

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



Sixty-ninth meeting of the Standing Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 27 November - 1 December 2017

Strategic matters

FOLLOW-UP OF THE YOUTH FORUM FOR PEOPLE AND WILDLIFE AND
SOUTH AFRICA'S YOUTH CONSERVATION PROGRAMME:
REPORT OF THE SECRETARIAT

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.
2. The Conference of the Parties, at its 17th meeting (CoP17, Johannesburg, 2016), adopted Decisions 17.26 and 17.27 on *Youth engagement*, as follows:

Directed to the Secretariat

17.26 *The Secretariat shall:*

- a) *review the reports of the Youth Forum for People and Wildlife and South Africa's Youth Conservation Programme and evaluate the recommendations put forward; and*
- b) *provide a report to the Standing Committee at its 69th meeting that addresses the feasibility of implementing these recommendations and provides recommendations on how CITES Parties can increase youth engagement.*

Directed to the Standing Committee

17.27 *The Standing Committee shall consider the report submitted by the Secretariat and its recommendations, and make any recommendations it deems appropriate to the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.*

Report and recommendations of the Youth Forum for People and Wildlife

3. The Youth Forum for People and Wildlife was held in the run-up to CoP17 in Johannesburg from 17 to 23 September 2016. The report of the Youth Forum, entitled *Empowering the next generation: CITES and Youth Engagement – Report of the Youth Forum on People and Wildlife* was submitted to CoP17 by the United States of America as information document [CoP17 Inf. 97](#). The report gives an overview of the importance of engaging the next generation in wildlife conservation; outlined key issues addressed during the pre-forum online discussions and the 6-days in-person discussion forum in Johannesburg; and presented the various platforms to engage youth in wildlife conservation that are currently available.
4. The report provided some specific recommendations on how to increase youth engagement in the CITES context. The comments of the Secretariat on the recommendations are presented below:

Recommendations	Secretariat's Comments
Outreach and communications	
<p>Suggest that the CITES Secretariat improve its targeted outreach towards the younger generation by incorporating an increase in its social media use, specifically Instagram.</p>	<p>With this suggestion, the Secretariat has expanded its social media reach and is now using Instagram for both CITES and World Wildlife Day.</p> <p>World Wildlife Day 2017, which was celebrated around the theme of youth engagement under the slogan “listen to the young voices”, provided an opportunity to reach the youth around the world including through social media tools. The Secretariat created a large number of youth-related posts on all its social media platforms with targeted messages, photos and out-reach videos.</p> <p>Recent statistics on the demographics of social media platforms show that Facebook has higher percentage of youth users than Instagram. The CITES Facebook page has over 400,000 followers.</p>
<p>Expand the existing CITES website to incorporate language targeted towards youth</p>	<p>The Secretariat is currently revising its website, including the content enhancement. Contents with languages tailored for the general public and the youth will be created in due course.</p>
<p>Suggest that the CITES Secretariat work with advanced learning centres, such as universities, to help wildlife and conservation students understand CITES, how decisions are made, and how conservationists can contribute.</p>	<p>This recommendation is, to a large extent, endorsed by Resolution Conf. 17.5 (para. 2).</p> <p>The Secretariat noticed that South Africa states in its report that it is already making efforts to ensure that conservation is included in the foundation phase curriculum at school and that the Department of Education fully participates in the programme.</p> <p>The Secretariat is of the opinion that it will work best if initiatives to incorporate CITES into the curriculum of students of biology, botany and zoology but also economics, law and trade at institutions of higher education or programmes of advanced learning centre are taken by countries where such institutions are located. The Secretariat can provide some necessary support if needed. It may also be desirable that a module be created in the future based on the best practices, which can shared with other countries.</p> <p>The Secretariat in the meantime encourages youth conservation organizations, especially those that serve as a network for youth in early career, to make best use of the CITES training materials available on the CITES website under the Virtual College section.</p>
Delegation capacity	
<p>Encourage the host country of CITES CoP to include a youth delegate as part of their official delegation</p>	<p>The Secretariat will convey this recommendation to Sri Lanka, the host country of CoP18, as a concrete step to implement Resolution Conf. 17.5 which, <i>inter alia</i>, “<i>INVITES Parties and observer organizations to include youth delegates on official delegations and provide learning opportunities at CITES meetings.</i>”</p>

