

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



Seventy-third meeting of the Standing Committee
Online, 5-7 May 2021

SUMMARY RECORD

Opening remarks of the Chair and the Secretary-General *No document*

The Chair of the Standing Committee and the Secretary-General gave opening addresses for this first online meeting of a CITES Committee.

Administrative and financial matters

1. Agenda

1.1 Adoption of the agenda SC73 Doc. 1.1

and

1.2 Annotated agenda SC73 Doc. 1.2

The Chair introduced documents SC73 Doc. 1.1 and SC73 Doc. 1.2.

The Committee adopted the provisional agenda in document SC73 Doc. 1.1.

There were no interventions.

2. Adoption of the working programme SC73 Doc. 2

The Chair introduced document SC73 Doc. 2.

The Committee adopted the draft working programme in document SC73 Doc. 2.

There were no interventions.

3. Rules of Procedure SC73 Doc. 3

The Secretary-General drew the attention of the Committee to information document [SC73 Inf. 1](#) that provides guidance on the application of the Rules of Procedure of the Standing Committee in an online meeting. Israel enquired whether there would be time limits for interventions. The Chair called on Parties to be pithy in their remarks and indicated that time limits may be enforced as per Rule 14.6 of the Committee's Rules of Procedure if the meeting was running late.

The Committee noted that its Rules of Procedure as amended at its 70th meeting (Sochi, October 2018) and set out in the Annex to document SC73 Doc. 3 remain valid for each of its meetings.

4. Credentials *No document*

The Secretary-General informed the Committee that all Members of the Standing Committee had submitted their credentials. Mauritania requested some clarifications as to who should sign letters of credentials and the Secretariat, referring back to Rule 5.2, of the Rules of Procedure of the Standing Committee, confirmed that nomination letters signed by the head of the Management Authority authorized to communicate with the Secretariat could be accepted as credentials, provided that they are not signed by the person whom they accredit.

The Committee noted that, at the beginning of the meeting, all delegations of the Members of the Standing Committee had provided credentials and that 68 observer Parties had submitted letters of credentials or nomination letters.

5. Admission of observers SC73 Doc. 5 (Rev. 1)

The Chair introduced document SC73 Doc. 5 (Rev. 1).

The Committee noted the list of observer organizations that had been invited to attend the meeting as set out in the Annex to document SC73 Doc. 5 (Rev. 1).

There were no interventions.

6. Financial matters: Report of the Finance and Budget Subcommittee *No document*

The Acting Chair (Switzerland) of the Finance and Budget Subcommittee (FBSC) informed the Committee that the FBSC had agreed to exceptionally reduce the participation charges for observers at the 73rd meeting of the Standing Committee to USD 50, noting that this should not be considered as a precedent and had noted the quarterly reports for the year 2020 and the first quarter of 2021 for the Core Trust Fund (CTL). The FBSC also noted the generous contribution from Switzerland to cover participant charges up to CHF 15,000 for the 73rd meeting of the Standing Committee, 31st meeting of the Animals Committee and 25th meeting of the Plants Committee which will allow up to two speakers per observer organization for the three online meetings in May-June. Reimbursement of internet connection charges will be offered to eligible Members of the Animals, Plants and Standing Committee for their participation at the online meetings during 2021.

As per Resolution Conf. 18.1 on *Financing and the costed programme of work for the Secretariat for the triennium 2020-2022*, paragraph 38, the Secretariat had informed FBSC that the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) audit took place during the period January to April 2021. The audit covered the period from 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2020 and addressed the following subjects: strategic management and governance; operations management; and finance and administration. The final audit report from OIOS is expected to be published in June/July 2021.

The Acting Chair highlighted some main concerns from the period ending 31 December 2020. The overall implementation rate of the approved budget for 2020 was 88% while only 75.5% of the assessed contribution for the year were collected; and the high level of outstanding contributions for 2020 and prior years amounting to USD 1.7 million.

The FBSC will continue its work intersessionally and will be discussing the following items online: consultation with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) on the Programme Support Allocation policy and charges towards this line; evaluation of the next triennium budget proposal for 2023-2025; and the CITES language strategy.

China asked for the number of Chinese speakers worldwide to be corrected from 900 million to 1.3 billion in document SC73 Doc. 11 (Rev. 1) on language strategy.

The Committee noted the oral report provided by the Acting Chair of the Finance and Budget Subcommittee (FBSC).

7. Arrangements for the 19th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP19)..... *No document*

The Secretary-General recalled that, on 12 March 2021, it was advised by Costa Rica that due to the financial and other impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic it was, with great regret, formally withdrawing its offer to host CoP19. In Notification No. 2021/027 of 25 March 2021, the Secretariat therefore sought expressions of interest from another Party (or Parties) to host (or co-host) CoP19 in the second half of 2022. Interested Parties have been requested to contact the Secretariat as soon as possible and at the latest by 30 June 2021. If no new host is forthcoming, CoP19 will be held at the International Conference Center (ICCG) in Geneva, Switzerland, from 9 to 21 July 2022, but with a restricted participation due to capacity limitations at the venue.

The Committee noted the oral report provided by the Secretary-General, including the composition of the Selection Panel that will review nominations for officers to serve at CoP19, which had been agreed by the Committee intersessionally:

Africa	Ms. Elly HAMUNYELA (Namibia)
Asia (SC Vice-Chair <i>ex officio</i>)	Mr. WU Zhongze (China)
Central and South America and the Caribbean	Mr. José Julián SUAZO CERVANTES (Honduras)
Europe	Ms. Elke MALFAIT (Belgium)
North America (SC Chair <i>ex officio</i>)	Ms. Carolina CACERES (Canada)
Oceania	Ms. Sarah BAGNALL (New Zealand)
Secretariat S-G (<i>ex officio</i>)	Ms. Ivonne HIGUERO
Next Host Country (<i>ex officio</i>)	To be confirmed

8. Report on current activities of the scientific committees

8.1 Animals Committee..... SC73 Doc. 8.1

The Chair of the Animals Committee (Mr. Lörtscher) introduced document SC73 Doc. 8.1 and provided an update on the intersessional work programme the Committee had to develop following the postponement of its 31st meeting due to the COVID-19 pandemic. He highlighted how the Committee intended to provide the inputs required for discussion at the 74th meeting of the Standing Committee and at the 19th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

Humane Society International queried the establishment and membership of the informal working groups mentioned in the Animal Committee Chair’s report. Species Survival Network, also speaking on behalf of the Center for International Environmental Law, Born Free Foundation, the Center for Biological Diversity, Animal Advocacy and Protection, David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation and Eurogroup for Animals expressed concern about the lack of transparency of voting procedures during the intersessional period without meetings. The AC Chair noted that no informal working group had been set up so far and that the Committee will be transparent in its approach to the establishment of the membership of informal working groups, should they be established.

