

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

Tortoises and freshwater turtles

REPORT OF THE SECRETARIAT

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.

Background

2. At its 16th meeting (CoP16, Bangkok, 2013), the Conference of the Parties adopted Decisions 16.109 to 16.124 on *Tortoises and freshwater turtles (Testudines spp.)*, directed to the Secretariat, the Animals Committee, the Standing Committee and the Parties.
3. These Decisions relate to: studies on the making of non-detriment findings, illegal trade, and identification materials; the collection of data on seizures and confiscations; capacity-building and training; enforcement; the establishment of a CITES Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles Task Force; and the Periodic Review of the Appendices. They are shown in the Annex to this document.
4. At the 65th meeting of the Standing Committee (SC65, Geneva, July 2014), the Secretariat reported on the status of implementation of Decisions 16.109 to 16.124 (see document [SC65. Doc. 45](#)). The Secretariat noted that these decisions comprehensively complemented (and sometimes appeared to duplicate) existing provisions in Resolution Conf. 11.9 (Rev. CoP13) on *Conservation of and trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles*. It also noted that there had been few responses from Parties to requests in several decisions for data or reports. Consequently, the Secretariat expressed concern that this might impede the successful implementation of Decisions 16.117, 16.120 and 16.121, all directed or relevant to the Standing Committee, and heavily dependent on successful reporting by the Parties. The Secretariat advised that the activities called for in Decision 16.119 paragraph b), and Decision 16.122 paragraphs a) and b) would probably generate much of the information that was requested from the Parties.
5. In ensuing discussions, it was suggested that the decisions concerning tortoises and freshwater turtles would need to be revisited and updated at the 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP17, Johannesburg, 2016) to avoid overlap, and duplications with provisions in Resolution Conf. 11.9 (Rev. CoP13).
6. The Standing Committee took note of the Secretariat's report, and urged Parties to consider, as a matter of priority, providing resources to the Secretariat for the implementation of Decisions 16.119, paragraph b), and 16.122, paragraphs a) and b). It was agreed that further considerations regarding trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles and the implementation of relevant decisions would have to take place at the present meeting of the Standing Committee.

Progress since SC65

7. In response to the request from the Standing Committee, the United States of America provided funding for the Secretariat to implement Decisions 16.119, paragraph b), and 16.122, paragraphs a) and b). The Secretariat is particularly grateful for this generous support.
8. The Secretariat has engaged the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) to support the implementation of Decision 16.122, paragraphs a) and b). The expected deliverables are a report on legal and illegal trade in specimens of tortoises and freshwater turtles, and a second report on identification and capacity-building materials for specimens of tortoises and freshwater turtles.
9. The wildlife trade study in accordance with Decision 16.122, paragraph a), will analyse reported data on legal and illegal trade, covering different types of trade (e.g. medicinal, food and pet trades) and specimens (e.g. live animals, turtle shell, bones, cartilage). It will identify the species and specimens prevalent in illegal trade, examine and document common illegal trade routes, locations of seizures and illegal trade incidents, and document any enhanced enforcement efforts that could serve as best practice for combating illegal trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles.
10. The review of identification and capacity-building materials in accordance with Decision 16.122, paragraph b) will identify existing materials and evaluate their adequacy, considering issues such as accessibility, quality and quantity of materials, and the distribution, uptake and utilization of available materials. The review will evaluate the need for the development of additional identification and capacity-building materials, including multilingual materials, and provide recommendations on their development.
11. In executing this work, IUCN has been asked to communicate with range States that authorize trade in these species, particularly States affected by illegal trade, and collaborate with experts and enforcement professionals in Asia and from international enforcement organizations.
12. While IUCN's work is underway, it could not be completed in time for consideration at the present meeting. The two reports indicated above are due to be submitted to the Secretariat by 15 February 2016. The Secretariat will give an oral update on progress with the studies at the present meeting.
13. The findings of the work conducted by IUCN, and the information and analysis contained in the reports, should feed into the CITES Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles Task Force, which is to be convened by the Secretariat pursuant to Decision 16.119, paragraph b). The Secretariat intends to convene this Task Force in March 2016, when the results of the IUCN study are available, and well before the deadline for submission of documents to the 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP17).
14. The Secretariat realises that the delays in implementing Decisions 16.119 and 16.122 will prevent the Standing Committee to effectively implement Decisions 16.117, 16.120 and 16.123. The Secretariat is of the opinion that under these circumstances, the best way forward would be for the Secretariat to report its findings and recommendations on the results of the studies, the outcome of the work conducted by the CITES Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles Task Force and, as appropriate, the implementation of other CoP16 Decisions on *Tortoises and freshwater turtles (Testudines spp.)* to the Conference of the Parties at its 17th meeting. Alternatively, the Standing Committee may wish to reconstitute Decisions 16.113 to 16.123 for their completion after CoP17.

