informed Parties in the same Notification of the results of the ITC study on trade in python skins and of the UNCTAD's Biotrade Initiative Working Group on reptile skin sourcing.
15. In accordance with Decision 16.102, paragraph d), and after review and approval by the Animals Committee and the Standing Committee, the Secretariat will make the final results of the activities in Decision 16.102, paragraphs a) and b) available on the CITES website. The studies could be linked to the Virtual College, while those mentioned in paragraphs 7 and 8 above could also be disseminated on the new non-detriment findings (NDF) portal that the Secretariat is developing pursuant to Resolution Conf. 16.7 on *Non-detriment findings*.
16. In accordance with Decision 16.102, paragraph e), the Secretariat - also in Notification to the Parties No. 2014/024 - requested Asian Parties to report on their implementation of Decision 16.106 to the Secretariat. At the time of writing of the present document (November 2015), no such information from Parties had been received by the Secretariat.
17. In accordance with Decision 16.102, paragraph f), the Secretariat plans to conduct an interdisciplinary workshop for CITES and other relevant authorities and stakeholders of range States of Asian snake species in international trade to promote and test the final results of the activities mentioned above, specifically the guidance for monitoring and controlling captive-breeding operations and other production

systems, and the guidance for making non-detriment findings and establishing export quotas for Appendix-II snake species in trade. The Secretariat has secured some funding to this effect.

18. In compliance with Decision 16.102, paragraph g), the Secretariat (together with the Animals Committee) reported on progress with implementing the various aspects of Decision 16.102 at the 65th and present meetings of the Standing Committee (see document [SC65 Doc. 44](#) and the current document).

Decision 16.103

19. Pursuant to Decision 16.103, paragraph a), the Animals Committee reviewed at AC28 the results of the activities indicated in Decision 16.102, paragraphs a) to c), as well as the results of the ITC study and other relevant studies on trade in python snakes in Asia and UNCTAD Biotrade Initiative's Working Group on reptile skin sourcing. The Animals Committee invited the Standing Committee to consider the drafting of a Resolution on the conservation, sustainable use of and trade in snakes, based on the results achieved under different decisions on snakes adopted at CoP16, with a view to increase coherence, reduce duplication of effort and provide guidance to Parties trading in snakes. The suggested draft of this resolution is contained in the report of the Standing Committee Working Group on Snake Trade and Conservation Management (see document SC66 Doc. 54.2).
20. Regarding Decision 16.103, paragraphs b) and c), the Animals Committee made a number of recommendations to the Standing Committee on the feasibility, development and implementation of a traceability system for snakes (see document SC65 Doc. 44). At SC65, the Standing Committee took note of these recommendations, acknowledging that its Working Group on Snake Trade and Conservation Management would further consider the matter of snake skin traceability and sourcing intersessionally and report at the 66th meeting of the Standing Committee (see document SC66 Doc. 54.2).
21. At AC28, the Animals Committee continued its review of the studies concerning traceability of snake skins. Following a broader consideration of the matters regarding traceability systems, it invited the Standing Committee to consider the drafting of a decision on traceability to provide guidance to Parties implementing traceability systems. Traceability systems are discussed under agenda item 34, and the suggested draft of this decision is found in document SC66 Doc. 34.1.

Decision 16.104

22. As directed in Decision 16.104, the Animals Committee reviewed at AC27 a provisional list of snake species identified as potentially threatened by trade, based on information included in The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. It directed AC28 to re-consider the list, following the incorporation of additional information from recently completed surveys and a further round of expert consultation.
23. At AC28, the Animals Committee reconsidered a revised list submitted by IUCN in document [AC28 Doc. 14.3](#) and adopted the following recommendations:
 - a) Range States, importing countries, and other Parties are encouraged 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). Range states are encouraged 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*, *Enhydris longicauda*, and *Cryptelytrops rubeus*. Range states are also encouraged to consider including the remaining species categorized as "may be threatened by trade" with listing in the Appendices.
 - b) In particular, range States of *Popeia buniana* (Malaysia), *Popeia nebularis* (Malaysia), *Cryptelytrops kanburiensis* (Thailand and probably Myanmar) and *Orthriophis moellendorfi* (China and Vietnam) should assess whether existing legislation, protected areas and current levels of trade are compatible with the conservation of these species in the wild, and evaluate the possible listing of these species under CITES (including Appendix III).
 - c) Parties and range States are encouraged 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] to evaluate the possible listing of these species under CITES (including Appendix III).

- d) Exporting countries and other Parties may wish 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].
- e) Parties should 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.

24. With the provision of the above recommendations, the Animals Committee considers that it has completed the tasks directed to it in Decision 16.104.

Decision 16.106

25. Pursuant to Decision 16.106, paragraph f), the Secretariat, requested Asian Parties in Notification to the Parties [No. 2014/024](#) of 2 June 2014 to report on their implementation of Decision 16.106 to the Secretariat. As explained in paragraph 16 above, no response has been received to date.

Recommendation

26. The Standing Committee is invited to consider the recommendations from the Animals Committee contained in paragraph 10 and 23 above.