The Committee noted the report of the Chair of the Animals Committee in document SC73 Doc. 8.1.

8.2 Plants Committee..... SC73 Doc. 8.2

The Chair of the Plants Committee (Ms. Koumba Pambo) introduced document SC73 Doc. 8.2 and provided an update on the intersessional work programme the Committee had to develop following the postponement of its 25th meeting due to the COVID-19 pandemic. She highlighted how the Committee intended to provide the inputs required for discussions that will take place at the 74th meeting of the Standing Committee and at the 19th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

Canada supported noting the reports by the Chairs of the scientific committees and stressed the importance of transparency for all stakeholders.

The Committee noted the report of the Chair of the Plants Committee in document SC73 Doc. 8.2.

9. Rules of Procedure of the Conference of the Parties: Report of the working group..... SC73 Doc. 9

Canada, as the Chair of the intersessional working group on Rules of Procedure, introduced document SC73 Doc. 9 and presented draft amendments to the following Rules of Procedure of the Conference of the Parties: Rule 7.2 (a) on the membership of the Credentials Committee, Rule 25.5 on addressing amendments to proposals and Rule 25.6 on amendment proposals that concern the same taxon but are different in substance. The Chair noted that the working group agreed on the amendments to Rules 7 2a) and 25.5 but did not have enough time to fully deliberate on the amendments to Rule 25.6 outlined in paragraph 14.

Belgium, also speaking on behalf of the European Union and its Member States, Canada, Indonesia, Kenya, Namibia, New Zealand and Peru supported the proposed amendments to Rules 7.2 (a) and Rule 25.5. With regard to Rule 25.6, the views expressed differed. Indonesia and Namibia did not consider there was a need to amend the rule, which had served the Convention well so far. Peru was not ready to express any views on the proposals at this time. China, echoed by IWMC-World Conservation Trust, supported the idea of continuing the consideration of Rule 25.6. Belgium expressed support for changing the order to consider and vote on the most restrictive proposal first and supported the idea of introducing more flexibility in the rule. China, Kenya and New Zealand requested the working group to consider and provide real world examples to illustrate the implications of the proposed amendments. Benin, Gabon, India, Niger, and Switzerland, as well as David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation, Fondation Franz Weber, ForestBased Solutions, Humane Society International and World Wide Fund for Nature expressed an interest in participating in the working group.

The Committee agreed to propose to the 19th meeting of the Conference of the Parties the amendments to Rule 7 2.a) as found in paragraph 8 of document SC73 Doc. 9, and the amendments to Rule 25.5 and Rule 25.6 as found in paragraph 9 of the same document. The Committee requested the working group on the Rules of Procedure of the Conference of the Parties to continue its deliberations on the amendments to Rule 25.6 taking account of the comments made and to report to it at its 74th meeting. The Committee invited those Parties and observers wishing to join the working group to contact the Secretariat before the close of the meeting.

10. Conduct of Committees: Guidance to assist chairs of working groups established by the Committees..... SC73 Doc. 10

The Chair introduced the draft guidance to assist chairs of working groups established by the committees in fulfilling their tasks as set out in the Annex to document SC73 Doc. 10. Parties and stakeholders were able to comment on a first draft of this guidance, through Notification to the Parties No. 2020/067 of 5 November 2020 and the Secretariat outlined in the document how it has incorporated the comments received.

Canada, Chile, Japan, New Zealand, Peru and Poland, also speaking on behalf of the European Union and its Member States, welcomed the document and found the assistance provided therein useful and clear. In addition, the following substantive comment were made. In finalizing the document, New Zealand invited the Secretariat to be mindful of small Parties and think of possible strategies to encourage small Parties to take on working groups. They further noted the difficulty of maintaining a balance of the views and engagement between Parties and observers throughout the deliberations of a working group. Finally, New Zealand noted that working group chairs should be mindful of the need to sequence any scientific input from scientific committees. Peru mentioned the importance of interpretation in the working groups and Japan noted that voting would be possible in working groups in accordance with the Rules of Procedure of the Standing Committee that apply *mutatis mutandis*. Canada invited the Secretariat to publish the guidance on the CITES website.

The Committee endorsed the guidance as set out in the Annex to document SC73 Doc. 10 and requested the Secretariat to finalize the guidance, taking into account the comments made by Canada, Chile, Japan, New Zealand, Peru and Poland, and to make it available to chairs of committee working groups and on the CITES website.

11. Language strategy for the Convention SC73 Doc. 11 (Rev. 1)

The Acting Chair of the FBSC (Switzerland) introduced document SC73 Doc. 11 (Rev. 1) by the Secretariat that laid out two options: the complete integration of Arabic, Chinese and Russian as languages of the Convention at an estimated cost of USD 2.43 million for the triennium (option 1) or an incremental language

strategy that aims to identify, with the help of interested Parties, those documents that should be translated as a priority in order to facilitate the daily implementation work of their national authorities (option 2). The Acting Chair noted that the composition of the FBSC did not allow it to make a balanced assessment and recommendations between the two options. They requested further instructions from the Standing Committee on how to proceed. Switzerland further noted that China and the Russian Federation were not part of the FBSC and should be involved in the discussions.

China, Kuwait, the Russian Federation and Sudan supported the complete integration of Arabic, Chinese and Russian as the working languages of CITES since multilingualism is an important enabler for diplomacy and equal participation. They expressed their willingness to discuss further the budgetary and implementation implications of the inclusion of these three additional UN languages. Yemen expressed its support for the inclusion of Arabic as one of the languages of the Convention.

Belgium, also speaking on behalf of the European Union and its Member States, Canada, Georgia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, and Senegal expressed their commitment to multilingualism within the Convention and their support for an incremental approach. They and the United States of America further highlighted the budget implications of option 1.