Recommendations	Secretariat's Comments
<p>Recommend that the host country coordinate a facilitated side event for young delegates attending as part of an official delegation. This will serve to fill the knowledge gap between our current and future leaders by providing an opportunity for our younger generation to be engaged in the CoP process.</p>	<p>The Secretariat will convey the suggestion to Sri Lanka, the host country of CoP18, and will encourage Sri Lanka to explore options to organize some colourful and informative events during the CoP together with youth organizations such as Youth for Wildlife Conservation (Y4WC). The Secretariat can also extend an invitation to the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth to attend the CoP18 and the side event on youth. In fact, the current UNSG's Youth Envoy is from Sri Lanka.</p>
<p>Encourage countries to have a youth delegate as part of their official delegation when feasible and appropriate.</p>	<p>As noted above, the Conference of the Parties endorsed this recommendation at CoP17 through Resolution Conf. 17 which, <i>inter alia</i>, "INVITES Parties and observer organizations to include youth delegates on official delegations and provide learning opportunities at CITES meetings." The Secretariat strongly encourages Parties to respond to this call and to invite youth in the discussions of agenda items prior to the CITES meetings so that the youth are indeed part of the decision-making process.</p>

5. The Secretariat highly appreciates the recommendations of the Youth Forum for People and Wildlife which it has found constructive, practical and feasible. As noted above, some of the recommendations have already been implemented or have been endorsed by the Conference of the Parties through Resolution Conf. 17.5.

Report and recommendations of the Youth Conservation Programme of South Africa

6. The Department of Environmental Affairs of South Africa submitted a report¹ on its Youth Conservation Programme to the Secretariat on 15 September 2017. According to the report, the Youth Conservation Programme was formally established as a legacy of CITES CoP17. One of the primary objectives of the Programme is to formally integrate the voices of the youth into the structure of governance, particularly within the People & Parks Programme, a key vehicle for empowering young South Africans to become pivotal in wildlife conservation.
7. The key progress made in the implementation of the Youth Conservation Programme are:
- a) During the period from August 2016 to August 2017, the Youth Conservation Programme was rolled out in all nine South African provinces, reaching 407 youth. Partnerships were formed with key role-players in each of the provinces.
 - b) The Youth Empowerment Commission addressed key issues and challenges during the 7th People & Parks Conference, such as the best ways to involve youth in conservation, careers for youth in the conservation sector, best mechanisms to mobilise youth to participate in the biodiversity and conservation sector and roles that can be played by youth against poaching of fauna and flora. The discussions resulted in some concrete recommendations for action.
8. The Programme identified four key actions: a) awareness-building and education; b) engagement; c) career development; d) empowerment through involvement in the decision-making process.
- a) Awareness-building is to be done both for the youth and by the youth, including by using arts and culture. Education will be achieved by including foundation phase curriculum at school, ensuring that the Department of Education as well as all other key departments collaborate and are involved in programmes supporting youth in conservation.

¹ The report will be distributed as an information document for SC69.

- b) Engagement will be at all levels, including 'imbizos' (meetings) at grassroots level, as well as conferences and fora at regional, provincial and national levels. It can be in the form of participation in protected areas' committees, in anti-poaching campaigns, or in film-making, story-telling and media.
 - c) Career opportunities for youth in wildlife conservation are identified in both public and private sectors.
 - d) The People and Parks Community Task Team is used as a platform and enabling environment to empower youth in the decision-making process. The Terms of Reference for the establishment of a People & Parks National Youth Forum have been developed to align this forum with existing People & Parks structures.
9. The recommendations of the report are as follows:
- a) Strengthen partnerships with provincial agencies to ensure a continued roll-out of the Youth Conservation Programme and to ensure that the 2018-2019 planning cycle at national and provincial levels supports such a roll-out;
 - b) Continue to support the work of the People & Parks National Youth Forum through the establishment of provincial structures, the refinement of their annual work plan and implementation thereof;
 - c) Continue to support South African youth to engage with other youth across Africa and globally through youth networks; and
 - d) Continue to find linkages with other programmes that target youth and conservation initiatives.
10. The Secretariat applauds the exemplary efforts made by the Government of South Africa in fostering the engagement and empowerment of youth in wildlife conservation through constructive and practical steps. The scale of the Programme (involving all nine provinces of the country) and depth of considerations [including on ways to involve the youth in rural communities who do not have a 'matric' (qualification after the final year of secondary school)] will help ensure the broad reach of the Programme. Such a level of efforts indeed shows the leadership of South Africa in youth engagement and will inspire many other Parties.
11. The Secretariat considers that the very specific actions identified in the areas of awareness building, education, career development, engagement and empowerment are very well targeted and rooted in local situations. The recommendations of the report reflect the next steps that South Africa will take to follow up on the useful findings and to realize the full potential of the Programme.
12. The Secretariat commends the excellent work of South Africa in implementing its Youth Conservation Programme as a legacy of CITES CoP17. The Secretariat considers it could be enhanced by including an indication of its effort to engage the youth in the CITES decision-making process as well as awareness-building on CITES.

