

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

Concluding items

Reports of regional representatives

NORTH AMERICA

1. This document has been submitted by Canada as the Regional Representative for North America.*

2. INTRODUCTION

- Regional Representative: Canada
- Alternate Regional Representative: Mexico
- Number of Parties in the Region : 3 (Canada, Mexico, United States)
- Number of Parties providing information for this Report: 3

This Regional Report for North America covers the period from the 66th meeting of the Standing Committee (January 2016) through 15 September 2017. It includes summaries of key measures taken by Canada, Mexico, and the United States in their implementation and enforcement of CITES during the reporting period. It is presented in the format provided in Document SC59 Doc. 23 at the 59th meeting of the Standing Committee (March 2010) and adopted by the Standing Committee at that meeting.

At the 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES (CoP17; October 2016), Canada was elected to be the North American Regional Representative to the Standing Committee and Canada was subsequently elected to be the new Standing Committee Chair. All three countries in the North American Region are in close contact. All three countries also regularly coordinate with interested organizations within their respective countries, in preparation for meetings and on other CITES-related issues.

3. OVERVIEW OF MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

CANADA

Canada reports highlights of CITES implementation under the *Wild Animal and Plant Protection and Regulation of International and Interprovincial Trade Act* (WAPPRIITA) to Parliament annually. This report fulfills the Minister of the Environment's obligation, under section 28 of WAPPRIITA, to report annually on the administration of the Act (<http://www.ec.gc.ca/cites/default.asp?lang=En&n=18F4A0BC-1>).

As of June 9, 2017 the CoP17 amendments to the list of CITES-regulated species were legally in force in Canada with completion of the regulatory process to update the *Wild Animal and Plant Trade Regulations* (WAPTR) of the *Wild Animal and Plant Protection and Regulation of International and Interprovincial Trade Act* (WAPPRIITA).

* 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.

The Government of Canada is serious about protecting species at risk within its borders and internationally, and is committed to its responsibilities to CITES.

As part of Canada's ongoing effort to ensure predictability in the implementation of CITES for Canadians, standards and performance for the issuance of CITES permits in Canada are captured on our Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) website at <http://www.ec.gc.ca/cites/default.asp?lang=En&n=B02A39A6-1>.

Canada continues to build on its wildlife compliance outreach activities. In 2017, Compliance Promotion material was developed and published to inform and educate the public and key stakeholders of the changes as a result of CoP17 in the requirements regarding the trade in African grey parrots (*Psittacus erithacus*) and Rosewood, genus Dalbergia. (https://www.ec.gc.ca/cites/default.asp?lang=En&n=9E21FDBF-1#_2)

OPERATION THUNDERBIRD (January 30 to February 19, 2017): Canada was one of the countries participating in Operation Thunderbird, a three-week globally-coordinated, country-led enforcement operation which aims to counter poaching, illegal harvest, illegal trade and transnational crime related to wildlife and forestry by participating INTERPOL member countries, INTERPOL networks, WCO Regional Intelligence Liaison Office (RILO), and CITES authorities. During that period, Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) and Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) conducted probes in different cities in Canada (Calgary, Vancouver and Toronto) targeting exotic markets that were suspected of selling protected species of fish like Totoaba, abalone and sharks. During these activities, considerable numbers of samples of shark's fins were taken and were sent for DNA species analysis. As a result, 25% - 30% of these samples were identified as being CITES-Protected species of sharks.

OPERATION VITRUM: In November 2016, processed European eels (CITES Appendix II species) were detected entering the port of Vancouver along with processed American Eel. Their final destination was Toronto. No CITES-Export permit accompanied the shipment. Environment and Climate Change Canada's (ECCC) enforcement officers detained and sampled the shipment. Operation VITRUM includes a joint investigation between ECCC and United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Currently, two containers, declared as American eel products, have been seized in Canada. An investigation is continuing in 2017.

Canada's involvement with the Interpol Wildlife Crime Working Group has included building capacity and facilitating the exchange of information in support of coordinated and enhanced enforcement efforts around the world. In 2017, Environment Canada seconded staff on a part-time basis to the INTERPOL National Central Bureau (NCB) located at the RCMP headquarters in Ottawa. The aim of these assignments is to improve Environment and Climate Change Canada's ability to exchange operational information with INTERPOL, with other countries' NCBs and with other domestic agencies.

Canada has been working to ensure that permitting processes are more responsive, where possible, to the needs of exporters. Canada is working closely with the various types of exporters of products made from Dalbergias or Guibourtiads to promote compliance promotion, and streamline permitting process to meet the varying needs. As well, Canada has been working to engage captive breeders and foster information exchange to provide improved information to the Management Authority, improved compliance from clients, and better service standards.

MEXICO

In terms of national legislation, amendments were made to the Federal Criminal Code (CPF) with respect to offences against wildlife, and the Federal Law Against Organized Crime (LFCD), setting out longer prison terms and larger fines for those who violate the provisions concerning the harvesting of abalone, shrimp, sea cucumber and lobster; in addition, when offences are committed against the environment, these will be punishable as organized crime.

Regarding the verification of CITES provisions, between September 2016 and August 2017, a total of 4,867 verifications were performed of cross-border movements of specimens, parts and derivatives of wild species (flora and fauna, forest, marine/aquatic); 3,423 were imports and 1,444 were exports.

