

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



Seventy-fourth meeting of the Standing Committee  
Lyon (France), 7 - 11 March 2022

Interpretation and implementation matters

Regulation of trade

SIMPLIFIED PROCEDURES FOR PERMITS AND CERTIFICATES

1. This document has been submitted by Australia.\* The document has been developed through consultation with the CITES Secretariat, the Chair of the working group on the role of CITES in reducing the risk of future zoonotic disease emergence associated with international wildlife trade (Canada) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE).

Background

2. At its 17th meeting (Johannesburg, 2016), the Conference of the Parties adopted a number of Decisions related to issuance of permits and certificates, as follows:

**17.173 Directed to the Secretariat**

*The Secretariat shall issue a Notification to the Parties requesting Parties to report on their implementation of, and experiences with the simplified procedures to issue permits and certificates to facilitate and expedite trade that will have a negligible impact, or none, on the conservation of the species concerned, as agreed under Section XII of Resolution Conf. 12.3 (Rev. CoP17) on Permits and certificates, and submit a compilation of this information and its recommendations for consideration by the Standing Committee prior to the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.*

**Directed to the Standing Committee**

**17.174** *The Standing Committee shall consider the report and recommendations from the Secretariat provided in accordance with Decision 17.173 and make recommendations for consideration by the Parties, if deemed necessary.*

**17.85** *The Standing Committee shall:*

- a) *examine mechanisms to facilitate the efficient international movement of samples for forensic or enforcement purposes, for consideration by the 18th Conference of the Parties; and*

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\* *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.*

- b) *with support of the Secretariat, explore options to strengthen cooperation and collaboration between CITES and the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the United Nations Convention against Corruption, including through their respective programmes of work and Secretariats, and report at the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.*
3. At its 69th meeting (Geneva, November 2017) the Standing Committee established a working group on simplified procedures for permits and certificates with a mandate to:
- a) *review the Secretariat's compilation of responses to Notification 2017/071 inviting Parties and stakeholders to report on their implementation of, and experience with, simplified procedures to issue permits and certificates to facilitate and expedite trade that will have a negligible impact, or none, on the conservation of the species concerned;*
  - b) *consider the scientific exchange provision outlined under Article VII, paragraph 6 of the Convention and further guidance on implementing that provision outlined in Resolution Conf. 11.15 (Rev. CoP12) on Non-commercial loan, donation or exchange of museum and herbarium specimens;*
  - c) *take into account relevant work of the electronic systems and information technology working group;*
  - d) *consider whether the provisions of Section XII of Resolution Conf. 12.3 (Rev. CoP17) on Permits and certificates are adequate to facilitate the international movement of:*
    - i) *samples of CITES-listed species (or samples suspected to contain CITES-listed species) for forensic or enforcement purposes, as requested of the Standing Committee in Decision 17.85 and canvassed in SC69 Inf. Doc. 18;*
    - ii) *the introduction from the sea of biological samples of CITES-listed species; and*
    - iii) *the urgent international movement of biological samples of CITES-listed species, including for diagnostic and other health and disease related purposes.*
  - e) *if required, make proposals for amendment to Resolution Conf. 12.3 (Rev. CoP17) on Permits and certificates, and Resolution Conf. 11.15 (Rev. CoP12) on Non-commercial loan, donation, or exchange of museum and herbarium specimens; and*
  - f) *present its report and recommendations to the 70th meeting of the Standing Committee for consideration.*
4. Australia chaired this working group. Following the efforts of the working group, the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (Geneva, 2019) adopted amendments to Resolution Conf. 11.15 (Rev. CoP18) on *Non-commercial loan, donation or exchange of museum, herbarium, diagnostic and forensic research specimens* and Resolution Conf. 12.3 (Rev. CoP18) on *Permits and certificates*.
5. The amendments adopted at the 18th meeting for the Conference of the Parties (Geneva, 2019) to Resolution Conf. 11.15 (Rev. CoP18) on *Non-commercial loan, donation or exchange of museum, herbarium, diagnostic and forensic research specimens* and Resolution Conf. 12.3 (Rev. CoP18) on *Permits and certificates* addressed a number of concerns raised by persons, bodies and organizations involved in the movement of CITES samples for the urgent international movement of CITES biological samples for diagnostic and other health/disease related purposes. In particular, they enabled Parties to allow for the expedited movement of these samples and expanded the types of biological specimens that are eligible for transport under simplified permitting procedures, which addressed many of the concerns associated with the delay in receiving permits for these items. The broadened application of Resolution Conf. 11.15 (Rev. CoP18) was intended to allow for a broader range of scientific research to be conducted, further forensic research capabilities and allow for more rapid research response to wildlife disease outbreaks.

