

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

IDENTIFICATION MATERIALS:  
REPORT OF THE ANIMALS AND PLANTS COMMITTEES  
AND OF THE SECRETARIAT

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat in consultation with the Animals and Plants Committees.

Background

2. At its 18th meeting (CoP18, Geneva, 2019), the Conference of the Parties adopted Decisions 18.135 to 18.139 on *Identification materials* as follows:

***Directed to the Secretariat***

**18.135** *The Secretariat shall:*

- a) *continue collecting information on identification materials and share it through the CITES Website and the CITES Virtual College; and*
- b) *subject to the availability of external funding, and with input from the joint working group called for under Decision 18.137, revise and redesign the CITES Virtual College in order to make the identification materials available in a more user-friendly manner.*

**18.136** *The Secretariat shall undertake a review of Resolution Conf. 11.19 (Rev. CoP16) on Identification Manual. It shall:*

- a) *collect and compile information on the current state of species identification activities and needs, and assess their relevance for the review of Resolution Conf. 11.19 (Rev. CoP16);*
- b) *consider whether Resolution Conf. 11.19 (Rev. CoP16) would best be revised or replaced with a new resolution on Identification of specimens of CITES-listed species, and prepare a draft text of the revised or new resolution;*
- c) *propose a revised resolution in consultation with the Animals and Plants Committees and the Standing Committee; and*
- d) *report on the progress and make recommendations at the meetings of the Animals and Plants Committees, and the meeting of the Standing Committee, as appropriate.*

### ***Directed to the Animals and Plants Committees***

**18.137** *The Animals and Plants Committees shall establish a joint working group on identification materials that are used by Parties to identify CITES-listed species and provide inputs to the Secretariat based on the outcomes of the following working group tasks, in consultation with the Secretariat:*

- a) review selected identification materials, including material compiled as per Decision 18.136 paragraph a), and assess the need for their revision and improvement, taking into account the materials that are being developed or have already been developed by Parties and materials requested in Decisions or Resolutions;*
- b) review Resolution Conf. 11.19 (Rev. CoP16) on Identification Manual, taking into account the review outlined in Decision 18.137 paragraphs a) and c), to promote accuracy and availability of identification materials;*
- c) consider ways to improve the accuracy and availability of identification materials on CITES-listed species; and*
- d) report on progress with these activities at the next meetings of the Animals and Plants Committees.*

### ***Directed to the Standing Committee***

**18.138** *The Standing Committee shall:*

- a) provide inputs on the draft resolution text prepared by the Secretariat and revised by the Animals and Plants Committees, to ensure that the needs for identification materials expressed by Parties and authorities responsible for wildlife law enforcement are taken into account; and*
- b) submit the revised draft resolution to the Conference of the Parties at its 19th meeting.*

### ***Directed to Parties***

**18.139** *Parties are encouraged to support the efforts of the working group on identification materials by providing to the Secretariat information on available identification and guidance materials that are used by Parties, and particularly by enforcement and inspection officers, to facilitate implementation of the Convention.*

### **Progress to date: towards a new resolution on species identification**

- 3. To implement Decision 18.137, the Animals and Plants Committees established a joint working group on identification materials in late 2020 through an online process. The membership, the revised terms of reference, and the detailed activities undertaken by the working group can be found in the document [AC31 Doc. 15/PC25 Doc. 18, Addendum](#).
- 4. The working group and the Secretariat worked in close coordination to review Resolution Conf. 11.19 (Rev. CoP16) on *Identification Manual* and agreed that a new resolution to replace Resolution Conf. 11.19 (Rev. CoP16) was desirable. The working group and the Secretariat prepared the text of a new draft resolution on *Materials for the identification of specimens of CITES-listed species*.
- 5. The proposed draft resolution was submitted to the Animals and Plants Committees at the joint sessions of the 31st meeting of the Animals Committee and the 25th meeting of the Plants Committee (online, June 2021), where it was further revised. The joint session agreed that the draft resolution should be submitted to the Standing Committee at its 74th meeting for onward submission to the Conference of the Parties at its 19th meeting. The Committees also prepared draft decisions on identification materials for consideration by the Standing Committee and submission to the Conference of the Parties at its 19th meeting. The text of the draft resolution and the draft decisions as agreed by the Animals and Plants Committees are set out in document [AC31/PC25 Com. 2 \(Rev. by Sec.\)](#)