Belgium, Canada, Georgia, Japan and the Republic of Korea wished to have further information on additional administrative and budgetary implications of the integration of Arabic, Chinese and Russian as working languages, namely additional budgetary implications for Parties that would need to provide translations in all six languages of any amendment proposal longer than 12 pages in accordance with Annex 6 to Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP17) on *Criteria for amendment of Appendices I and II*; implications for law enforcement officials with CITES permits and certificates filled in Arabic, Chinese and Russian; and any additional administrative burden for Parties not using any of the six official UN languages.

Canada inquired whether the Secretariat had the capacity to validate translation and to take on three additional languages since, as noted by Georgia, adding three languages could increase timing and delay translation for all languages. Japan further noted that option 2 would also need to be reviewed further for indirect transaction costs. The United States of America also specified that they could not accept option 2 since they considered that translation should be a core function of the Secretariat. All Parties expressed their willingness to further engage on this issue.

The Committee requested the Secretariat to prepare a more detailed analysis of the administrative and cost implications of different language strategies for the Secretariat and Parties outlined in document SC73 Doc. 11 (Rev. 1) and to submit it to the Finance and Budget Subcommittee (FBSC). The Committee invited China and the Russian Federation to join the FBSC as observers when it further considers the Secretariat's detailed analysis on the proposed language strategies and any other approach the FBSC may decide in its discussion. The Committee agreed to consider at its 74th meeting the results of the FBSC's discussions based on the Secretariat's detailed analysis.

12. Cooperation with other biodiversity-related Conventions:
CITES input to the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework..... SC73 Doc. 12

The Secretary-General introduced document SC73 Doc. 12 and summarized the inputs of CITES to the different fora working on the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). Since the negotiations on the GBF are still ongoing, the Secretariat was seeking direction from the Standing Committee, within the policies adopted by the Conference of the Parties, on the best way to provide inputs to these negotiations on behalf of the Parties, with the aim of strengthening the linkages between CITES and the Framework; demonstrating the value of CITES to the development of the Framework; and identifying a role for the Convention in the achievement of its objectives.

Parties supported engagement of individual Parties and of CITES in the negotiations on the GBF and thanked the Secretariat for the compilation of the useful inputs it had made so far in the GBF negotiations.

Bahamas, Cambodia, Canada, Congo, Ethiopia, Georgia, Indonesia, and the United States of America, echoed by IWMC-World Conservation Trust, expressed their support for the establishment of an intersessional working group to provide inputs in the negotiations and to report to the 74th meeting of the Standing Committee.

Brazil, Chile, the European Union, Gabon, Israel, Peru, and Switzerland considered that input by individual Parties and by the Secretariat, with the support of the Committee Chairs, was sufficient to represent CITES views in the GBF negotiations. As such, the establishment of a working group would not be necessary, in particular considering the fast-moving nature of the negotiations and the type of input that might be requested from the working group, for instance on indicators. The David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation, speaking on behalf of Animal Advocacy and Protection, Animal Welfare Institute, Born Free Foundation, Center for Biological Diversity, Defender of Wildlife, Environmental Investigation Agency US and UK, Eurogroup for Animals, Fondation Franz Weber, Four Paws International, Humane Society International Natural Resources Defense Council, Pan African Sanctuary Alliance, Pro Wildlife and Species Survival Network, expressed concern about the proposed establishment of a limited intersessional working group that would limit transparency.

Congo, Chile, Gabon, Georgia and the United States of America highlighted the importance of the involvement of all CITES authorities at the national level as per Decision 18.23.

Bahamas, Gabon and Peru further highlighted the need to solidify the relationship of CITES with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and further enhance synergies between the two Conventions. This was echoed by TRAFFIC that encouraged a continued input by CITES in the GBF negotiations and called for a strong monitoring framework for the GBF.

The Committee noted the importance of the work at national level between Parties' Management Authorities and national Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) focal points to seek to ensure CITES aims are reflected in the GBF. The Committee requested the Secretariat to continue to engage, consistent with Decision 17.56 (Rev. CoP18), in the negotiations on the GBF on behalf of CITES Parties and invited the Secretariat to seek advice from the Standing Committee and the Animals and Plants Committees, through their Chairs, in order to support its engagement, when necessary.

13. Cooperation with the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals SC73 Doc. 13

The Chair introduced document SC73 Doc. 13 by the Secretariat that provided an overview of its cooperation with the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), specifically on the implementation of the CMS-CITES Joint Work Programme 2015-2020 (see Annex 1), and presented to the Committee the draft CMS-CITES Joint Work Programme 2021-2025 as set out in Annex 2.

Gabon, India, Peru and Zimbabwe supported the draft Joint Work Programme for 2021-2025 and highlighted the importance of cooperation and synergies with CMS. Gabon and Peru stressed the importance of the work on nomenclature issues, while Peru welcomed the joint activities on jaguars, sharks and rays, and expressed an interest in receiving a list of the species that are both on Appendix I of CITES and CMS. Zimbabwe suggested the inclusion of a funding strategy as part of the Joint Work Programme and the inclusion of CBD in the work programme, while the United States of America made a distinction between noting the Joint Work Programme and endorsing it.

The Committee noted document SC73 Doc. 13 and its Annex 1 and endorsed the draft CMS-CITES Joint Work Programme 2021-2025 in Annex 2.

14. African Carnivores Initiative: Report of the Secretariat SC73 Doc. 14

The Chair presented the draft Programme of Work for the Joint CITES-CMS African Carnivores Initiative in Annex 2 to document SC73 Doc. 14. The African Carnivores Initiative (ACI) aims to bring coherence and efficiency to the implementation of the resolutions and decisions of CITES and CMS relating to four African carnivore species, African lion (*Panthera leo*), leopard (*Panthera pardus*), cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*), and African wild dog (*Lycaon pictus*). The comments of the ACI range States of these four species were incorporated in the draft Programme presented to the Committee.

Parties welcomed the draft Programme of Work for the Joint CITES-CMS African Carnivores Initiative and Burkina Faso, Gabon, Israel, Niger, and the United States of America, echoed by Born Free Foundation speaking on behalf of Animal Welfare Institute, Born Free Foundation, Center for Biological Diversity, David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation, Environmental Investigation Agency, Eurogroup for Animals, Fondation Franz Weber, Humane Society International, Pan African Sanctuary, Alliance Pro Wildlife, and Species Survival Network, made several comments on the draft Programme of Work. These pertained to objective 6 where "sustainable" should read "Non-detrimental use and management" and where the text would further benefit

from recognizing the risks from trade in captive bred specimens; objective 8 that should also note the risks of zoonotic diseases from big cat captive breeding; and objective 10 that could include specific references to Resolution Conf.17.4 on *Demand reduction strategies to combat illegal trade in CITES-listed species*. A further suggested edit was the inclusion of cheetahs in activity 6.2 and in all its subpoints.