In regard to actions for the conservation of species listed in the CITES appendices, the Government of the Republic, in cooperation with civil society organizations, has taken actions that contribute to the conservation of the vaquita porpoise; a memorandum of understanding for capacity-building for the recovery and conservation of this species was signed between the actor Leonardo DiCaprio; Carlos Slim; Rafael Pacchiano Alamán, Minister of Environment and Natural Resources; José Eduardo Calzada Roviroso, Minister of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Food; and Adm. Vidal Francisco Soberon Saens, Minister of the Navy.

UNITED STATES

END WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING ACT AND EXECUTIVE ORDER ON TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME:

The U.S. Congress passed the Eliminate, Neutralize, and Disrupt (END) Wildlife Trafficking Act in September 2016, which became law in October 2016. It enshrines into law the role of the Task Force on Wildlife Trafficking, originally established by Executive Order in 2013, which ensures a coordinated, whole-of-government approach to combating wildlife trafficking. The Act reinforces existing efforts to combat wildlife trafficking, such as strengthening law enforcement capacity, and provides the United States with new tools to combat wildlife trafficking. Wildlife trafficking is also one of four areas highlighted in Executive Order 13773, signed by President Trump on February 9, 2017, calling for a comprehensive and decisive approach to dismantle organized crime syndicates.

SECOND GLOBAL MEETING OF WILDLIFE ENFORCEMENT NETWORKS: The U.S. Department of State funded the second Global Meeting of Wildlife Enforcement Networks (WENs), which was hosted by the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC) on the margins of CoP17. The meeting convened some 90 representatives of more than 20 existing and proposed WENs to engage in discussions on strengthening frontline, regional, and global cooperation and coordination to combat transnational organized wildlife and forest-related crime, and share best practices, tools, and lessons learned.

INTERNATIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT ACADEMY: CITES instruction was provided by USFWS Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) special agents and wildlife inspectors as part of the U.S. Department of State International Law Enforcement Academies (ILEA) Program. Since January 11, 2016, OLE special agents have instructed the Wildlife Trafficking Investigators Program (WTIP) five times at the ILEA in Gaborone, Botswana (May 2016-July 2017); four times at the ILEA in Bangkok, Thailand (February 2016-August 2017); one time at the ILEA in Budapest, Hungary (October 2016); and one time at the ILEA in San Salvador, El Salvador (October 2016). By the end of 2017, OLE will conduct an additional three WTIPs, one each at ILEA Gaborone, Budapest, and San Salvador. The wildlife investigation course is focused on wildlife crime scene investigation and investigative techniques specific to wildlife trafficking investigations.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) delivered a presentation on CITES during U.S. Forest Service Illegal Logging courses at ILEA Budapest in September of 2015 and October of 2016. A similar CITES presentation will be provided by APHIS at a U.S. Department of Justice Illegal Logging course at ILEA Budapest in November of 2017.

CITES ENFORCEMENT TRAINING KITS: The USFWS Repository and OLE have compiled 11 complete CITES Enforcement Training Kits that will be utilized for multiple purposes. These kits contain various CITES wildlife and plant trade specimens such as spotted cat furs, various ivory specimens, various reptile skin leather goods, and rosewood samples. The ILEA Academy in Bangkok, Thailand, and various provincial offices of South Africa's Ministry of the Environment have received these kits. They will be used by border, customs, and relevant wildlife enforcement authorities, to assist in the identification of CITES wildlife and law enforcement training purposes, and also by the USFWS attachés to Southeast Asia and Southern Africa in future capacity building projects at both the ILEA Academies and in regional law enforcement training.

The following activities in Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, and the Middle East were supported by the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI), with funding from the U.S. State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development.

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

SUPPORT TO CHILE IN DEVELOPING CITES-IMPLEMENTING LEGISLATION: The President of Chile signed legislation into law on November 16, 2017, that brought Chile into CITES Category 1 status. DOI worked with the Chilean CITES National Committee and legislative stakeholders to support the law and the following related activities:

- Customs training on the new CITES law, and practical approaches to implementing and enforcing the law at ports and within Customs activities.
- Seminar on the challenges and best practices in investigating and prosecuting contamination, hazardous waste, and wildlife trafficking crimes.
- Ocean Science Camp for students to learn about marine conservation and the benefits of CITES protection for marine species.

EL SALVADOR AND HONDURAS CONDUCT BI-NATIONAL WILDLIFE OPERATIONS: The Governments of Honduras and El Salvador conducted a two-day bi-national wildlife inspection, enforcement, and public awareness operation at key points along their entire shared border. Approximately 100 representatives from the police, customs, judiciary, military naval and air units, and local communities conducted inspection and enforcement activities for 48 hours straight along land and sea border points. The Ministries of Environment sent out personnel, including CITES officials, to conduct public outreach and education on national wildlife and smuggling laws and counter-wildlife trafficking efforts.

CENTRAL AMERICAN AND DOMINICAN REPUBLIC WILDLIFE ENFORCEMENT NETWORK (CAWEN/ROAVIS) CONTINUES SUCCESSFUL COORDINATION: The Central American and Dominican Republic Wildlife Enforcement Network held its 5th regional meeting in January 2016 in Panama, which included a half-day meeting of regional CITES officials. During the year, CAWEN trained:

- Guatemalan judges on national wildlife laws and best practices in considering and sentencing wildlife cases.
- Honduran judges on environmental laws, best practices in hearing cases, and sentencing options.
- Honduran prosecutors on wildlife and forest crimes.
- Police officers and investigators from the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Panama on wildlife investigation.
- Judges, prosecutors, investigators and police in El Salvador on investigating and prosecuting wildlife crimes including CITES violations.
- Judicial personnel in Costa Rica on wildlife cases

CAWEN/ROAVIS held its 6th regional meeting in February 2017 in Washington, DC.

