

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

Sixty-seventh meeting of the Standing Committee  
Johannesburg (South Africa), 23 September 2016

Species specific matters

STURGEONS AND PADDLEFISH (ACIPENSERIFORMES SPP.)  
REPORT OF THE SECRETARIAT ON COUNTRY OF ORIGIN OF CAVIAR

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.

Background

2. The Standing Committee, at its 65th meeting (SC65), established an intersessional working group to review Resolution Conf. 12.7. (Rev. CoP16) on *Conservation of and trade in sturgeons and paddlefish*. The working group reported the results of its discussions, including proposed amendments to the resolution, at the 66th meeting of the Standing Committee (SC66), in document [SC66 Doc. 55.1](#).
3. At SC66, the Standing Committee decided to reconvene the working group to discuss unresolved issues, including country of origin. Based on the working group's subsequent report contained in document [SC66 Com. 8](#), the Standing Committee agreed to submit to the Conference of the Parties, at its 17th meeting, a revised version of Resolution 12.7 (Rev. CoP16) on *Conservation of and trade in sturgeons and paddlefish*, incorporating all the proposed changes in the Annex to document SC66 Doc. 55.1 with additional changes as reflected in [SC66 Sum. 9 \(Rev. 1\)](#) and contained in document [CoP17 Doc. 50](#).
4. The Standing Committee further requested the Secretariat, at the 67th meeting of the Standing Committee:
  - a) in cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), to verify the content of the proposed Annex 3 of the draft revised Resolution; and
  - b) to provide further advice on the issue of country of origin of caviar for discussion

Annex 3 of draft revised Resolution 12.7 (Rev. CoP16): Overview of shared stocks

5. The table contained in Annex 3 of draft revised Resolution 12.7 (Rev. CoP16) was originally compiled by the Secretariat, based on past submissions by range states and, regarding *Acipenser ruthenus*, reflects the understanding of the Secretariat that the biology of the species allows it to occur in brackish, very low salinity environments at the mouth of the rivers, which make up its range.
6. Pursuant to the Standing Committee's request, the Secretariat sought the advice of FAO to verify the content of the table in Annex 3, and the proposed amendments submitted by the Russian Federation.
7. The expert opinions subsequently provided by FAO confirm that, while *Acipenser ruthenus* is primarily a freshwater sturgeon species, occurring in the tributaries of the Pont-Caspian basin, the Siberian rivers and the Danube, there are rare occurrences of the species at the mouth of these rivers.
8. On 21 March 2016 the Russian Federation submitted to the CITES Secretariat an amendment proposal to Annex 3 of draft revised Resolution 12.7 (Rev. CoP16) to split the "North-West Black Sea and Lower Danube" shared stock into two shared stocks of "Danube River" and "Black Sea"; based on those changes, add several range states; and delete *Acipenser ruthenus* from the shared species in the Caspian Black and Azov Sea.

9. The Secretariat agrees that proposed split of the “North-West Black Sea and Lower Danube” shared stock into two shared stocks of “Danube River” and “Black Sea” appears to be consistent with the approach taken for the Amur / Heilongjiang River.
10. Based on these additional sources of information, the Secretariat proposes the Annex 3 of draft revised Resolution 12.7 (Rev. CoP16), contained in CoP17 Doc. 50 to be amended as presented in Annex 1 to this document. Changes are reflected in bold and strikethrough.
11. The Secretariat would further like to note that in its comments on the report of the Standing Committee to the 17th Conference of the Parties (document CoP17 Doc.50), it also proposes to amend the title of the table in Annex 3 to read “Stocks of *Acipenseriformes* species shared between range States”.