The United States of America further noted that the input of the Animals Committee would be important for the ACI. Finally, Conservation Force noted that many of the objectives of the ACI went beyond the mandates of CITES and CMS and stressed that range States needed funding to undertake conservation initiatives, rather than a new strategy.

The Committee established an intersessional working group with the mandate to address the revisions proposed by Burkina Faso, Gabon, Israel, Niger, and the United States of America to the draft Programme of Work for the Joint CITES-CMS African Carnivores Initiative in Annex 2 to document SC73 Doc. 14 and report back to the Standing Committee in time for consideration at the next meeting of the Standing Committee of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) scheduled for September 2021.

Members of the intersessional working group on the African Carnivores Initiative were agreed as follows: Argentina, Benin, Burkina Faso, China, Costa Rica, Ethiopia, Gabon, Germany (Chair), Israel, Namibia, Niger, South Africa, Spain, United States of America, Yemen, and Zimbabwe; the Convention of Migratory Species, the International Union for Conservation of Nature; and Born Free Foundation, Conservation Analytics, Conservation Force, European Association of Zoos and Aquaria, Humane Society International, IWMC-World Conservation Trust, Panthera, Safari Club International, Safari Club International Foundation, San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance, TRAFFIC, Wildlife Conservation Society, World Wide Fund for Nature, and Zoological Society of London.

The Committee invited those Parties and observers that were not able to express an interest in joining the working group to reach out to the Chair of the working group.

15. Implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of the Convention SC73 Doc. 15

The Secretary-General introduced document SC73 Doc. 15 that summarizes the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of the Convention, specifically on national CITES authorities, governing bodies and scientific advisory committees of CITES and on the CITES Secretariat. The Secretary-General presented some of the lessons learnt in the process thanks to feedback from Parties on that document that was posted for comments on 28 January 2021 and to an online survey on the experiences of Parties in implementing the Convention during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Israel expressed the wish to bring in the issue of the role that CITES could play in reducing the spread of zoonotic diseases under this agenda item. However, the Chair reminded the Committee that this work was to be undertaken by the intersessional working group on zoonotic diseases.

Parties, in particular Canada, Chile, Kenya, Morocco, Niger, Peru, Poland, also speaking on behalf of the European Union and its Member States, Senegal, the United Republic of Tanzania, generally agreed with the recommendations of the Secretariat in paragraphs 31 to 33 of the document, with Canada wishing to ensure that the adjustments to the Rules of Procedure of the committees and the review of the allocation of funds in the Trust Fund should be in case of emergencies when in person meetings are not possible.

Indonesia and Japan agreed with the Secretariat that greater flexibility was indeed needed to respond to exceptional circumstances, but that should be accompanied by financial transparency and accountability.

Canada, echoed by Gabon and Senegal, expressed a preference for face-to-face meetings but acknowledged that online meetings were an option as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Canada and Chile noted that hybrid meetings should not be held under normal circumstances, but on an exceptional basis. Indonesia expressed its willingness to participate in hybrid meetings thanks to the presence of its mission in Geneva but noted that not all Parties have missions and/or environment experts in Geneva. Senegal expressed a preference for hybrid, rather than fully online meetings. Burkina Faso further noted that online meetings disadvantaged countries with technological challenges.

Poland, also speaking on behalf of the European Union and its Member States, Kenya and Niger stressed the importance of transparency and equal access for Parties and observers to CITES meetings and would therefore not favour the option of the organization of hybrid meetings – in the future, meetings should be

face to face or fully virtual. Gabon and Morocco suggested that the Secretariat's recommendations should focus on increasing transparency, clear decision-making and enhancing participation. Niger called for the Secretariat to expand on the definition of "exceptional circumstances". Finally, Peru mentioned other implications of the COVID-19 pandemic such as the limitations on field work that can also have an impact on amendment proposals.

The Natural Resources Defense Council, speaking also on behalf of Center for International Environmental Law, Fondation Franz Weber, Defenders of Wildlife, Sea Shepherd Legal, Species Survival Network, David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation, Four Paws International, Animal Advocacy Protection, Humane Society International, Eurogroup for Animals, Environmental Investigation Agency US and UK, Center for Biological Diversity, Born Free Foundation, and ProWildlife, stressed that new meeting formats should not exacerbate inequalities and called for no face-to-face or hybrid meetings until all have been vaccinated. They called for an expanded access to online meetings and urged Parties to ensure that any amendment to the Rules of Procedure should not lead to a loss of inclusion and transparency.

The Committee noted document SC73 Doc. 15 and invited the Secretariat to take account of the points made during the discussion, including the definition of exceptional circumstances, the transparency in relation to budgetary issues and implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for fieldwork and studies.

Interpretation and implementation matters

Existing Resolutions and Decisions

16. Review of Resolutions and Decisions: Report of the Secretariat SC73 Doc. 16

The Chair introduced document SC73 Doc. 16 that proposed corrections of non-substantive errors in the Interpretation section of the Appendices and in Resolutions and Decisions. Most of these non-substantive errors were incorrect cross-references, translation errors or renumbering of paragraphs. In the document, the Secretariat also informed the Standing Committee of its intention to propose to the Conference of the Parties amendments to relevant Resolutions and Decisions to ensure consistent use of the term 'wildlife crime linked to the internet' and other amendments related to the use of the term 'implementation report' instead of 'biennial report'. Parties and stakeholders had been able to comment on a first draft of this document, through Notification to the Parties No. 2020/067 of 5 November 2020 and the Secretariat outlined in the document how it had incorporated the comments received.