FIRST EVER NATIONAL PROTECTED AREAS CONGRESS IN CHILE: Chile held its first-ever National Protected Areas Congress, during which a First Responder's Wildlife Crime Scene Investigations Manual was introduced to participants. This manual, the first of its kind in Spanish and geared toward first responders such as park rangers and border forces, emphasizes the need to coordinate potential wildlife investigations with CITES officials, as appropriate.

CENTRAL AMERICAN REGIONAL CITES COORDINATION MEETING: CITES Scientific and Management Authority officials from Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, the Dominican Republic, and the United States participated in a two-day coordination meeting in El Salvador. Participants focused on issues of mutual interest in preparation for the 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES.

CAPACITY ON CITES IMPLEMENTATION AND ENFORCEMENT STRENGTHENED: Training was provided to:

- Panamanian prosecutors and investigators from the Public Ministry, technical experts from the Ministry of Environment, and regional experts on: national wildlife laws; best practices in preparing and presenting wildlife cases; national CITES legislation; and CITES violations and sentencing options.
- Costa Ricans on national wildlife laws and best practices in preparing and presenting wildlife cases in court.
- Government officials from Central America, Dominican Republic, and Colombia on applying risk assessment methodologies and analysis to marine species in order to make sound decisions with regard to issues such as making non-detriment findings (NDFs).
- Salvadoran CITES officials and customs inspectors on applying and enforcing CITES laws and requirements.

REGIONAL COUNTER-WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING MEETING: Officials from Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, Brazil, and Peru met to discuss wildlife trafficking trends in the region and explore opportunities for regional collaboration.

COLOMBIA WILDLIFE INVESTIGATIONS COURSE: Thirty-eight representatives from the Colombian National Police participated in a course covering basic wildlife investigation techniques, CITES, the negative impacts of wildlife crime, and wildlife concealment methods.

HONDURAS FORESTRY MANAGEMENT AND CRIMES COURSE: Twenty-eight Honduran environmental prosecutors and technicians participated in a 4-month long “Forestry Management and Crimes” university certificate course. The curriculum included review of national CITES laws and implementation.

AFRICA

CITES ASSESSMENTS IN UGANDA AND TANZANIA: The U.S. Department of the Interior conducted wildlife trafficking needs assessments in Uganda and Tanzania in order to provide recommendations to improve CITES implementation.

CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATION TRAINING: The U.S. Department of the Interior trained law enforcement personnel from Uganda, Tanzania, and Malawi in crime scene investigation and evidence collection.

MIDDLE EAST

CITES ASSISTANCE TO MOROCCO: In February 2017, USFWS participated in a CITES capacity building mission to Morocco. The purpose of the mission was to assist Moroccan authorities in developing and operationalizing procedures to implement CITES protocols related to inspection and clearance of CITES shipments as well as confiscation and disposal of specimens imported or exported in contravention of CITES. At the conclusion of the mission, the team hosted a half-day workshop for relevant officials to discuss a draft collaboration framework developed by the team on the basis of information gathered during the mission.

CITES ASSESSMENT IN OMAN: The U.S. Division of Management Authority (DMA) participated in a CITES capacity assessment in Oman as part of DOI’s International Technical Assistance Program (ITAP). The purpose of this field visit was to gather information needed to evaluate the current effectiveness of CITES implementation in Oman and identify opportunities where USFWS capacity building efforts may help improve CITES performance. The main outcome of this exercise was the identification of a need for training of Customs officers at the Sea Port of Sohar in wildlife identification and trade regulation skills. DMA together with the USFWS Office of Law Enforcement is developing a training workshop to be provided in Oman in conjunction with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, which recently established the Container Control Programme at the seaport in Oman.

U.S. DEMAND REDUCTION EFFORTS: Since 2015, USFWS has been increasing efforts to reduce demand for illegal wildlife products with a particular focus on U.S. consumers traveling abroad. These consumers may unknowingly fuel the illicit trade by purchasing or collecting souvenirs or trinkets that are illegal to bring into the United States. Through consultation with USFWS law enforcement personnel, and an analysis of personal wildlife items refused clearance at U.S. ports of entry, the United States has been able to identify species and products that are commonly traded illegally and seized from travelers. USFWS has undertaken several initiatives and engaged strategic partners from the private sector to reach international travelers. More information on these efforts can be found in an information document submitted by the United States to SC69.

U.S. CITES EXPORT TAGGING PROGRAM: The United States cooperates with its States and Indian Tribes in utilizing a tagging program for the export of skins of the following Appendix-II species: bobcat (*Lynx rufus*); river otter (*Lontra canadensis*); Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*); wolf (*Canis lupus*); brown bear (*Ursus arctos*); and American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*). USFWS currently cooperates with 49 States and 32 Indian Tribes that have instituted approved harvest programs. Each approved State or Indian Tribe applies CITES tags, provided by USFWS, to skins of approved species taken in that State or Tribe and intended for export from the United States. USFWS issued 588,000 tags during 2016 and 682,000 during 2017.