#### Country of origin of caviar

12. The intersessional working group established by SC65 recognized that uncertainties exist about the definition of “country of origin of caviar” in the context of Resolution 12.7 (Rev. CoP16) and its Annexes, in particular the “CITES guidelines for a universal labelling system for the trade in and identification of caviar”. A summary of the discussion is given in paragraph 26 of document SC66 Doc. 55.1. The working group did not come to a conclusion of how this should be resolved.
13. The reconvened working group at SC66 agreed on the necessity to establish a definition for “country of origin of caviar”, and the majority of the working group decided to include the following definition for “country of origin of caviar” in its report (document SC66 Com 8)

*[Country of origin of caviar: Country in which a registered processing plant harvests roe of *Acipenseriformes* species to process caviar]*

14. Based on the text of the Convention and the resolutions adopted by the Conference of the Parties, the Secretariat finds that the only existing guidance on this matter is contained in Annex 2 of Resolution 12.3 (Rev. CoP16), the “Standard CITES Form”, which under Instructions and Explanations states that:

*The country of origin is the country in which the specimens were taken from the wild, bred in captivity or artificially propagated, except in the case of plant specimens that cease to qualify for an exemption from the provisions of CITES. In such instances, the country of origin is deemed to be the country in which the specimens ceased to qualify for the exemption. (...)*

15. The Secretariat however recognizes that due to the existence of a wide variety of specialized sturgeon aquaculture facilities, with complicated chains of custody encompassing various life stages of sturgeons and caviar, a practical approach specific to caviar may be needed to resolve existing confusion.
16. The Secretariat notes that if the definition currently proposed in document CoP17 Doc.50 were adopted by the Conference of the Parties, an exemption specific Annex 2 of Resolution 12.3 (Rev. CoP16) would need to be amended accordingly.

#### Recommendation

17. The Secretariat invites the Standing Committee to take note of this document.

**Annex 3**

**Overview about stocks shared by range states and the respective species** (see: [AC27 Doc. 21.1](#))

Changes are reflected in bold and strikethrough.

<u>Shared stock</u>	<u>Range states</u>	<u>Species</u>
<u>Caspian Sea</u>	<u>Azerbaijan</u> <u>Iran (Islamic Republic of)</u> <u>Kazakhstan</u> <u>Russian Federation</u> <u>Turkmenistan</u>	<u>Acipenser gueldenstaedtii</u> <u>Acipenser nudiventris</u> <u>Acipenser persicus</u> <u>Acipenser ruthenus</u> <u>Acipenser stellatus</u> <u>Huso huso</u>
<b><u>Black Sea</u></b>	<u>Bulgaria</u> <u>Romania</u> <u>Turkey</u> <u>Georgia</u> <u>Russian Federation</u> <u>Ukraine</u>	<u>Acipenser gueldenstaedtii</u> <u>Acipenser nudiventris</u> <u>Acipenser ruthenus</u> <u>Acipenser stellatus</u> <u>Huso huso</u>
<b><u>North-West Black Sea and Lower Danube River</u></b>	<b><u>Austria</u></b> <u>Bulgaria</u> <b><u>Croatia</u></b> <b><u>Germany</u></b> <b><u>Hungary</u></b> <b><u>Republic of Moldova</u></b> <u>Romania</u> <u>Serbia</u> <b><u>Slovakia</u></b> <u>Ukraine</u>	<u>Acipenser gueldenstaedtii</u> <u>Acipenser nudiventris</u> <u>Acipenser ruthenus</u> <u>Acipenser stellatus</u> <u>Huso huso</u>
<u>Saint John River / Bay of Fundy</u>	<u>Canada</u> <u>United States of America</u>	<u>Acipenser oxyrinchus</u>

<u>Shared stock</u>	<u>Range states</u>	<u>Species</u>
<u>Amur / Heilongjiang River</u>	<u>China</u> <u>Russian Federation</u>	<u><i>Acipenser schrenckii</i></u> <u><i>Huso dauricus</i></u>
<u>Azov Sea</u>	<u>Russian Federation</u> <u>Ukraine</u>	<u><i>Acipenser gueldenstaedtii</i></u> <u><i>Acipenser nudiventris</i></u> <u><i>Acipenser ruthenus</i></u> <u><i>Acipenser stellatus</i></u> <u><i>Huso huso</i></u>