Argentina, Australia, Gabon, Indonesia, Peru and Poland, also speaking on behalf of the European Union and its Member States, all supported the proposed corrections of non-substantive errors. Argentina, Australia and Gabon noted that the proposed incorporation of Decision 14.81 under Resolution Conf. 14.8 (Rev. CoP17) on *Periodic Review of species included in Appendices I and II* would be acceptable provided the amendment to the Resolution is agreed before the deletion of the Decision, because the priority was to ensure that the International Whaling Commission remain the main body for these issues. With regards to the new proposed submission date of the implementation report, Argentina, Indonesia and Peru preferred a submission date of 31 October of the year preceding a meeting of the Conference of the Parties. Gabon and ProWildlife, speaking also on behalf of Animal Welfare Institute, Born Free Foundation, David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation, Four Paws International, Humane Society International, Japan Wildlife Conservation Society and Species Survival Network, supported the proposed changes relating to the term 'wildlife crime linked to the internet', with exception to the proposed change to paragraph 16 of Resolution Conf. 10.10 (Rev. CoP18) on *Trade in elephant specimens*.

The Committee agreed to the proposed corrections of the non-substantive errors in paragraph 4 of document SC73 Doc. 16 and instructed the Secretariat to republish the Interpretation section of the Appendices and the Decisions and Resolutions concerned with the necessary corrections. The Committee noted the Secretariat's proposed revisions to certain Resolutions to ensure consistent use of the term 'wildlife crime linked to the internet' in accordance with Decision 18.84, as indicated in paragraph 5, and further proposed revisions in paragraph 7 of the same document. The Committee invited the Secretariat to take note of the comments made by Argentina, Australia, Gabon, Indonesia, and Peru to its proposed revisions in paragraphs 5 and 7 when making its proposal to the Conference of the Parties.

General compliance and enforcement

17. Revisions to the Guidelines for the preparation and submission of CITES annual reports and to the Guidelines for the preparation and submission of the CITES annual illegal trade report SC73 Doc. 17

The Secretary-General introduced document SC73 Doc. 17 that proposed revisions to the *Guidelines for the preparation and submission of CITES annual reports* and to the *Guidelines for the preparation and submission of the CITES annual illegal trade report*. Most of the proposed revisions aimed to incorporate term used in the Appendices into the *Guidelines*. In the document, the Secretariat also proposed some amendments to Resolutions Conf. 4.6 (Rev. CoP18) on *Submission of draft resolutions, draft decisions and other documents for meetings of the Conference of the Parties* and Conf. 11.17 (Rev. CoP18) on *National reports* to ensure that any new term introduced in the Appendices is systematically included in the *Guidelines*. Parties and stakeholders had been able to comment on a first draft of this guidance, through Notification to the Parties No. 2020/067 of 5 November 2020 and the Secretariat outlined in the document how it had incorporated the comments received. The Secretary-General further proposed an additional edit as follows: remove the word ‘elephant’ from the N.B. in the explanation of tusk (raw ivory) in Annex 1 and Annex 2 so that it is also applicable to whole carved tusks from hippopotamuses, walruses and narwhals. The N.B. would now read “N.B. Whole carved tusks should be reported as carving – ivory (see “IVC” above).”

The Secretary-General further noted that the Secretariat had received a letter from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland wishing to put on record their objection to a deletion in the table in both sets of guidelines containing the ISO codes for the names of countries, territories, and special areas of geographical interest. The United Kingdom also indicated that it would inform other Parties of their position via a letter to the Depositary Government.

Belgium, also speaking on behalf of the European Union and its Member States, supported the proposed revisions, including the last correction introduced orally by the Secretariat. Peru proposed new explanations for the following terms in the *Guidelines*: fibre, hair, handicraft product, skin, and baleen. Israel called for CITES to examine the overlap of reporting on illegal trade between the members of the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime and to explore options to build capacity to report on illegal trade.

The Committee approved the revised *Guidelines for the preparation and submission of CITES annual reports* presented in Annex 1 to document SC73 Doc. 17, including the revisions to the Spanish version proposed in paragraph 7 to document SC73 Doc. 17, and the revised *Guidelines for the preparation and submission of CITES annual illegal trade reports* presented in Annex 2 to the same document, with the additional deletion of “elephant” in the explanation section for tusk (raw ivory) as follows: N.B. Whole carved tusks should be reported as carving – ivory (see “IVC” above) in both *Guidelines*.

The Committee further noted the intention of the Secretariat to propose to the Conference of the Parties revisions to Resolution Conf. 4.6 (Rev. CoP18) on *Submission of draft resolutions and other documents for meetings of the Conference of the Parties* and Resolution Conf. 11.17 (Rev. CoP18) on *National reports* as outlined in paragraphs 10 and 11 of the document.

The Committee invited the Secretariat to take note of Peru’s suggestions and to consider if further revisions of the *Guidelines* are needed.

Regulation of trade

18. Electronic systems and information technologies: Report of the working group SC73 Doc. 18

Switzerland, as Chair of the intersessional working group on electronic systems and information technologies, updated the Committee on the activities of the working group, specifically on a Task Force on CITES Electronic Permit Information eXchange (EPIX) for Parties from the regions of the Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), an international workshop on modern customs procedures for improved control of trade in CITES-listed species that took place from 7 to 9 December 2020, the review of the EPIX guidelines, the guidance on the electronic signatures on CITES permits and certificates (see Annex 1) and the revision of Resolution Conf. 12.3 (Rev. CoP18) on *Permits and certificates* (see Annex 2). The working group has not fully completed its mandate and may submit to the Standing Committee at its next meeting additional recommendations, as well as set of draft decisions to be considered for adoption by the Conference of the Parties at its 19th meeting (CoP19).

Australia, Congo, Costa Rica, the European Union, and Indonesia supported the proposed amendment to Resolution Conf. 12.3 (Rev. CoP18) on *Permits and certificates* in Annex 2 to the document. The United States of America supported noting the document and drew the Committee's attention to the proposed changes to box 4 of the model permit, noting that the model permit was also part of Appendix IV of the Convention. Several working group members read out additional text they had to propose and noted that they would continue to engage within the working group.

New Zealand, echoed by the European Union, stated that, while the EPIX guidelines were helpful, it would have been more useful to go beyond bilateral point-to-point connections and to look at different architectures in electronic systems.

Congo and Indonesia called for more capacity-building for Parties in implementing e-permitting, while the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Singapore and Thailand provided updates on their work on electronic permitting.

The Committee noted document SC73 Doc. 18 and further noted that the *Guidance on electronic signatures on CITES permits and certificates* in Annex 1 was a living document.