U.S. CITES AMERICAN GINSENG PROGRAM: In implementing the CITES Appendix-II listing of American ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*), USFWS works closely with other Federal agencies and the 23 States and single Indian Tribe that have approved American ginseng export programs. USFWS relies on those States, Tribes, and Federal agencies to provide information on legal and illegal harvest of American ginseng, the status of the species in the wild, and population trends. During the reporting period, USFWS regularly communicated with the States and the approved Indian Tribe on issues related to American ginseng, including revision of State/Tribal ginseng management regulations and administrative changes to the State/Tribal programs.

OPERATION CRASH: This operation, led by USFWS OLE, Special Investigations Unit and prosecuted by the Department of Justice (DOJ), is a complex, multi-year, and multi-agency investigation into the black-market world of wildlife trafficking. The investigation portion has concluded and it is currently in the prosecution phase. The operation was created to detect, deter, and prosecute those engaged in the illegal killing and trafficking of

endangered rhinoceros and their horns; elephants and their ivory; and coral. This enforcement initiative has secured the arrest and successful prosecution of numerous individuals or businesses and the disruption of transnational smuggling networks. Traffickers have been sentenced to prison terms as high as 70 months and USFWS has seized millions of dollars in cash, gold bars, rhino horn, luxury vehicles, and jewelry. To date, the total in fines, forfeitures, and restitution is over \$7.75 million.

Not only has this successful operation impeded rhinoceros horn smuggling, it has also benefitted wild rhinoceroses. In one conviction of a major rhinoceros horn smuggler in California, the judge directed that the confiscated assets be used to help save rhinoceroses in the wild through USFWS's Rhinoceros Tiger Conservation Fund (RTCF). The seizure in the California case yielded gold and jewelry worth more than \$684,000, which was used to support the following three projects: 1) Using modern technology to protect Africa's and Asia's rhinoceroses: security and monitoring workshop; 2) Black rhinoceros population monitoring and protection management operations in North Luangwa National Park, Zambia; and 3) Reintroduction of black rhinoceroses to Sera Wildlife Conservancy, Kenya.

OPERATION RIVER WONDERS: In January 2016, the subject of a four-year manhunt led by USFWS OLE special agents and DOJ was arrested by the Mexican Federal Police near Metepec, Mexico, and subsequently extradited to the United States. In 2009, the subject was indicted and subsequently arrested on felony wildlife trafficking, predominantly involving *Arapaima gigas*, as well as smuggling and trafficking in piranha and freshwater stingrays. While the subject was free on bond, OLE special agents uncovered evidence that the subject continued to smuggle protected species while on pre-trial release. A superseding indictment was filed and the subject fled the country. His movements were tracked through Europe to Israel, and finally to Mexico. He was sentenced to 366 days in prison.

OPERATION NANOOK: In a joint investigation conducted by USFWS, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and Environment and Climate Change Canada involving the smuggling and interstate trafficking of narwhal tusks, investigators documented approximately 250 tusks that were smuggled into the United States and sold to customers, in violation of CITES and the U.S. Lacey Act. A New Jersey man was ultimately sentenced to 33 months in prison and forfeiture of \$85,089, six narwhal tusks, and a skull; he was also fined \$7,500. The Canadian supplier in the case was indicted and extradited to the United States. Three additional U.S. defendants, who were part of the conspiracy, have all pleaded guilty.

TOTOABA SWIM BLADDER TRAFFICKING: USFWS OLE special agents continue to work jointly on investigations with agents from NOAA and Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) concerning totoaba trafficking. Information from the investigations indicate that swim bladders are routinely smuggled from Mexico, into the United States, and re-smuggled out the United States to Asia via international mail couriers such as DHL or Federal Express. Due to the amount of money involved in the smuggling schemes, agents are focusing efforts on locating assets purchased from the illicit sales of totoaba swim bladders in pursuit of money laundering and related financial crime charges in addition to smuggling, CITES, and wildlife trafficking charges under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) or the U.S. Lacey Act. Since 2012, 13 defendants have been charged by the U.S. Attorney's Office in the Southern District of California. One additional subject was declined prosecution. Information sharing continues through official channels between Mexico and the United States regarding totoaba smuggling cases.

FALSE LABELING OF ANIMAL BLOOD EXPORTS: A USFWS OLE investigation resulted in a Virginia man pleading guilty and being sentenced to making and submitting false labels for animal blood that was transported internationally. The investigation discovered that the subject, the owner of a human and animal blood products brokerage company, knowingly shipped falsely labeled animal blood, as human blood, to evade USFWS regulations and enforcement actions. The accurate labels stating the blood was animal blood were sent in separate FedEx envelopes that are not subject to USFWS inspection. From January 2014 through May 2016, his company internationally shipped products such as squirrel monkey (*Saimiri* spp.) blood. In addition, based on information provided by OLE, South Korean law enforcement made an arrest connected with this case. On November 2, 2016, the Seoul Metropolitan Police Agency arrested a Korean subject, and owner of Biomedex Korea, for violations of the Korean domestic animal infectious disease control law, Wildlife Protection and Management Act, and customs law. The Korean subject admitted that from 2008 to 2016, she smuggled animal blood plasma and serum over 260 times into South Korea from the United States labeled as human blood.

WILDLIFE DETECTOR DOG: Since its inception in 2013, the Wildlife Detector Dog program has been very successful. In calendar year 2016, the USFWS' seven wildlife detector dogs have found smuggled shipments including live reptiles, elephant and walrus ivory, giant clam meat, shark fins, sea turtle items, ginseng, and sea cucumbers.