Recommendations

15. The Standing Committee is invited to note this document.
16. The Standing Committee is invited to consider the suggestions of the Secretariat in paragraph 14 of the present document concerning the implementation of the Decisions on *Tortoises and freshwater turtles* directed to the Secretariat, the Standing Committee and the Parties.

Tortoises and freshwater turtles (*Testudines* spp.)

Directed to the Secretariat

- 16.109 Subject to external funding, the Secretariat shall contract independent consultants to undertake a study, taking into account the findings of the Cancún workshop on non-detriment findings and other pertinent sources of information, to identify and discuss factors that are of particular relevance to make non-detriment findings for tortoises and freshwater turtles. These factors should include, but not be limited to, tortoise and turtle population status and dynamics, trade dynamics, production systems, and trade in parts and derivatives. This study should provide guidance to make non-detriment findings for tortoises and freshwater turtles.
- 16.110 The Secretariat shall make the results of the study referred to in Decision 16.109 available to the Animals Committee for consideration, if possible, at its 27th meeting.

Directed to the Animals Committee

- 16.111 The Animals Committee shall review the study undertaken in accordance with Decision 16.109 and make recommendations, as appropriate and, if possible, at its 27th meeting for consideration by the Standing Committee and the Parties.

Directed to the Standing Committee

- 16.112 The Standing Committee shall review the study undertaken in accordance with Decision 16.109 and the Animals Committee recommendations, and make its own recommendations, as appropriate, for communication to the Parties or for consideration at the 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

Directed to Parties

- 16.113 The Parties, particularly those of the Asian region, should collect data on seizures of CITES-listed live tortoises and freshwater turtles, and report these data annually to the Secretariat, along with the disposition of the specimens. The Parties should provide the data in conjunction with their annual report submission. These data should be reported for confiscations through the end of 2019.

The Parties should report, if possible, on the following parameters: species, numbers of specimens, destination (for exports) or source/re-exporting country (for imports), and disposition of the animals as per Resolution Conf. 10.7 (Rev. CoP15) on *Disposal of confiscated live specimens of species included in the Appendices*.

- 16.114 Parties are encouraged to collect and report data voluntarily, in the same manner as indicated in Decision 16.113, on confiscations of international shipments of non-CITES freshwater turtle species, so that such data may shed light on illegal trade methods and provide useful information to Enforcement and Management Authorities.
- 16.115 Parties are encouraged to collect and report voluntarily comparable data on confiscations of specimens of CITES and non-CITES species of tortoises and freshwater turtles traded domestically. Parties are encouraged to provide the data annually in response to the invitation by the Secretariat.

Directed to the Secretariat

- 16.116 The Secretariat shall invite Parties to provide the information specified in Decisions 16.114 and 16.115, consider the information submitted under Decision 16.113, and report on its evaluation of the data received to the Standing Committee for its next regular meeting, and make recommendations for the implementation and enforcement of the Convention.