6. The Committees further agreed, if necessary, to mandate their Chairs, with the assistance of the in-session working group members, to continue to draft the proposed new resolution on identification materials, and submit it to the Standing Committee for inputs and onward submission to the Conference of the Parties at its 19th meeting.
7. In consultation with the Chairs of the two Committees, the Secretariat made three amendments to the draft text of the new resolution in order to further improve and clarify the text as follows:
  - a) the reference to paragraph C. 9 of Annex 6 to Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP17) on *Criteria for amendment of Appendices I and II* in the fourth preambular paragraph has been amended to align closer with the text of the Resolution;
  - b) the word “specimens” has been inserted in paragraph 2 a) to be consistent with the usage elsewhere in the text of the draft resolution; and
  - c) the text of paragraph 4 a) has been amended to clarify that Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP17) on *Criteria for amendment of Appendices I and II* only applies to proposals to amend Appendices I and II and not Appendix III.
8. The text of the draft Resolution so amended is set out in Annex 1 to the present document.
9. The draft decisions prepared by the joint sessions of the Animals and Plants Committees are set out in Annex 2 to the present document. The Secretariat suggests deleting the reference to Decision 18.136 in draft decision 19.AA, paragraph a) ii) as this is not necessary. The Secretariat would further recommend the deletion of all text that refers to the draft resolution on the assumption that the draft resolution will be adopted by the Conference of the Parties. The Secretariat further notes that draft Decision 19.AA seems to repeat in part and in different terms the obligations of the Animals and Plants Committees set out in the proposed new resolution. It furthermore directs the two Committees to establish a joint working group; the Secretariat considers that it should be for the Committees themselves to determine how they discharge obligations like the ones set out in the Resolution. Draft decision 19.BB seems to repeat what is in paragraph 2 of the proposed resolution and draft decision 19DD seems to repeat paragraph 4 of the draft resolution. Overall, it would appear that, if the proposed new resolution is submitted by the Standing Committee to the Conference of the Parties for adoption, there would be no need to also submit the draft decisions to the Conference of the Parties.

Progress to date: other activities of the Secretariat

10. Since CoP18, the Secretariat has undertaken or initiated the following activities pursuant to Decisions 18.135 and as part of its continued efforts to collect identification materials on CITES-listed species and improve their accuracy and availability through the CITES website and the CITES Virtual College:
  - a) The Secretariat, in cooperation with the United Nations Environment Programme-World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC), has made available a scan of the CITES Identification Manual on the CITES website and by searching on the [CITES Checklist](#) and [Species+](#). The Secretariat is considering adding further functionalities.
  - b) The Secretariat, in cooperation with World Wildlife Fund – United States of America (WWF-US), TRAFFIC and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (US-FWS) published the 4th edition of the *Identification guide for ivory and ivory substitutes* and is available as a printed booklet and electronic version on the [CITES website](#) in English, French and Spanish.
  - c) The Secretariat is currently developing an updated CITES Virtual College, which includes a searchable database of identification materials. The updated Virtual College is expected to be launched in early 2022.

## Recommendations

11. The Secretariat invites the Standing Committee to:

- a) take note of the present document and the progress made in implementation of Decisions 18.135 to 18.137;
- b) review the draft resolution contained in Annex 1 to this document and submit it to the Conference of the Parties at its 19th meeting;
- c) consider whether the draft decisions contained in Annex 2 to the present document should be submitted to the Conference of the Parties considering the comments by the Secretariat in paragraph 9 above and, as appropriate, review and submit them to the Conference of the Parties at its 19th meeting; and
- d) invite the Conference of the Parties to agree that Decisions 18.135 to 18.139 have been implemented and can be deleted.

DRAFT RESOLUTION ON IDENTIFICATION OF SPECIMENTS  
OF CITES-LISTED SPECIES

## Conf. 19.X

### Materials for the identification of specimens of CITES-listed species

---

RECALLING that the definition of “specimen” in Article I, paragraph (b) includes any animals or plants, whether alive or dead, and includes readily recognizable parts and derivatives thereof unless otherwise annotated in the Appendices;

RECALLING that Article II, paragraph, 4 states that the Parties shall not allow trade in specimens of species included in Appendices I, II, and III except in accordance with the provisions of the Convention;

RECALLING that the provisions of Article XII, paragraph 2 (f), require the Secretariat to publish periodically and distribute to the Parties current editions of Appendices I, II and III together with any information which will facilitate identification of specimens of species included in those Appendices;

RECALLING that paragraph C. 9. “Information on similar species” in Annex 6 to Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP17) on *Criteria for amendment of Appendices I and II* resolves that Parties provide details on how species proposed for listing are to be distinguished from similar species;

