

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



Seventieth meeting of the Standing Committee  
Rosa Khutor, Sochi (Russian Federation), 1-5 October 2018

Interpretation and implementation matters

Trade control and traceability

Identification of specimens in trade

IDENTIFICATION MANUAL AND IDENTIFICATION OF TIGER SKINS:  
REPORT OF THE SECRETARIAT

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.

Background

2. In paragraph 1 of Resolution Conf. 11.19 (Rev. CoP16) on *Identification Manual*, the Conference of the Parties DIRECTS the Secretariat to:
  - a) *prepare texts on the identification of animal and plant species for inclusion in the Identification Manual in the three working languages of the Convention;*
  - b) *when listings that include annotations are adopted, prepare sheets that illustrate the parts and derivatives covered under the listings, as appropriate, based on relevant data obtained from Parties whose proposals to amend the Appendices have been adopted;*
  - c) *upon request from a Party, provide advice on the identification of species, or seek advice from experts on the taxa concerned;*
  - d) *ensure, where relevant, that the subject of identification of species or specimens is included in training seminars organized by the Secretariat;*
  - e) *provide assistance to Parties in the development of national or regional identification manuals;*
  - f) *obtain, from Parties whose proposals to include new species in the Appendices have been adopted, appropriate data for inclusion in the Identification Manual within one year after acceptance of such additions;*
  - g) *publish, within its financial capacity, the Identification Manual;*
  - h) *inform the Standing, Animals and Plants Committees on the progress made whenever appropriate; and*
  - i) *report at each meeting of the Conference of the Parties.*

3. At the 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties, Parties adopted Decisions 17.164 to 165 on *Tiger skins (identification)*:

**17.164 Directed to the Secretariat**

*The Secretariat shall:*

- a) *issue a Notification to the Parties, to request the tiger range States to inform the Secretariat whether they have photographic identification databases for tigers, and the capacity to identify tigers from photographs of tiger skins, and if so, the contacts of the relevant National focal points or agencies; and*
- b) *inform the Parties which tiger range states have photographic identification databases for tigers, and the capacity to identify tigers from photographs of tiger skins, and the contacts of the relevant National focal points or agencies;*
- c) *subject to external funding, contract a qualified expert or body to assess the feasibility of establishing, to aid enforcement efforts, a central repository of photographs of wild tigers and seized tiger skins. Such feasibility study shall examine the potential hosts, costs, data management and related issues of such a repository. All tiger range States must be fully consulted as stakeholders;*
- d) *report on the implementation of this Decision to the 69th meeting of the Standing Committee.*

**17.165 Directed to the Standing Committee**

*The Standing Committee shall consider the report of the Secretariat and present its recommendations at the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.*

Implementation of Resolution Conf. 11.19 (Rev. CoP16)

4. In order to facilitate the sharing of information on identification materials gathered from Parties and other stakeholders, the Secretariat currently manages two separate platforms:
- a) The CITES Virtual College provides an archive of identification materials developed by Parties and other stakeholders. The identification materials are published whenever an explicit permission is given to the Secretariat to make them publicly available through the website. Parties that have prepared various identification materials that may be of wider benefit, including identification materials for newly listed species, are strongly encouraged to communicate to the Secretariat in order to share those materials through the CITES Virtual College.
  - b) The Secretariat developed a new dedicated webpage on identification materials on the CITES website to introduce information resources on the subject matter. This includes the relevant text of the Convention, Resolutions and Decisions containing references to identification materials or methods, and a link to the identification archive on the CITES Virtual College described in paragraph a) above. The page also contains information that the Conference of the Parties explicitly directed the Secretariat to make available on the CITES website, i.e. on ivory (Decisions 17.162 and 163), tiger skins (Decisions 17.164 and 165), timber (Decision 17.166), and agarwood (Decision 17.194).
5. It is imperative that these two platforms are brought together, so as to consolidate and improve the Secretariat's collection and dissemination of identification materials and to facilitate Parties' access to them. Subject to the availability of external funds, the Secretariat proposes to develop a database of identification materials archived in the CITES Virtual College and to integrate it into the CITES website. Additional functions may be developed to allow Parties and others to upload identification materials themselves. Training materials linked to identification materials may also need to be reviewed and updated. These tasks are part of the proposed overhaul of the CITES Virtual College mentioned in document SC70 Doc. 22.1 on *Capacity building*.
6. Work is currently underway to include the scanned sheets of the CITES Identification Manual and make them accessible as an archive through the CITES website, with the financial support from the European Union. The Secretariat will make an oral report if there are any update to this work