Directed to the Standing Committee

- 16.117 The Standing Committee shall consider the reports submitted by the Secretariat and its recommendations, and make any recommendations it deems appropriate.

Directed to Parties

- 16.118 Considering the large-scale illegal and undocumented trade in parts and derivatives from CITES-listed tortoises and freshwater turtles, the Parties should:

- a) take note of this problem and take steps to address it within their national systems to ensure that CITES permits are properly issued and the Convention is fully implemented and enforced;
- b) examine their enforcement efforts regarding the trade in these parts and derivatives, and take adequate steps to deter and detect illegal and undocumented trade;
- c) conduct education and outreach efforts directed towards turtle farms, buyers and sellers of turtle shell, bones, cartilage (calipee), and other parts, medicinal product manufacturers, shippers, brokers, and other key stakeholders to better ensure that turtle parts and derivatives are traded in compliance with national laws and CITES requirements; and
- d) report their progress in these areas, via the Secretariat, at the 65th meeting of the Standing Committee.

Directed to the Secretariat

16.119 The Secretariat shall:

- a) forward the reports provided pursuant to Decision 16.118 to the Standing Committee, making any recommendations it deems appropriate;
- b) seek funding to establish and convene a CITES Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles Task Force, which should undertake an exchange of intelligence and develop strategies to combat illegal trade. The members of the Task Force could include ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network, the members of the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime, and those Parties in Asia that are most affected by the illegal trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles and their parts and derivatives; and
- c) report on the work of the Task Force at the 65th or 66th meeting of the Standing Committee and make any recommendations it deems appropriate.

Directed to the Standing Committee

16.120 The Standing Committee shall consider at its 65th or 66th meeting all the information and recommendations submitted by the Secretariat in compliance with Decision 16.119 and make any recommendations it deems appropriate.

Directed to the Parties

16.121 Parties, particularly those in the Asia region, are encouraged to:

- a) increase enforcement activities to deter, detect and address illegal and undocumented trade in CITES-listed live tortoises and freshwater turtles, and their parts and derivatives, *inter alia* by providing relevant training to national enforcement authorities, strengthening the enforcement and implementation of the Convention for these species, disseminating identification materials and increasing awareness amongst the judiciary; and
- b) provide relevant information on their progress in these areas to the Secretariat for reporting at the 65th meeting of the Standing Committee.

Directed to the Secretariat

16.122 The Secretariat shall:

- a) recognizing the ongoing prevalence of an illegal trade in live tortoises and freshwater turtles for the medicinal, food, and pet trades which is threatening the survival of some species in the wild and impacting the integrity of the Convention, seek external funding and, subject to its availability, hire a consultant to analyse reported data, identify species prevalent in illegal trade, and document illegal trade incidents, trade routes (including the Internet-based trade), methods of concealment, and other aspects relevant to enforcing CITES provisions concerning trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles;
- b) subject to external funding, contract a consultant to identify and evaluate tortoises and freshwater turtle identification and capacity-building materials, and assist with developing additional materials as deemed necessary, including the preparation and distribution of multilingual [Bahasa Indonesia, Bahasa Malaysia (Melayu), Bengali, Burmese, Chinese, English, Hindi, Khmer, Lao, Thai, Urdu, Vietnamese and other languages as appropriate] identification materials focused on the shells and shell pieces of Asian tortoises and freshwater and terrestrial turtles; and

- c) report on progress on Decision 16.121, paragraph b), and paragraphs a) and b) above, including its recommendations, at the 65th and 66th meetings of the Standing Committee.

Directed to the Standing Committee

- 16.123 The Standing Committee shall consider at its 65th and 66th meetings all information submitted by the Secretariat under Decision 16.122 and make any recommendations it deems appropriate.

Directed to the Animals Committee

- 16.124 The Animals Committee shall, as a matter of priority, include *Cuora galbinifrons* and *Mauremys annamensis* in its Periodic Review of the Appendices.