The Committee agreed to propose the draft amendments to Resolution Conf. 12.3 (Rev. CoP18) on *Permits and certificates* contained in Annex 2 to the document for the consideration of the Conference of the Parties at its 19th meeting, with a change to paragraph 3 q) to read as follows "or in case of electronic permits and certificates the names of the empowered persons or and methodologies used to authenticate them" and with the exception of paragraph 6, which was referred back to the working group for further consideration.

19. Purpose codes on CITES permits and certificates:
Report of the working group..... SC73 Doc. 19

Australia, as Chair of the intersessional working group on purpose-of-transaction on CITES permits and certificates, updated the Committee on the activities of the working group, specifically on the draft definitions of purpose-of-transaction codes outlined in Resolution Conf. 12.3 (Rev. CoP18) on *Permits and certificates* at paragraph 3. g). The working group focused its work on codes Z (zoo), P (personal), T (commercial), M (medical), E (educational), N (reintroduction or introduction to the wild) and L (law enforcement / judicial / forensic) with the draft definitions set out in Annex 1. Arising from this work on definitions, the working group was also considering subsequent amendments to Resolution Conf. 12.3 (Rev. CoP18), as well as the merits of proposing a new resolution to deal with the more substantive matters related to zoos and aquariums.

Parties welcomed the significant progress achieved by the working group so far and Indonesia called for the working group to complete the list of definitions for all purpose codes. Several Parties proposed edits to the draft definitions of purpose codes. Belgium, also speaking on behalf of the European Union and its Member States, proposed to insert "rescue centres" after aquariums in the definition of code "Z", to replace "indigenous range" with "natural and/or historical range" in the definition of code "N" and noted that it was too premature to accept the proposed definition for code "P" since it may be strict and does not allow for commercial use after movement. Gabon, echoed by the Species Survival Network, speaking also on behalf of Animal Advocacy and Protection, Animal Welfare Institute, Born Free Foundation, Environmental Investigation Agency UK and USA, Eurogroup for Animals, Fondation Franz Weber, Four Paws International, Defenders of Wildlife, Humane Society International, Pan African Sanctuary Alliance and Pro Wildlife, proposed to add "including any activity reasonably likely to result in economic use, gain, or benefit" to the definition of purpose code "T". Brazil proposed to add "or if the permit is issued under court order" at the end of the definition of purpose code "L" and to delete "only in accordance with Resolution Conf 10.20" in the definition of purpose code "P".

Peru queried the use of the term "intercambio" in the draft definition for purpose code "T", while Israel proposed a new purpose code for food with the letter "F" in order to regulate trade in wild meat. Thailand drew the attention of the working group to the possibility of including under purpose code "P" the situation when someone is moving their collection of Appendix-I live plants. All expressed their willingness to further engage with the working group.

Canada supported the suggestion of drafting a separate resolution on zoos and suggested that the working group also consider the development of an implementation plan. The Association of Zoos and Aquariums, speaking also on behalf of the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria and the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums, supported the proposed draft definition for "Z" with the addition suggested by Belgium and suggested that a new resolution on zoos was not necessary.

The Committee noted document SC73 Doc. 19 and invited the working group to take into account the comments made by Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Gabon, Indonesia, Peru, and Thailand in its continued work. The Committee further noted the new issues that arose from the discussion at its meeting, namely the possibility of a new purpose code for food and a possible resolution on zoos.

Exemptions and special trade provisions

20. Simplified procedures for permits and certificates:
Report of the Secretariat SC73 Doc. 20

The Secretary-General introduced the draft guidance on the use of the scientific exchange exemption and the simplified procedures to issue permits and certificates, set out in the Annex to document SC73 Doc. 20. The aim of the guidance is to increase awareness of the scientific exchange exemption (SEE) provided in Article VII, paragraph 6, of the Convention and the simplified procedures (SP) established in Resolution Conf. 12.3 (Rev. CoP18) on *Permits and certificates* by Authorities and by possible 'beneficiaries' and provide nonbinding guidance on their use; facilitate a better understanding of the benefits and the risks of using these procedures; and explain the similarities and differences between the two procedures. Parties and stakeholders had been able to comment on a first draft of the guidance and the Secretariat outlined in the document how it had incorporated the comments received.

Belgium, also speaking on behalf of the European Union and its Member States, Canada, Indonesia and Thailand welcomed the document as useful guidance for Parties. Belgium and Canada welcomed the proposal by the Secretariat to develop shorter checklists for different uses of the procedures; Canada encouraged Parties to register OIE official reference laboratories as noted in paragraph 6 of the document and Thailand highlighted the need for scientific exchange of plant specimens.

The League of American Orchestras, speaking on behalf of American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada, American Federation of Violin and Bow Makers, Bundesverband der deutschen Musikinstrumentenhersteller e.V., C.F. Martin & Co., Confederation of European Music Industries (CAFIM), Fender Musical Instruments Corporation, ForestBased Solutions, French Musical Instrument Organisation (CSFI), International Association of Violin and Bow Makers (EILA), International Federation of Musicians (FIM), International Wood Products Association, John Cruz Custom Guitars, League of American Orchestras, Madinter, National Association of Music Merchants, Orchestras Canada, Paul Reed Smith, Pearle Live Performance Europe, and Taylor Guitars, noted that simplified procedures could also help facilitate travel with musical instruments and invited the Secretariat to make this more explicit in the final version of the guidance document.

The Standing Committee endorsed the draft guidance contained in the Annex to document SC73 Doc. 20; and requested the Secretariat to finalize the guidance taking into account the comments made by Belgium, Canada, and Thailand, and to make it available on the website of the Convention.

21. Stocks and stockpiles SC73 Doc. 21

The Chair introduced document SC73 Doc. 21 that presented an overview of existing provisions agreed by the Parties concerning controls on stocks of specimens of CITES-listed species. Those controls focus on the Tibetan antelope (*Pantholops hodgsonii*), the saiga antelope (*Saiga* spp.), the vicuna (*Vicugna vicugna*), Asian big cats (Felidae spp.), rhinoceroses (Rhinocerotidae spp.), pangolins (*Manis* spp.), elephants (Elephantidae spp.), pythons (Boidae spp.), sharks and rays (Elasmobranchii spp.), Malagasy ebonies (*Diospyros* spp.) and Malagasy palisanders and rosewoods (*Dalbergia* spp.). The document further suggested the establishment of an intersessional working group on stocks and stockpiles with the mandate based on paragraph 9 of the document.