## Revision of Resolution Conf. 11.19 (Rev. CoP16)

7. The joint session of the 29th meeting of the Animals Committee and the 23rd meeting of the Plants Committee (AC29/PC23, Geneva, July 2017) established a joint intersessional working group on capacity-building and identification materials, as directed in Decision 17.32. The terms of reference and composition of the working group are contained in the summary record of the meetings. The mandate included the review and possible revision of Resolution Conf. 11.19 (Rev. CoP16).
8. At the joint session of the 30th meeting of the Animals Committee and the 24th session of the Plants Committee (AC30/PC24, Geneva, July 2018), the co-chairs of the joint working group reported that there had been little inputs made from the members, and that the working group had not succeeded in making significant progress in implementing its mandate.
9. At AC30/PC24, the Animals and Plants Committees agreed that the topics of capacity building and identification materials would in the future be dealt with separately. They also agreed on draft decisions on identification materials, to be submitted to the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP18)<sup>1</sup>.

## Discussion

10. The Secretariat notes that the issue of species identification in the context of CITES has evolved significantly in recent years. There is an ever-increasing challenge, particularly for CITES authorities and enforcement officials, to identify specimens of CITES-listed species in trade in a timely, practical and effective manner. The means for identification have diversified, including visual means, as well as molecular, DNA and other techniques. The delivery and dissemination methods for identification guidance now include visual guides in paper- and electronic formats, DNA test kits and other types of services using handheld devices, social media tools, and so on, often involving a wide variety of partners and experts. Yet, none of these new identification techniques, opportunities or challenges are reflected in Resolution Conf. 11.19 (Rev. CoP16), of which large sections have become obsolete.
11. In this regard, the Secretariat notes that all preamble paragraphs, and most operational paragraphs of Resolution Conf. 11.19 (Rev. CoP16), no longer correspond to the current practice due to the cessation since 2009 of the Secretariat's updating the CITES Identification Manual and the preparation of identification sheets. The only sections of the Resolution that remain pertinent today can be found in paragraph 1, items c), d), e), h), and i). This calls for a substantial redrafting of the resolution, or its cancellation and replacement by a new resolution on identification.
12. As seen in the Annex to this document, many CITES Decisions contain references to species identification needs, and this may also be the case with the new decisions that will be adopted at CoP18. Some of the common and recurrent elements may benefit from consolidation into a single resolution, so that they may be dealt with under longer-term guidance. The Secretariat will therefore propose to draft a new resolution on *Identification of specimens of CITES-listed species* for consideration at CoP18. In the preparation of the new draft resolution the Secretariat will consider elements from existing CITES Resolutions and Decisions, as well as guidance provided by the Conference of the Parties, the Committees and Parties, which may include, but will not be limited to the following:
  - a) importance of identification for Parties, CITES authorities, traders, administrators, scientists, and enforcement officials;
  - b) needs expressed by Parties and authorities responsible for wildlife law enforcement;
  - c) provision of support to Parties by making available information regarding existing identification methods, tools and services;
  - d) increased use of modern forensic methods such as molecular, DNA and isotope analyses as identification tool;
  - e) need for common sources of information, procedures, reference samples, and repositories;
  - f) consideration of practicality, costs, time efficiency, reliability, and technical requirements;

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<sup>1</sup> See AC30/PC24 Sum. 1 (Rev. 1), agenda item 9.1.

- g) exploration of different guidance materials for identification of parts and derivatives;
  - h) different dissemination methods, taking into consideration the limited information and communication technology capacity of some Parties;
  - i) the variety of potential stakeholders and partners available for cooperation; and
  - j) the establishment of networks of identification specialists and experts.
13. The Secretariat seeks any views and inputs from the Standing Committee on this proposal, which will be taken into account when drafting the resolution.