## Current issue

6. On 12 October 2021, the Director General of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), Dr. Monique Eloit, wrote to the Chair of the Standing Committee's working group on the role of CITES in reducing the risk of future zoonotic disease emergence associated with international wildlife trade (Canada) to raise an issue relating to the issuance of permits and certificates associated with the exchange of wildlife health diagnostic samples.
7. In its letter, the OIE proposed further exploring simplified CITES requirements for the transport of wildlife diagnostic specimens (most of the times collected and held by veterinarians or wildlife rangers in the field) with the aim to further facilitating the ability to undertake rapid wildlife health diagnostics. In particular, the OIE noted that when there is a wildlife health event, the current requirements to seek CITES export permits for wildlife diagnostic specimens (and in some cases import permits) frequently extends the time to obtain a diagnosis and thus may compromise any early measures that could be taken to protect the health of these and other species. The OIE also observed that there has been a decrease in international collaboration with many scientists and laboratories no longer being willing to expend the time and effort required to obtain CITES permits since the work is conducted on a voluntary or non-profit basis.
8. As previous Chair of the working group on simplified procedures for permits and certificates, the Secretariat approached Australia to discuss presenting this issue to the Standing Committee for consideration.
9. In consultation with the Secretariat and the Chair of the Standing Committee's working group on the role of CITES in reducing the risk of future zoonotic disease emergence associated with international wildlife trade (Canada), Australia agreed to present the current paper to invite the views of the Standing Committee on the need to further consider this matter.
10. We note that the working group on simplified procedures for permits and certificates presented document CoP18 Doc. 56 to the 18th meeting of the Conference of Parties (Geneva, 2019) which contained the considerations, conclusions and recommendations of the working group, including some relevant commentary on the issue of simplified CITES requirements for transporting wildlife diagnostic specimens. In particular, the working group concluded that 'emergency health/diagnostic samples will only be able to be moved using this exemption if they can be first transferred from a registered scientist or scientific institution in accordance with the exemption provisions. This will not always be possible when responding to emergency disease outbreaks that require the movement of biological samples, as use of the exemption would require both Parties involved in the movement of samples to hold registered scientists or scientific institutions.' The working group further noted that 'the requirement for research samples to be moved through a registered institution is considered to be an impediment by some researchers. However, removing the need for samples to be exchanged, loaned or donated by registered institutions would be in contravention of the Convention and would completely remove CITES oversight of movement of specimens, which could present significant risks to vulnerable species.'
11. Despite the concerns and challenges raised in paragraph 10 above, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to, as far as possible, allow for the rapid movement of wildlife diagnostic samples in the interests of addressing emerging human and wildlife disease risks, we consider that the issue may benefit from further consideration. In particular, we consider that there may be value in involving more members of the wildlife health community with on-ground or practical experience in discussions.

## Recommendations

12. Australia invites the Standing Committee to:
  - a) consider the implementation of Resolution Conf. 11.15 (Rev. CoP18) on *Non-commercial loan, donation or exchange of museum, herbarium, diagnostic and forensic research specimens* and Resolution Conf. 12.3 (Rev. CoP18) on *Permits and certificates* following the Resolution amendments adopted at CoP18 in facilitating the movement of diagnostic specimens;
  - b) consider whether the issues raised in this document should be presented to the 19th meeting of the Conference of the Parties for discussion;
  - c) dependent on the views expressed under paragraph b) above, provide comment on the below draft decision which could be proposed for discussion at the 19th meeting of the Conference of the Parties:

**19.XX *Directed to the Standing Committee***

The Standing Committee shall consider the need for the development of further appropriate mechanisms to facilitate the efficient international movement of wildlife samples for diagnostic purposes, for consideration by the 20th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.