Argentina, Chile, China, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Niger, Peru, Poland, also speaking on behalf of the European Union and its Member States, and Zimbabwe supported the establishment of an intersessional working group. China and Poland, also speaking on behalf of the European Union and its Member States, proposed to clearly limit the scope of such a working group, noting that it should focus on preventing stolen stocks from entering illegal trade. Canada first proposed to postpone this work until after the 19th meeting of the Conference of the Parties, and then suggested that the working group's mandate should not look at the management of stockpiles and should stay within the scope of the Convention.

The Committee established an intersessional working group on stocks and stockpiles with a mandate to:

- a) review the existing provisions agreed by Parties concerning controls on stocks of specimens of CITES-listed species provided in paragraph 7 of document SC73 Doc. 21;
- b) identify CITES conservation and enforcement objectives in the management of stocks and stockpiles of specimens;
- c) suggest definitions of “stock” and “stockpile”; and
- d) report to the Standing Committee at its 74th meeting.

Members of the intersessional working group on stocks and stockpiles were agreed as follows: Argentina, Benin, Burkina Faso, Canada, Chile, China, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, India, Israel, Kenya, Namibia, Niger, Peru, Singapore, South Africa, Thailand, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United Republic of Tanzania, the United States of America, Viet Nam, Zimbabwe; the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Union of Conservation of Nature; and Born Free Foundation, Defenders of Wildlife, Environmental Investigation Agency USA, Fauna and Flora International, ForestBased Solutions, Humane Society International, International Association for Wildlife, International Wood Products Association, IWMC-World Conservation Trust, Lewis & Clark – Global Law Alliance for Animals and the Environment, Natural Resources Defense Council, OCEANA Inc., Sea Shepherd Legal, TRAFFIC, Wildlife Conservation Society, World Wide Fund for Nature and Zoological Society of London.

The Committee invited those Parties and observers that were not able to express an interest in joining the working group to reach out to the Chair of the working group.

22. Stocks and stockpiles (elephant ivory): Report of the working group..... SC73 Doc. 22

The document by the European Union, as Chair of the intersessional working group on guidance on ivory stockpiles, presented the outcomes of the activities of the working group, specifically a “Practical guidance for the management of ivory stockpiles, including their disposal” in Annex 1 to document SC73 Doc. 22 and a “Review of Elephant Ivory Destruction Methods” in Annex 2. The guidance lists the most important attributes of an effective system, detailing the goals of such a system whilst providing links to further tools available for Parties to use. Both documents were supported by the members of the working group, with some concerns by two Parties and a group of observers as outlined in paragraph 8 of the document.

The Committee did not have time to discuss this agenda item and invited the working group on Guidance on ivory stockpiles to continue its work and to report back at its next meeting.

There were no interventions.

Species specific matters

23. CITES Big Cats Task Force: Report of the Secretariat SC73 Doc. 23

The document by the Secretariat presented draft terms of reference and a *modus operandi* for the CITES Big Cat Task Force set out in the Annex to document SC73 Doc. 23. The Task Force is expected to generate a better understanding of enforcement priorities relating to illegal trade in specimens of big cats; a better understanding of the tools and techniques to identify big cat specimens in trade; their use for enforcement purposes to address illegal trade; and better knowledge of relevant forensic facilities, research institutions, and developments; and an enhanced exchange of intelligence and other information on illegal trade in big cats. The Task Force is further expected to generate proposals for strengthened collaboration and targeted activities to more effectively enforce the Convention in response to this illegal trade; and strategies and proposed actions providing a strong basis for Parties to take concrete actions to respond to illegal trade in big cat species, to be presented to a future meeting of the Standing Committee. The *modus operandi* explains the Task Force will prioritize Parties and big cat species and how the membership of the Task Force will be established.

The Committee did not have time to discuss this agenda item and requested the Secretariat to publish the draft terms of reference and *modus operandi* for the CITES Big Cat Task Force in a Notification to the Parties. The Committee invited Parties and observers to send comments to the Secretariat and requested the

Secretariat to revise the draft terms of reference and *modus operandi* based on those comments and to report back to the Standing Committee.

There were no interventions.

24. Tortoises and freshwater turtles (Testudines spp.)

24.1 Report of the Secretariat..... SC73 Doc. 24.1

and

24.2 Implementation of Resolution Conf. 11.9 (Rev. CoP18) on Conservation of and trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles in Madagascar: Report of Madagascar SC73 Doc. 24.2

The Secretary-General introduced document SC73 Doc. 24.1 and summarized the report submitted by Madagascar (see document SC73 Doc. 24.1) on its implementation of Resolution Conf. 11.9 (Rev. CoP18) on *Conservation of and trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles* and the measures it has taken to combat illegal trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles occurring in Madagascar. The Secretary-General presented the Secretariat's observations and recommendations on the report, noting some positive work and developments, but also areas for improvement and the need for continued and further strengthened efforts.

Madagascar introduced document SC73 Doc. 24.2 on its implementation of Resolution Conf. 11.9 (Rev. CoP18). They provided information on capacity-building to combat illegal trade; on prevention, detection, and intervention efforts; on identification materials; on awareness raising efforts and on seizures. Madagascar highlighted the Global Action Plan for the conservation of endemic turtles of Madagascar, and the Regional strategy to combat trafficking in radiated tortoises (*Astrochelys radiata*) in the Atsimo-Andrefana region of Madagascar which was included as an Annex to the document. Madagascar stated that it had a zero-tolerance policy against illegal trade and corruption since January 2020 and that the government was working with local communities to increase seizures and arrest criminals. They highlighted that international demand was the main source of illegal trade and therefore called on the CITES community to help them by curbing international demand.

The United States of America supported the Secretariat's recommendations in document SC73 Doc. 24.1. Noting that Madagascar's report was a year out of date, they proposed to the Committee that Madagascar and the Secretariat prepare an updated report to the 74th meeting of the Committee with updates on prosecution and outcomes, on the implementation of the Dina, on Madagascar's cooperation with TRAFFIC and on the implementation of the GEF-7 projects. Humane Society International, speaking on behalf of Animal Welfare Institute, Born Free Foundation, Eurogroup for Animals, Fondation Franz Weber, Japan Wildlife Conservation Society, Pan African Sanctuary Alliance, Pro Wildlife, Species Survival Network, and the World Wide Fund for Nature, agreed with the United States and urged Madagascar to establish a zero export quota for wild-caught *Erymnochelys madagascariensis*.