USFWS SENIOR SPECIAL AGENT/ATTACHÉ PROGRAM: USFWS OLE created the first-ever program for stationing wildlife special agents at U.S. Embassies as attachés. USFWS special agent attachés are experienced criminal investigators who are specialized in wildlife and natural resource investigations. The mission of the attaché is primarily to support wildlife investigations within the host country and region, to provide training and capacity building, and to advise on the leverage of U.S. assets in the host region to combat wildlife trafficking. The first posting was effective January 2014 at the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok. The program has expanded to include attachés, and their regional areas of responsibilities, stationed at the following U.S. embassies: Bangkok, Thailand (Southeast Asia Region); Beijing, China (Asia Region); Dar es Salaam, Tanzania (Eastern Africa Region); Gaborone, Botswana (Southern Africa Region); Libreville, Gabon (West and Central Africa Region); Lima, Peru (South American Region); and Mexico City, Mexico (Mexico, Caribbean, and Central American Region).

OPERATION THUNDERBIRD: USFWS OLE participated in this global wildlife enforcement operation, organized under the auspices of the International Consortium to Combat Wildlife Crime (ICWC). The operation, facilitated by the INTERPOL Wildlife Crime Working Group (WCWG), the World Customs Organization (WCO), and the CITES Secretariat, provided a 'snapshot' view of wildlife trafficking globally and established a platform for information sharing between CITES and WCWG partner nations to initiate joint investigative efforts to combat transnational wildlife crime. The operation involved the participation of CITES law enforcement authorities from over 60 countries, including, among others, the United States, Canada, Mexico, China, India, Russian Federation, Zambia, Mozambique, South Africa, and the European Union (EU). The overall results highlight the need for the world to tackle wildlife trafficking collaboratively. For example, INTERPOL provided the following global statistics from the operation: (more than) 4,770 birds; 100 wild cats; 8.2 tons of elephant ivory; 25 tons of various wildlife products; 1,240 reptiles; two tons of pangolin scales; 310 animal skins; 58 tons of wood and timber; 37,130 wildlife derivatives (medicines, etc.); and 14 tons of marine products (shark fin, etc.). Building on the success experienced during Operation Thunderbird, future international enforcement operations are planned through the WCWG under the auspices of ICWC.

ILLEGALLY OBTAINED LEOPARD TROPHY: USFWS OLE executed a search warrant on a subject's residence for violations of the Lacey Act, foreign law, and smuggling. A reporting party told OLE special agents that the subject had shot a leopard in South Africa without a permit, left the trophy with the guide, returned to the United States, and arranged for a leopard hunt in Mozambique. The subject then applied for U.S. permits for a Mozambique-taken leopard. The subject returned to South Africa where he and the guide smuggled the previously killed leopard across the border into Mozambique, which was concealed in the tire well of the vehicle. The subject claimed the leopard was killed during the Mozambique trip and then filed a declaration with USFWS upon import. Prior to the application of the warrant, the subject personally confirmed these facts to a covert USFWS special agent and identified other illegally obtained wildlife such as a mountain lion and a carved hippopotamus tooth.

OPERATION PATINA: USFWS OLE and a USFWS K-9 wildlife detection dog, seized 2,295 pieces of wildlife products from a commercial shipment of African handicrafts from Senegal. Seized items included one elephant ivory handled cutlery item and two roe deer antlers mounted on a decorative wooden carved furniture; an antique cabinet inlaid with turtle shell, ivory, and mother of pearl; and 20 wooden lion statues with 80 warthog ivory carved mini tusks. The K-9 was instrumental to this seizure; the wildlife detection dog first alerted to non-declared and non-invoiced warthog ivory that were inside of baskets in the shipment.

OPERATION SNACKTIME II: USFWS OLE executed a weeklong, interagency operation at the U.S. Postal Service's International Mail Facility at the John F. Kennedy International Airport. The multi-agency team comprised OLE wildlife inspectors, special agents, support staff, and the K-9 teams (from Los Angeles, Miami, Chicago, Anchorage, and Houston); and officers from the U.S. Food & Drug Administration, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and U.S. Customs and Border Protection. The operation targeted exports destined for China and Hong Kong and imports from China, Great Britain, and Thailand. As a result, 30 wildlife shipments were seized; 48 additional shipments, imported or exported in violation of the ESA, were identified and released with a warning letter; and over 300 shipments were referred to partner agencies for being imported in violation of U.S. laws and regulations. Seized wildlife products included live native CITES-listed turtles; live endangered turtles (Appendix I); injurious live salamanders; elephant, sperm whale, and walrus ivory; endangered sea turtle shell products; Asian medicinals that contained primate parts; CITES-listed species leather products; and CITES protected bird feathers. Referrals to partner agencies included possible CITES-listed live orchids, live peyote cacti, codeine, marijuana, testosterone, steroids, khat, money, and firearm parts.

CITES PLANT RESCUE CENTER PROGRAM: USFWS established the CITES Plant Rescue Center Program in 1978 in response to the need to care for live CITES-listed plants legally abandoned or forfeited to the U.S. Government due to non-compliance with the import/export requirements of the Convention. USFWS administers

this program in cooperation with APHIS, the U.S. inspection agency for live CITES-listed plants entering the United States. Currently, 86 institutions cooperate as volunteer plant rescue centers. All of the cooperating rescue centers are public botanical gardens, arboreta, zoological parks, or research institutions, and are either government entities or governmentally or privately funded non-profit entities. During 2016, APHIS confiscated 52 shipments of live plant material that were in violation of CITES. These shipments contained a total of 4,681 plants and 51 cactus skeletons. The 51 shipments assigned to plant rescue centers contained 1,547 cacti, 505 euphorbias, 119 orchids, 2,000 sundews, 336 lilies, and 10 pitcher plants.