Implementation of Decision 17.164

14. As reported orally at SC69, the Secretariat received three responses to the two Notifications to Parties<sup>2</sup> that requested the tiger range States<sup>3</sup> to inform the Secretariat whether they have photographic identification databases for tigers, and the capacity to identify tigers from photographs of tiger skins. Their responses are summarized below:

Party	Information	Contact details of the relevant national focal point/agency
China	There are no photographic identification databases for tigers	
India	National Repository of Camera Trap Photographs of Tigers (NRCTPT) <sup>4</sup> developed and managed by the National Tiger Conservation Authority. India also has established a Tiger Cell located at the Wildlife Institute of India, which maintains data obtained from annual tiger monitoring.	Inspector General of Forests (Project Tiger) B-1 Wing, 7 <sup>th</sup> Floor Pt. Deendayal Antyodaya Bhawan CGO Complex, Lodhi Road New Delhi 110003 INDIA Email: <a href="mailto:ms-ntca@nic.in">ms-ntca@nic.in</a> Tel: +91-11-24347835 +91-11-24367836
Thailand	Database of wild tiger photographs Captive Tiger Database containing information on tiger stripes, photos and DNA	Wildlife Conservation Bureau Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation 61 Phaholyothin Road, Chatuchak Bangkok 10900 THAILAND Email: <a href="mailto:citesthailand@yahoo.com">citesthailand@yahoo.com</a> ; <a href="mailto:iwt_cites@dnpp.mail.go.th">iwt_cites@dnpp.mail.go.th</a> Tel: +66 (2) 561 48 38; 940 64 49 Fax: +66 (2) 561 48 38; 940 64 49

15. The above information as well as the *Field pocket guide for law enforcement agencies to combat illegal trade in Asian big cat specimens* are available on the identification materials page of the CITES website<sup>5</sup>. The field pocket guide is currently available in English, Chinese and Russian. The Secretariat takes this opportunity to remind Parties that would like to receive hard copies of the field pocket guide, that these can be requested as outlined in Notification to the Parties No. 2018/014 of 30 January 2018.<sup>6</sup>
16. Since no external funding has been secured to implement Decision 17.164, paragraph c), and since there is very limited data source available on photographic identification of tiger skins, it appears as though it would not be not feasible to develop a central repository of photographs of wild tigers and seized tiger skins at the moment. For the time being, the dedicated section on the CITES website on identification materials may serve as the source of information on tiger identification. Information related to other means of identification

<sup>2</sup> Notification to Parties No. 2017/038 of 15 May 2017 and Notification the Parties No. 2017/058 of 10 August 2017.

<sup>3</sup> Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Russian Federation and Thailand; possibly extinct in Cambodia, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Viet Nam.

<sup>4</sup> [https://projecttiger.nic.in/WriteReadData/userfiles/file/Protocol\\_Camera\\_trap.pdf](https://projecttiger.nic.in/WriteReadData/userfiles/file/Protocol_Camera_trap.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> [https://cites.org/eng/imp/identification\\_materials/index.php](https://cites.org/eng/imp/identification_materials/index.php)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.cites.org/sites/default/files/notif/E-Notif-2018-014.pdf>

of tiger skins can also be shared in the same section of the website upon request. Otherwise, Decision 17.164 can be deemed completed.

### Recommendations

17. The Standing Committee is invited to:

- a) take note of this document;
- b) note the Secretariat's proposal in paragraph 12 above for it to propose a new draft resolution on *Identification of specimens of CITES-listed species* at the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties, which would replace Resolution Conf. 11.19 (Rev. CoP16) on *Identification Manual*;
- c) provide inputs on the elements contained in paragraph 12 that the Secretariat would take into account during the development of the proposed new resolution; and
- d) based on the Secretariat's report contained in paragraphs 14 to 16 above, propose to the Conference of the Parties that Decisions 17.164 to 17.165 can be considered completed.