RECALLING the interpretation of the term “readily recognizable part or derivative” in Resolution Conf. 9.6 (Rev. CoP16) on *Trade in readily recognizable parts and derivatives*;

NOTING that accurate identification of animal and plant specimens is important to determine whether and which provisions of the Convention apply to their international trade, including, where appropriate, identification that a species belongs to a higher order (e.g., genus or family) listing, as well as the identification of commodities in trade;

NOTING that CITES authorities and enforcement officials need to be able to recognize specimens of CITES-listed species in international trade in a timely, practical, accurate and effective manner;

NOTING that identification methods continue to advance and diversify;

RECOGNIZING that new electronic formats for providing identification materials are rapidly evolving, and can continue to assist CITES authorities and enforcement officials to identify specimens in international trade;

NOTING that CITES authorities and enforcement officials will not always have access to real-time electronic databases and may have to rely on printed or printable materials;

RECOGNIZING the usefulness of developing or making available identification materials in the working languages of the Convention;

AWARE that information facilitating the identification of animal and plant specimens has been and may continue to be developed as a result of various CITES processes, including through amendments to the Appendices, Resolutions and Decisions, and recommendations and agenda item discussions of the Conference of the Parties and of the Committees; and

RECALLING that the CITES Identification Manual was begun in 1977 and continued through Resolution Conf. 11.19 (Rev. CoP16) on *Identification Manual*, but has become obsolete in 2009 when the Identification Manual was no longer updated due to the need for more dynamic and multi-faceted approaches in the future;

## THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION

1. ENCOURAGES the development of identification materials that include key elements particularly useful to identifying species and specimens thereof in trade, as presented in the Annex to the present Resolution;
2. DIRECTS the Secretariat to:
  - a) regularly review and analyse the materials produced by or for Parties to assist in identification of specimens of CITES-listed species and gaps in existing identification materials relative to the needs expressed by the Parties, and provide a summary of this to the Animals and Plants Committees;
  - b) publish and maintain in a centralized location on the CITES website access to identification materials in a timely and practical manner and in a format that is readily available for CITES authorities and enforcement officials to use, and make updates as new electronic formats evolve;
  - c) where available and practical to do so, continue to link identification materials to existing electronic lists of species, or higher order groupings of species, in the CITES Appendices;
  - d) upon request from a Party and subject to the availability of financial and human resources, provide advice in coordination with the Chair of the Animals or Plants Committee on the identification of species or particular specimens, or seek advice from experts on the taxa concerned and, where relevant, share this information through the CITES website;
  - e) assist Parties in developing and promulgating national or regional identification materials, enlisting input from the appropriate technical committees or specialist organizations when possible;
  - f) keep the Standing, Animals and Plants Committees informed of progress made and needs identified in the development and maintenance of identification materials, as appropriate; and
  - g) report progress and developments to the Conference of the Parties, as appropriate;
3. REQUESTS the Animals and Plants Committees to:
  - a) identify where materials are lacking or inaccurate, or where improvements might be made on existing identification materials, taking into consideration information on gaps and needs identified by Parties and the Secretariat, and make recommendations when appropriate to prioritize development of new or updated materials;
  - b) provide input and recommendations to Parties and the Secretariat concerning the development of new or updated identification materials, or where draft materials are submitted for input; and
  - c) identify and suggest to the Secretariat improvements to the access of CITES identification materials;
4. RECOMMENDS that Parties:
  - a) provide identification information to the extent possible in the proposals for amendment of the Appendices, including information outlined in the Annex to this Resolution, and in the case of proposals to amend Appendix I or II, in paragraphs C. 1. "Taxonomy", 3. "Species characteristics" and 9. "Information on similar species" in Annex 6 to Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP17) on *Criteria for amendment of Appendices I and II*;
  - b) continue to develop and share national, regional, or taxon-based guides to the identification of specimens of CITES-listed species, especially for those specimens that are commonly traded and/or found in their country or region, and when practicable include in these identification materials for commonly traded species that are not listed on the CITES Appendices to assist in identifying and differentiating between listed and unlisted species;
  - c) coordinate with other Parties in the development of identification materials, as appropriate;
  - d) develop or make available identification materials in the working languages of the Convention, as well as other languages used by Parties where appropriate;