Canada noted that the COVID-19 pandemic had had an impact on Madagascar's reporting capacities and wished to hear from Madagascar which issues they would be able to report on at the next Committee meeting. Madagascar recalled that it had banned trade in tortoises since 2020 and stated that it could report on seizures, arrests and prosecutions, including on the outcomes of the prosecutions, and on its work with different partners.

The Committee noted document SC73 Doc. 24.2 and the progress reported by Madagascar.

a) The Committee encouraged Madagascar to:

- i) scale up efforts to gather information and intelligence concerning the criminal networks operating within and from the country, to facilitate investigations that will go beyond frontline offenders such as the local poachers who are often at the lowest end of the illegal trade chain, targeting those individuals managing and organizing the illegal activities;
- ii) actively pursue the continued implementation of the different aspects of Resolution Conf. 11.9 (Rev. CoP18) on *Conservation of and trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles*, including

through the active implementation of its *Regional strategy to combat trafficking in radiated tortoises (Astrochelys radiata) in the Atsimo-Andrefana region (Stratégie régionale de lutte contre le trafic de tortues radiées « Astrochelys radiata » dans la région Atsimo Andrefana – in French only)*; and

- iii) revise and update its existing endemic tortoise and freshwater turtle species identification materials and posters to inform the general public about these species and the importance of their conservation and protection, as well as to raise awareness amongst relevant national law enforcement agencies about the way these species are affected by wildlife crime and the importance of the fight against trafficking in these species;
- b) The Committee encouraged Parties, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations implementing programmes in Madagascar or planning to do so, to take into consideration in their work programmes and activities, as appropriate and applicable, recommendations a) i) to iii) above, the provisions of Resolution Conf. 11.9 (Rev. CoP18) on *Conservation of and trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles*, and the *Regional strategy to combat trafficking in radiated tortoises (Astrochelys radiata) in the Atsimo-Andrefana region (Stratégie régionale de lutte contre le trafic de tortues radiées « Astrochelys radiata » dans la région Atsimo Andrefana – in French only)*; and
- c) The Committee requested the Secretariat to continue to monitor illegal trade in tortoise and freshwater turtle species as it affects Madagascar, and the measures being implemented to address it, and to report back at its next meeting.
- d) The Committee invited Madagascar to provide an update on seizures, arrests and prosecutions, including on the outcomes of the prosecutions, and on its work with different partners, at its next meeting.

Maintenance of the Appendices

25. Annotations: Report of the working group SC73 Doc. 25

The Committee did not have time to discuss this agenda item and noted document SC73 Doc. 25.

There were no interventions.

26. Guidance for the publication of the Appendices: Report of the Secretariat SC73 Doc. 26 (Rev. 1)

The Committee did not have time to discuss this agenda item and agreed to defer consideration of this document to its next meeting.

There were no interventions.

Concluding items

27. Any other business *No document*

The Committee noted the request by Israel to draw the attention of Parties, via the issue of a Notification to the Parties, to the Guidelines “Reducing public health risks associated with the sale of live wild animals of mammalian species in traditional food markets” issued by the World Health Organization, the World Organization for Animal Health and the United Nations Environment Programme.

28. Future Standing Committee meetings and activities SC73 Doc. 28

The Secretary-General introduced document SC73 Doc. 28 and presented a risk analysis for future meetings of the Standing Committee and three different scenarios for the 74th meeting of the Standing Committee: 1) hold a face-to-face meeting at the Centre International de Conférences (CICG), Geneva, Switzerland, in September 2021; 2) invite a Party to host SC74 or seek alternative facilities in Switzerland in late 2021 or early 2022; or 3) hold SC74 in an online format in early 2022.

France announced that it had offered to host the meetings of the Animals and Plants Committees and that it was now ready to look into hosting the 74th meeting of the Standing Committee, noting that, depending on the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic, the size of delegations might have to be limited in order to enforce social distancing measures.

The Bahamas, Canada, China, Congo, Gabon, Israel, Kenya, Morocco, Senegal, and Sudan supported option 2 as the best option for increased participation and transparency and stated that option 3 could be a backup with an online meeting later in 2022. If SC74 were to be held online, Israel and Kenya suggested the organization of the meeting over a longer time period and maybe aligned with different time zones. Kenya and Poland, also speaking on behalf of the European Union and its Member States, stated that any online meeting of the Standing Committee would need to provide for in-session working groups. Canada highlighted the need to prioritize the work of the Standing Committee, especially if the Committee were to meet online, with low priority and sensitive issues to be deferred.

Niger and Peru supported option 3 based on the current evolution of the pandemic, with Niger noting that those countries that did not have access to COVID-19 vaccines would be unable to attend face-to-face meetings in the near future. New Zealand noted that the choice of the best format and timing depended on the timing of the 19th meeting of the Conference of the Parties. Noting that January corresponded to the summer holiday season for the southern hemisphere, New Zealand opted for an online meeting in late 2021.

Poland, also speaking on behalf of the European Union and its Member States, drew the Committee's attention to the upcoming online meetings of the Animals and Plants Committees and noted that the choice between option 2 and 3 would be informed by the scientific committees' experience of online meetings.

The Species Survival Network, speaking also on behalf of Animal Advocacy and Protection, Animal Welfare Institute, Born Free Foundation, Center for Biological Diversity, Center for International Environmental Law, David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation, Defenders of Wildlife, Environmental Investigation Agency UK and USA, Eurogroup for Animals, Fondation Franz Weber, Four Paws International, Humane Society International, Pan African Sanctuary Alliance, Pro Wildlife, and Sea Shepherd Legal, recognized the strong record of transparency and participation upheld and championed by CITES bodies and encouraged the Committee to maintain these standards in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic by guaranteeing the ability of observers to engage in CITES' work.

The Committee welcomed the offer by France to consider hosting its 74th meeting. The Committee requested the Secretariat to pursue scenario 2 of a face-to-face meeting under the circumstances where it is possible that all participants are able to attend. Should a face-to-face meeting not be possible, the Committee also requested the Secretariat to develop plans for an online meeting with adjusted modalities, including an extended meeting period, the early submission of documents for comments and the possibility of establishing in-session working groups.

29. Closing remarks *No document*

The Chair and the Secretary-General thanked all participants for their cooperation and thanked the Secretariat, the interpreters, and the online operators for their work. The Chair closed the meeting.