U.S. CITES ANNUAL REPORTS for 2015: On October 25, 2016, USFWS submitted, directly to UNEP-WCMC in electronic format, the U.S. CITES Annual Report data file for 2015 (151,900 data records), which contained data on all U.S. trade with the rest of the world in CITES-listed species of fauna and flora during 2015. The data in this data file represents actual trade and not just numbers of CITES permits issued.

4. ACTIVITIES OF THE REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

The United States served as both the North American Regional Representative and Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee throughout the reporting period until CoP17 (October 2016). Canada has served as both the North American Regional Representative and Chair of the Standing Committee since CoP17. While Regional Representative, both Canada and the United States have been in regular communication with the Standing Committee and have coordinated North American Regional contact for Standing Committee issues and regional consultation process in preparation for Standing Committee meetings within this reporting period.

5. REGIONAL COOPERATION

CANADA / MEXICO / USA

21ST AND 22ND TRILATERAL MEETING: The members of the North America Region communicate regularly as part of our ongoing commitment to meet and discuss regional CITES issues. The North American Region meets annually as the CITES Table at the Canada/U.S./Mexico Trilateral Committee for Wildlife and Ecosystem Conservation and Management meeting to discuss issues of mutual interest. In this reporting period, meetings were held in Ottawa Canada, August 15-19, 2016 and in Ensenada Mexico, May 15-18, 2017. The three countries discussed CITES implementation issues, preparations for CITES meetings, and other CITES issues of interest to our region. These meetings allow regional members to better understand other North American Parties' views and concerns, especially regarding shared species.

STRENGTHENING CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION OF SELECTED CITES APPENDIX II SPECIES IN NORTH AMERICA: January 2017 marked the end of the two-year project entitled "Strengthening Conservation and Sustainable Production of Selected CITES' Appendix II Species in North America", which was financed by the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) and carried out in collaboration with North American CITES Authorities. Based on a comprehensive analysis of trade in five priority groups of Appendix II species (sharks, tarantulas, parrots, turtles/tortoises and timber), the project yielded a series of action plans that will guide decision-making to ensure that trade in these species adheres to a sustainable, legal and traceable framework. Mexico presented these project results on behalf of the North American region at the joint session of the Scientific Committees AC29/PC23 (22 July 2016) through the document AC29 Doc. 12/PC23 Doc. 13. The Committees took note of this initiative and recognized that it represents a model to be replicated by other Regions, as it confirms the importance of Appendix II as an international mechanism for ensuring the long-term conservation and sustainable use of species of economic and ecological importance.

SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE TRADE OF CITES SPECIES: In August 2017, the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) awarded Canadian \$800K for implementation of the second phase of the project "Supporting Sustainable Trade of CITES Species." This project aims to implement priority actions developed under the CEC 2015-2016 project Strengthening Conservation and Sustainable Production of Selected CITES Appendix-II Species in North America. The 2015-16 project identified 56 priority species from 5 groups – parrots, sharks, tarantulas, turtles/tortoises, and timber, and resulted in a set of SMART action plans for each of them. The aim of this project is to implement the most tri-nationally relevant actions (with emphasis on those of high priority) for four species groups (sharks, tarantulas, turtle/tortoises, and timber), and thus, contribute (on a long-term basis) to their legal, sustainable and traceable production and trade. Implementation of action plans will focus on those opportunities most relevant to national governments, but efforts will necessarily engage a broad set of stakeholders including state, provincial, and local levels of government. The initial meeting of this project was held from 26-28 September 2017 (Montreal, Canada).

MEXICAN WOLF MANAGEMENT: Binational Mexico-US management of the Mexican wolf in captivity has now been in effect for 30 years. There is a binational population of 1,550 specimens, with 336 specimens in 53 institutions (census of 31 July 2016) and two populations that are establishing themselves in the wild in Arizona-New Mexico and in Chihuahua. The cooperative efforts will continue.

6. MEETINGS AND WORKSHOPS

CANADA

NATIONAL MEETINGS: The Canadian networks of Management and Scientific Authorities communicate regularly to discuss CITES implementation issues, as well as communicating with interested stakeholders including the Canadian Provinces and Territories and representatives of Canadian Indigenous peoples.

MEXICO

29TH MEETING OF THE CITES FAUNA COMMITTEE: Mexico reported on its progress with the guide to identifying arboreal lizards of the genus *Abronia* (AC29 Doc. 19), and asked the Committee for feedback so that it can continue updating the guide. In addition, as part of the periodic review process for Appendices I and II, Mexico volunteered to undertake the periodic reviews of three Appendix I species: the Guadalupe fur seal (*Arctocephalus townsendi*), in cooperation with the United States; the Mexican prairie dog (*Cynomys mexicanus*); and the Coahuilan box turtle (*Terrapene coahuila*); and, from Appendix II, the Mexican rose grey tarantula (*Aphonopelma pallidum*).

23RD MEETING OF THE FLORA COMMITTEE: Through the Alternate Representative for North America, the Scientific Authority of Mexico presented recommendations from document PC23 Doc. 14 on updating the overall assessment of CITES' contribution to the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (GSPC) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD); the recommendations were adopted by the Committee. In regard to the period review process in Appendices I and II, Mexico volunteered to conduct periodic reviews of two Appendix I species, the cactus *Ariocarpus retusus* and the cycad *Ceratozamia hildae*.