- e) develop and promote the use of rapid, accurate and inexpensive techniques to identify species in trade, especially for identifying specimens that are traded in a highly processed or modified form, or where derivatives of multiple species are combined, which may include molecular or isotope techniques, digitized field guides, apps, or other tools being developed for identification;
  - f) raise awareness of the availability of identification materials and techniques that are used by CITES authorities and enforcement and inspection officers to facilitate the implementation of the Convention, through training programmes for customs and border officials;
  - g) inform the Animals or Plants Committee of any difficulties experienced in identifying particular taxonomic groups, species or specimens, where improved identification guidance would be beneficial, for consideration and any appropriate recommendation under paragraph 3; and
  - h) consider submitting draft identification material under development to the Animals or Plants Committee to review and provide input, as appropriate.
5. INVITES any Party having submitted a proposal for an amendment of Appendix I or II in accordance with Article XV, or having submitted a species for inclusion in Appendix III in accordance with Article XVI, that results in the inclusion of a new species or in new annotations in the Appendices, to:
- a) develop identification materials as expeditiously as possible, and where possible before such amendments become effective; and
  - b) provide the Secretariat with identification materials to be published on the CITES website and otherwise shared with CITES Parties;
6. ENCOURAGES Parties and organizations to provide funds to assist in the production and publication of identification materials; and
7. REPEALS Resolution Conf. 11.19 (Rev. CoP16) on *Identification Manual*.

## ANNEX TO THE RESOLUTION

To support implementation and enforcement for CITES-listed species, the following key information should be considered when developing CITES identification materials to provide information specific to the identification of CITES-listed species and commodities in trade.

The development of CITES identification materials should be guided by the need to recognize both *species* and *specimens* thereof and provide information of sufficient quality and detail, to aid enforcement authorities to distinguish between CITES and non-CITES-listed species and commodities.

*Main elements:* The following information might be considered fundamental to all CITES identification materials:

- Order / Family / Genus / Species
- Synonyms
- Vernacular Names (multi languages, as available)
- Description - Identifying features may include morphological, anatomical, physiological, behavioural, or molecular information
- Images – Consider including line drawings or diagnostic images; colour photos of specimens and commodities in trade; finished products
- Geographic range
- Distribution by country
- Protection [Appendix I, II, or III]
- Uses and known trading patterns
- Parts and derivatives in trade (description)
- Verifiable methods for distinguishing wild from non-wild specimens
- Similar species or commodities

*Additional information pertinent to specific groups of traded specimens, such as:*

- Pharmaceutical names, characteristics of the parts and derivatives in trade (odour, taste, other characteristics) for species of plants or animals traded for medicinal purposes
- As appropriate, available information on conversion metrics

*References:*

- Author, affiliation, date



## DRAFT DECISIONS ON IDENTIFICATION MATERIALS

### **19.AA *Directed to the Animals and Plants Committees***

The Animals and Plants Committees shall:

- a) establish a joint working group on identification materials and undertake the following working group tasks, in consultation with the Secretariat:
  - i) ~~continue to draft the proposed new resolution on identification materials if necessary; [to be deleted if the Conference of the Parties adopts the resolution]~~
  - ii) review selected identification materials, ~~including material compiled as per Decision 18.136 paragraph a)~~, and assess the need for their revision and improvement, taking into account the materials that are being developed or have already been developed by Parties and materials requested in Decisions or Resolutions;
  - iii) consider ways to improve the accuracy and availability of identification materials on CITES-listed species; and
  - iv) report on the progress with these activities at the meeting(s) of the Animals and Plants Committees; and
- b) ~~submit the proposed new resolution on identification materials to the Standing Committee for inputs and onward submission to the Conference of the Parties. [to be deleted if the Conference of the Parties adopts the resolution]~~

### **19.BB *Directed to the Secretariat***

The Secretariat shall:

- a) continue collecting information on identification materials and share it through the CITES Website and the CITES Virtual College;
- b) ~~provide inputs to the proposed new resolution on identification materials drafted by the joint working group on identification materials called for in Decision 19.AA [to be deleted if the Conference of the Parties adopts the resolution]; and~~
- c) report on the progress and make recommendations to the Conference of the Parties, as appropriate.

### **~~Directed to the Standing Committee~~**

~~[to be deleted if the Conference of the Parties adopts the resolution]~~

### **~~19.CC The Standing Committee shall:~~**

- a) ~~provide inputs on the draft resolution text prepared by the Animals and Plants Committees to ensure that the needs for identification materials expressed by Parties and authorities responsible for wildlife law enforcement are taken into account; and~~
- b) ~~submit the revised draft resolution to the Conference of the Parties at its 19th meeting.~~

**19.DD *Directed to Parties***

Parties are encouraged to support the efforts of the working group on identification materials by providing to the Secretariat information on available identification and guidance materials that are used by Parties, and particularly by enforcement and inspection officers, to facilitate implementation of the Convention.