**Decisions containing references to identification materials or methods**

(taken from AC29 Doc. 9/PC23 Doc. 10, Annex 2)

Decision	Title	Directed to	Text
17.124	Illegal trade in cheetahs ( <i>Acinonyx jubatus</i> )	Secretariat	The Secretariat shall, subject to external funding, and in consultation with relevant experts, commission the development of a CITES cheetah trade resource kit that compiles relevant information and tools to assist in implementing the Convention with regard to trade in cheetahs, and addresses <i>inter alia</i> : <b>identification of live cheetahs and parts and derivatives thereof</b> ; ...
17.131	Illegal trade in Tibetan antelope ( <i>Pantholops hodgsonii</i> )	Parties concerned by the illegal trade in specimens of Tibetan antelope	All Parties concerned by the illegal trade in specimens of Tibetan antelope are encouraged to draw upon the offer of support from the CITES Management Authority of Switzerland, <b>in particular with regard to identification methods</b> and exchange of information and knowledge about this topic.
17.162	Identification (ivory)	Secretariat	The Secretariat shall, subject to the availability of external funds, prepare a <b>revised and updated version of the <i>Identification Guide for Ivory and Ivory Substitutes</i></b> , taking into account modern forensic methods such as DNA analysis, for circulation to the Parties.
17.164	Identification (tiger skins)	Secretariat	The Secretariat shall: a) issue a Notification to the Parties, to request the tiger range States to inform the Secretariat <b>whether they have photographic identification databases for tigers, and the capacity to identify tigers from photographs of tiger skins</b> , and if so, the contacts of the relevant national focal points or agencies; and b) inform the Parties which tiger range states have <b>photographic identification databases for tigers, and the capacity to identify tigers from photographs of tiger skins</b> , and the contacts of the relevant national focal points or agencies; c) subject to external funding, contract a qualified expert or body to assess the feasibility of establishing, to aid enforcement efforts, a central repository of photographs of wild tigers and seized tiger skins. ...
17.166	Identification (timber)	Parties	Parties are encouraged to expand or create and <b>maintain scientific reference collections essential for the development of methodologies to identify CITES-listed tree species</b> and distinguish them from look-alike species, in accordance with current best practices regarding collection, curation and facilitation of exchange of reference materials.
17.167		Plants Committee	With respect to CITES-listed tree species, the Plants Committee shall, at its 23rd and 24th meetings: ...

Decision	Title	Directed to	Text
			<p><u>Concerning wood and other material as reference samples for identification purposes, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders and building on information on existing initiatives previously made available to Parties:</u></p> <p>a) determine, for all CITES-listed tree species, the locations and availability of existing reference samples or collections, and identify priorities in addressing gaps;</p> <p>b) encourage interested Parties to identify, collect and curate reference samples, and facilitate exchange to make them available, as appropriate, to research institutions, law enforcement agencies, and other authorities concerned;</p> <p>c) identify and compile information on best practices for the collection and curation of reference samples, identifying gaps where they exist; and</p> <p>d) consider how best to assist and strengthen capacities for forensic work on identification of CITES-listed tree species in trade.</p>
16.58 (Rev. CoP17)	Physical inspection of timber shipments	Secretariat	<p>By the 69th meeting of the Standing Committee, the Secretariat shall:</p> <p>a) obtain information and materials from those Parties that have reported that they have developed <b>tools and procedures for the identification and measurement</b> of CITES-listed tree species, and the physical inspection of timber shipments;</p> <p>b) publish the information on the CITES website so that it can be accessed by CITES plant inspection and enforcement authorities; and ...</p>
16.136 (Rev. CoP17)	Sturgeons and paddlefish (Acipenseriformes spp.)	Secretariat	<p>The Secretariat shall:</p> <p>a) subject to external funding and in consultation with the Animals Committee, organize a study to:</p> <p>i) provide an overview of <b>molecular, DNA-based and other forensic methods that could assist in identifying the species and populations</b> of Acipenseriformes specimens in trade, determining the origin or age of specimens, and differentiating wild from captive-bred or aquacultured specimens;</p> <p>ii) review relevant developments in this area, including the <b>availability and reliability of uniform identification systems</b>;</p> <p>iii) evaluate the <b>advantages and disadvantages of the different methods</b> (including practicality, costs, time-efficiency, reliability, technical requirements, etc.); and</p> <p>iv) formulate relevant guidance for CITES Parties, enforcement agencies, the private sector and other stakeholders; ...</p>
17.186	Eels ( <i>Anguilla</i> spp.)	Secretariat	<p>The Secretariat shall, subject to external funding:</p> <p>a) contract independent consultants to undertake a study compiling information on challenges and lessons learnt with regards to implementation of the Appendix II listing of European Eel (<i>Anguilla anguilla</i>) and its effectiveness. This includes in particular the making of non-detriment findings,</p>