COP13 CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY: Mexico hosted the 13th Conference of the parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (Cancún, December 2016), where for the first time in the history of the CBD, the 13th Conference of the parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Eighth Meeting of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the second meeting of the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization were held simultaneously. The "Cancun declaration on mainstreaming the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity for well-being" was adopted at this event, as was the COP13 Decision on biodiversity integration, which implies that biodiversity is integral to the functioning of the productive sectors, whose negative impacts are to be reduced, prevented, and mitigated, while enhancing their positive impacts, so that healthy and resilient ecosystems can ensure a supply of essential services for human well-being. Also at this event, decrees for four Protected Natural Areas were signed, namely: the Mexican Caribbean Biosphere Reserves, the Deep Mexican Pacific Biosphere Reserve, the Baja California Peninsula Pacific Islands Biosphere Reserve, and the Sierra de Tamaulipas Biosphere Reserve. This constitutes Mexico's greatest contribution to achievement of the Aichi targets, since with these decrees, 91 million hectares are now protected. Also reported on was Mexico's National Strategy on Biodiversity (ENBIOMEX) and its 2016–2030 Action Plan, as well as the signing of the SEMARNAT-SAGARPA cooperation agreement for the preservation of forests and strengthening of food sustainability in the country.

TRILATERAL MEETING TO COMBAT ILLEGAL TRADE IN TOTOBA: Ensenada, Baja California, Mexico, hosted the First Trilateral Mexico-China-US Meeting to combat the illegal trafficking of totoaba (August 2017), which set out the procedure for exchanging cooperative practices and experiences to combat this crime and for making use of the international legal framework to promote investigations into trafficking and trade in this species. Also stressed was the need for greater training of customs officers in identifying the species. The intention to formalize these efforts was established with the signing of a memorandum of understanding or specific instrument of international collaboration. In terms of actions to combat the illegal trafficking of totoaba, in the context of the Congress held in Xiamen, China, the Mexican president thanked his Chinese counterpart for his support in combatting the illegal trafficking of totoaba. Both presidents restated their commitment to the conservation of species in danger of extinction, in particular the vaquita porpoise, a cetacean endemic to the Upper Gulf of California.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN WOOD: Mexico has participated in the discussions on the implementation of best practices in international trade in wood, including frameworks for certification and traceability of forest products, and the combatting of illegal logging under EGILAT-APEC.

UNITED STATES

INTERNATIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT ACADEMIES (ILEA): USFWS OLE coordinated an unprecedented number of wildlife investigation courses at the ILEA academies in Fiscal Year 2016, with two training missions at the ILEA in Bangkok, Thailand, three training missions at ILEA in Gaborone, Botswana, one training mission at ILEA in Budapest, Hungary, and one training mission at ILEA in San Salvador, El Salvador. The wildlife investigation course is focused on wildlife crime scene investigation (CSI) and investigative techniques specific to wildlife trafficking investigations.

CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATION TRAINING (CSI): USFWS OLE, in partnership with host country governments and non-governmental organizations, created and provided over 40 customized CSI kits that were used during four training missions organized in Uganda, Malawi, and Tanzania. The kits contained appropriate evidence collection materials such as evidence bags, tape, tags, crime scene tape, digital cameras, chain of custody, etc. USFWS OLE forensic scientists, Digital Evidence Recovery and Technical Services Unit (DERTSU) agents, and senior special agents provided specialized training to national police, game rangers, and other enforcement authorities who are assigned to wildlife task force(s) in those countries. The customized training was developed and delivered based on specific needs expressed by the participants and recognized via an assessment completed by the OLE attaché after working directly with wildlife enforcement authorities in the region since 2015. The success of the specialized training was witnessed by poaching and large-scale seizure events in east Africa. Law enforcement officers used techniques learned from the training, along with materials from the donated CSI kits, to properly collect and handle evidentiary materials.

ASSOCIATION OF ZOOS AND AQUARIUMS: The U.S. CITES Authorities participated in the annual meeting of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) held in San Diego, California September 7-12, 2016. The meeting featured a CITES permits help desk and staff presented a summary of outcomes of CoP17.

CITES IMPLEMENTATION AND ENFORCEMENT WORKSHOP: In November of 2016, the USFWS Divisions of Management Authority and Scientific Authority, a USFWS wildlife inspector, the special agent attaché for the West Africa Region, and NOAA experts conducted a CITES Implementation and Enforcement training and workshop in Dakar, Senegal. The workshop joined multiple West African nations (Francophone) CITES Management Authorities with regional customs and border law enforcement officials in training. The focus of the training was on CITES implementation and enforcement, with an emphasis on the recently adopted shark listings; and the identification and enforcement of CITES listings relative to the shark fin trade. The training was accompanied with a permanent donation from the USFWS National Wildlife Property Repository (Repository) of various CITES wildlife trade items, including numerous species of shark fins. These items will be used by customs officials to assist in the identification of illicit wildlife specimens in the trade and for law enforcement training exercises. Additional capacity building sessions are planned in the region (Anglophone nations), where the CITES Wildlife Education Kits will be utilized.