Efforts made by the Secretariat to promote youth engagement

13. The Secretariat is the facilitator of World Wildlife Day designated by the UN General Assembly. As an immediate response to the call of Resolution Conf. 17.5 on *Youth engagement* and with the approval of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee, youth engagement was chosen as the theme of World Wildlife Day 2017, under the slogan "Listen to the young voices". This prominent global annual event dedicated to wildlife has proven to be the best way to reach out to the youth around the world and to engage them in wildlife conservation. The messages from young conservation leaders were heard around the world, including at the high level event at UN Headquarters in New York. One of the panel discussions at UN Headquarters was dedicated to the engagement and empowerment of the youth. The "Through young eyes" photo competition for the youth attracted contributions from youth across the globe. More detailed information can be found in the Secretariat's report to SC69 on World Wildlife Day.
14. The Secretariat has been working closely with several youth conservation organizations to promote youth engagement, including during the celebration of World Wildlife Day 2017. The Secretariat also provided assistance to youth organizations, including the facilitation of contacts with national CITES Authorities, participation in CITES meetings, as well as regular exchanges so that they understand CITES better. The Secretariat's key partner for youth engagement is [Youth for Wildlife Conservation \(Y4WC\)](#) which has registered to attend SC69.

15. The Secretariat has been in contact with the Secretariats of other biodiversity-related Conventions to learn from their experiences in youth engagement, particularly the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the [Global Youth Biodiversity Network](#) (GYBN) it supports. GYBN currently comprises 115 member organizations, representing 342,000 individual members from 107 countries. The report of South Africa also referred to it.
16. The Secretariat has been in contact with the office of UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth in the past two years on the celebration of World Wildlife Day in an effort to use the Day as an opportunity to encourage youth participation. The Secretariat is also planning to extend an invitation to UNSG's Youth Envoy to participate in CoP18 and the side event on youth.
17. For many years, the Secretariat has been offering internship opportunities to young women and men. Some of these interns have later taken positions at national CITES authorities. One intern was recruited in 2017 to assist the Secretariat in the organization of World Wildlife Day 2017. Being a youth herself, the intern was particularly helpful in communicating with the youth. She also moderated an important UN-led event in Geneva to observe the Day. In addition, the Secretariat has been working with young artists hired through UN Volunteer Programme to create promotional materials for World Wildlife Day.
18. The Secretariat regularly gives presentations on CITES to groups of students from various countries that visit the International Environment House in Geneva which hosts the Secretariat. Such events are usually organized by the [Geneva Environment Network](#), a cooperative partnership of over 75 environment and sustainable development organizations based in the Geneva area.
19. The Secretariat has used various other opportunities to promote youth engagement in wildlife conservation issues, including at CITES meetings. For example, the CITES Secretary-General sent a message to the 13th National School Championship Games in Mozambique and welcomed the government's initiative to use the game as an opportunity to raise awareness of students and all youth across the country about the conservation of wildlife. A rhino was used as the mascot of this game. Also, when the Secretariat announced Sochi (Russian Federation) as the venue of SC70 in a [press release](#), the Secretary General encouraged youth around the world to attend the meeting.
20. The Secretariat has been celebrating the International Youth Day (12 August) since 2016 and used it as an opportunity to promote youth engagement and to raise awareness of wildlife conservation among the youth.

Discussion

21. The Youth Conservation Programme of South Africa demonstrates that youth engagement and empowerment can and should take place at all levels including at grassroots level and can be best achieved with due consideration of local situations. The Secretariat is very appreciative of the participation of Minister Edna Molewa, Minister of Environmental Affairs of South Africa, at the high-level event at UN Headquarters on 3 March 2017 to mark World Wildlife Day to promote youth engagement in wildlife conservation, including in joining the opening panel and the award giving ceremony. Minister Molewa has demonstrated the role that political leadership can play in advancing youth engagement in wildlife conservation.
22. Decisions in CITES are collectively made by Parties to CITES at the international level. At the national level, some Parties have established mechanisms to solicit public comments on draft amendment proposals and resolutions for consideration at meetings of the Conference of the Parties. Youth and youth organizations should take advantage of such opportunities and Parties should also alert the youth of such opportunities.
23. The Secretariat is of the opinion that, due to the complexity of the Convention, the youth will benefit from some guidance from Parties on the basics of the Convention. For example, youth should be made aware that science and rule of law are the backbone of the Convention in its decision-making process as they participate in CITES meetings.

Recommendations

24. The Secretariat invites the Standing Committee to:
 - a) take note of the present document and thank South Africa and the Youth for Wildlife Conservation for the information they submitted;

- b) encourage South Africa to integrate CITES in its Youth Conservation Programme and update the Secretariat on progress made in this regard, as well as on the implementation of the Programme; and
- c) request the Secretariat to issue a Notification to the Parties to encourage other Parties to inform the Secretariat of progress made to implement Resolution Conf. 17.5 and so that the Standing Committee can report to CoP18 in accordance with Decision 17.27.