Decision	Title	Directed to	Text
			enforcement and <b>identification challenges</b> , as well as illegal trade. This study should notably take account of the data compiled and advice issued by the ICES/GFCM/EIFAAC Working Group Eel; ...
16.157 (Rev. CoP17)	Agarwood-producing taxa ( <i>Aquilaria</i> spp. and <i>Gyrinops</i> spp.)	Secretariat in collaboration with the Plants Committee	Range, transit, consumer, and producer Parties of agarwood products are invited to <b>compile and publish identification manuals on agarwood products</b> , taking into consideration the updated version of the Glossary provided in the Annex to document PC22 Doc. 17.5.3, and any further updated version, if appropriate. They are encouraged to <b>distribute these identification manuals as training material to management and enforcement officials</b> .
17.203	Malagasy ebonies ( <i>Diospyros</i> spp.) and palisanders and rosewoods ( <i>Dalbergia</i> spp.)	Madagascar	Madagascar shall: ...  d) continue the <b>production of identification materials</b> for identifying timber and timber products of species of the genera <i>Dalbergia</i> and <i>Diospyros</i> from Madagascar;
17.209	Sharks and rays (Elasmobranchii spp.)	Parties	Parties are encouraged to: ...  e) share experiences with, and knowledge of, forensic means to efficiently, reliably and cost-effectively identify shark products in trade; and ...
17.210		Secretariat	The Secretariat shall:  a) make <b>guidance materials available for the identification of CITES-listed sharks and rays</b> , including fins and other products and derivatives, on the CITES Sharks and Rays Portal, and the sharing of genetic testing protocols and other forensic approaches; and ...
17.213		Secretariat and to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)	The CITES and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Secretariats are invited to continue and expand their collaboration concerning the conservation of and trade in sharks and rays, in particular by:  a) exploring options for using the existing iSharkFin tool for the identification of dried and skinned shark fins; ...
17.216		Standing Committee	On the basis of information provided by the Secretariat and the Animals Committee, the Standing Committee shall consider issues concerning the conservation and management of sharks and rays, and provide guidance as appropriate, pertaining to: ...  b) identification and traceability, taking into consideration requirements that have been developed for the trade in specimens of other Appendix-II species, and their applicability to specimens of CITES-listed sharks and rays in trade; ...
17.269	Saiga antelope ( <i>Saiga</i> spp.)	Range states of saiga antelope ( <i>Saiga</i> spp.) (Kazakhstan, Mongolia, the	Range States of <i>Saiga</i> spp. and important consumer and trading countries of saiga parts and derivatives are encouraged to address challenges in controlling illicit trade in saiga horns and derivatives thereof by:

Decision	Title	Directed to	Text
		Russian Federation, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan), and important consumer and trading countries of saiga parts and derivatives	a) supporting the development of tools to facilitate the identification, sourcing and determination of age of saiga horns; ...
17.291	Tortoises and freshwater turtles (Testudines spp.)	Secretariat	The Secretariat shall, subject to available funding: ... c) in collaboration with ICCWC, relevant Parties and experts, establish a secure <b>rapid-response identification network</b> to connect inspecting officials to a network of verified specialists on <b>species identification</b> , with an initial pilot phase focusing on tortoises and freshwater turtles, that could be extended to other species, if appropriate.
17.300	Black Sea bottlenose dolphin ( <i>Tursiops truncatus ponticus</i> )	Range States for the Black Sea bottlenose dolphin ( <i>Tursiops truncatus ponticus</i> )	Parties are encouraged to: ... b) establish, on a national or regional basis, <b>repositories where relevant genetic identification data are stored</b> and to make these accessible online; and ...