CAPTIVE BRED AND RANCHED SPECIMENS: The United States participated in a March 2017 consultation workshop on the regulation of trade in CITES specimens of captive bred and ranched source organized by the Secretariat and held in Cambridge, UK. The workshop, hosted by UNEP-WCMC, was designed to provide information and perspectives to inform the implementation of Resolution Conf. 17.7 on *Review of trade in animal specimens reported as produced in captivity*.

CITES TORTOISE AND TURTLE TASK FORCE: The United States participated in the first meeting of the CITES Tortoise and Turtle Task Force, held in Singapore in April 2017. The Task Force was called for in Decisions 17.295 and 17.296 on *Tortoises and freshwater turtles (Testudines spp.)*. The United States also provided funding for the meeting. The workshop brought together Parties from across South and East Asia, as well as Madagascar and Colombia, to discuss ongoing trafficking in tortoises and freshwater and terrestrial turtles. Attendees shared perspectives and information and the World Customs Organization has agreed to host an electronic information exchange platform for Task Force participants.

CONGO BASIN ILLEGAL LOGGING LAW ENFORCEMENT TRAINING: The U.S. Department of Justice Environment and Natural Resources Division and U.S. Forest Service International Programs Office conducted a Regional Workshop on Investigating and Prosecuting Illegal Logging Cases—Part II funded by the U.S. Department of State. The training was held in Libreville, Gabon, on May 15-19, 2017. Participants attended from Gabon, Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Cameroon. This four and a half-day course addressed legal, evidentiary, and strategic issues faced by prosecutors and investigators as they work on illegal logging cases. The training sought to foster better enforcement with respect to illegal logging of CITES species, thereby supporting the legal trade in forest products within and from Central African countries. This activity is a follow-up to one held in Douala, Cameroon, in May 2016.

REDUCING OPPORTUNITIES FOR UNLAWFUL TRANSPORT OF ENDANGERED SPECIES WORKSHOP (ROUTES): In June 2015, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) convened a workshop in Washington, D.C., on Reducing Opportunities for Unlawful Transport of Endangered Species (ROUTES), to address the complex challenge of combating wildlife trafficking in transcontinental transportation and logistics supply chains. Participants included government agencies, nine NGOs, and transport industry representatives from Europe, Africa, and Asia. Participants developed a joint understanding of the problems and challenges in order to clarify existing efforts and activities and identified key areas for collaborative action. ROUTES and partner C4ADS released a new report, *Flying Under the Radar: Wildlife Trafficking in the Air Transport Sector*, which analyzes ivory, rhinoceros horn, reptile, and bird seizures at airports worldwide. The report is the most comprehensive assessment of wildlife trafficking in the air transport sector to date. In June 2017, ROUTES hosted a virtual presentation for members of the transport industry to detail the report's findings.

APEC WORKSHOP ON CUSTOMS BEST PRACTICES TO IDENTIFY ILLEGAL TIMBER AND WOOD PRODUCTS: The United States organized under the auspices of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum a one and a half day workshop on Customs Best Practices to Identify Illegal Timber and Wood Products. The workshop was co-sponsored by the European Forest Institute, INTERPOL, and The Nature Conservancy. The workshop, which was attended by over 100 people from 24 economies, took place August 18-19, 2017, in Ho Chi Minh City on the sidelines of the 3rd APEC Senior Officials Meeting (SOM3). The workshop was directed primarily at customs officials and aimed to strengthen officials' abilities and understanding to identify legally and illegally traded wood products and take appropriate action. Presentations were made by representatives from INTERPOL, World Customs Organization, UNODC, heads of customs agencies, certification bodies, and wood identification experts. Outputs will include a publicly-available guidance tool of collected customs best practices. Presentations from the workshop can be found at the following link: <https://sites.google.com/view/apecillegaltimber2017/home>.

CENTRAL AMERICA ILLEGAL LOGGING LAW ENFORCEMENT TRAINING: The Environment and Natural Resources Division of the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Forest Service, International Programs conducted a Regional Workshop on Investigating and Prosecuting Illegal Timber Trafficking Cases for law enforcement personnel funded by the U.S. Department of State. The training took place from August 28-September 2, 2017 in San Salvador, El Salvador. Participants attended from seven countries: El Salvador, Panama, Honduras, Guatemala, Mexico, Belize, and Costa Rica. Subject matter experts from the Department of Justice's Environment and Natural Resources Division, the United States Forest Service, and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and Regional experts, among others presented course material on issues faced by prosecutors and investigators on timber trafficking of CITES species.

INTERNATIONAL CONSERVATION CHIEF'S ACADEMY (ICCA): In May of 2016 and September of 2017, the USFWS OLE hosted the International Conservation Chief's Academy (ICCA) at the National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. OLE, along with the National Association of Conservation Law Enforcement Chief's (NACLEC), provided instruction and training for the program, which was funded by the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of International Narcotics & Law Enforcement Affairs. ICCA training overlaps for one week with the National Conservation Law Enforcement Leadership Academy. Training for both academies are similar, with topics including adaptive leadership, wildlife forensics, human-wildlife conflicts, systems thinking, leading change, shaping organizational culture, strategic planning, liability, and surviving and succeeding as an executive. Law enforcement leaders meet to build capacity and make international connections to fight wildlife trafficking on a global scale. Attendance totals for both academies were 76 African law enforcement officials and 71 U.S. state conservation law enforcement leaders.

7. PROBLEMS FACED BY THE REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

There are no special problems faced by the Regional Representative. All three Parties in this Region are actively engaged in CITES and work together cooperatively.