

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



Informal briefing with the Secretariat to discuss the date and venue of CITES CoP20  
12.00-13.00 (Geneva time), 26 June 2024

AIDE-MEMOIRE

**1. Welcome by the SC Chair and Secretary-General.**

The Chair of the Standing Committee (SC Chair – United States of America), Rosemarie Gnam, and the Secretary-General, Ivonne Higuero, welcomed Members and alternate Members of the Standing Committee to the informal briefing. The Chair explained that the purpose of the informal briefing was to provide information on the latest developments regarding the 20th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP20); the Secretary-General mentioned that the Secretariat had been working with the Finance and Budget Sub-Committee on identifying ways to finance the hosting of the CoP in Geneva and with the procurement services to initiate the various procurement processes if the meeting were to be held in Geneva.

**2. Offer to host CoP20 from the Government of Uzbekistan.**

The Chair announced that Uzbekistan had submitted a formal offer to host CoP20 in Uzbekistan to the Secretariat and invited the representative of Uzbekistan to join the meeting.

**3. Presentation of the offer by representatives of the Government of Uzbekistan.**

Mr. Jakhongir Talipov, Head of Department, International Cooperation and Grants, at the Ministry for Ecology, Environmental Protection and Climate Change of the Republic of Uzbekistan, made a presentation to the SC Members. He highlighted the commitment of Uzbekistan to the global environmental agenda and presented initiatives taken by Uzbekistan for forestry and landscape restoration and for the expansion of protected areas. He expressed the hope that Uzbekistan's offer to host CoP20 would be accepted and presented the facilities of the Silk Road Samarkand touristic complex that provides a spacious congress center. The 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP14) of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and the twenty-first session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC 21) to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) were held in this congress center. This touristic complex outside of Samarkand features eight hotels within walking distance of the congress center and is not far from the new Samarkand International Airport.

The Chair invited questions to the representative from Uzbekistan.

Japan thanked Uzbekistan for its offer and suggested it should be accepted, given the costs of hosting the CoP in Geneva which was an expensive city. She also said that it would be the first time hosting the CoP in Asia since 2013 and this would be beneficial for the region and foster international cooperation.

Belgium, echoed by New Zealand, the United States of America and Senegal, also thanked Uzbekistan for its offer and inquired whether the facilities in Samarkand would be big enough to meet the requirements of a CITES CoP, i.e., the holding of two parallel Committees in rooms large enough to contain the usual numbers of delegates participating in a CITES CoP, noting that Uzbekistan, in its presentation, had mentioned that further facilities were being built.

India and New Zealand further conveyed that Uzbekistan had been an excellent host for CMS CoP14.

Uzbekistan clarified that additional facilities of a total surface of 11,000 m<sup>2</sup> would be completed by the end of 2024 and that they were awaiting a visit from the Secretariat in order to allocate the different facilities.

The Chair thanked the representative of Uzbekistan who then left the briefing.

#### **4. Consideration of offer**

The SC Chair suggested that the Standing Committee should accept the offer and request the Secretariat to work with Uzbekistan in order to sign a Host Country Agreement (HCA) and to finalize the dates and venue of CoP20.

Based on the experience of the CMS CoP14, Belgium inquired whether the Secretariat had taken the necessary measures in order to ascertain that the dates of the CoP would be firm and not be postponed. They further suggested that the CITES Secretariat should get in touch with the CMS Secretariat in order to benefit from their recent experience. They emphasized once more the importance not only of the size of the two Committee rooms, but also of their proximity. Indeed, the two Committee rooms had to be as close as possible to allow small delegations to walk quickly from one Committee room to another for new agenda items or in the case a vote was called for. As a final question, they asked whether holding the CoP in Geneva would still be a possibility if the facilities in Uzbekistan were not considered to be adequate for a CITES CoP and whether the Secretariat had already signed some financial commitments to hold the CoP in Geneva.

Senegal asked about visa requirements for Uzbekistan.

The Secretary-General noted that Resolution Conf. 19.1 requires any candidate host country to sign a Host Country Agreement for CoP no later than 60 days after the decision is made to hold the meeting outside the host country of the Secretariat. The Secretariat would share a draft Host Country Agreement with Uzbekistan and work with Uzbekistan to confirm the date and venue of the meeting. The Host Country Agreement would contain the firm dates for the CoP.

The Secretary-General indicated that some CITES staff had either been attending the CMS CoP14 or supported CMS colleagues in Samarkand as additional staff on site. She confirmed that further exchanges would continue with the CMS Secretariat, but also with the UNCCD Secretariat.

The Secretary-General confirmed that the Secretariat would go to Samarkand before the 60-day deadline for the signature of the HCA to ascertain that the requirements for the two Committee rooms are met. She also noted that citizens from about 100 countries can travel to Uzbekistan without visa and that the Secretariat would work with Uzbekistan to ensure free visas for others.

With regard to holding the CoP in Geneva, the Secretariat had not signed any procurement agreement, but might have to compensate the time spent by the Procurement Office of the United Nations Office in Geneva (UNOG) searching for a facility for CoP in Geneva. Furthermore, the Secretary-General indicated that the Secretariat would wait until after the visit to Samarkand to inform UNOG on decisions taken. Also, in case of unforeseen problems, an online CoP may be the only solution to agree a Trust Fund budget which needs to be renewed before the end of 2025.

#### **5. Conclusions**

Summing up, the SC Chair expressed her deep appreciation for the offer by Uzbekistan and concluded that the Standing Committee agreed that the Secretariat should work with Uzbekistan to sign a Host Country Agreement within the next 60 days and after a visit of the Secretariat in Samarkand in order to ascertain that the proposed facilities meet the requirements of a CITES CoP.

In closing the briefing, the SC Chair, joined by the Secretary-General, thanked Members and alternate Members for their presence and engagement and expressed the fervent hope that CoP20 could be held in Uzbekistan in 2025.

**Participant list**

<b>Member</b>	
<b>AFRICA</b>	
<b>Morocco</b>	Hayat Mesbah Latifa Sikli
<b>Madagascar (SC Vice-Chair)</b>	ABSENT
<b>Kenya</b>	ABSENT
<b>Chad</b>	ABSENT
<b>Senegal (alternate)</b>	Abba Sonko Dairou Diallo Rokhaya Plea
<b>Zambia (alternate)</b>	ABSENT
<b>United Republic of Tanzania (alternate)</b>	Elisante Ombeni
<b>Democratic Republic of the Congo (alternate)</b>	ABSENT
<b>ASIA</b>	
<b>Indonesia</b>	ABSENT
<b>Kuwait</b>	Makiya Albaghli
<b>Japan</b>	Akira Osawa Mariko Watanabe Masami Fukata
<b>India (alternate)</b>	Gobind Sagar Bhardwaj
<b>Singapore (alternate)</b>	Xie Renhui
<b>China (alternate)</b>	Ronghong Shi Wei Ji Yan Zeng
<b>CENTRAL AND SOUTH AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN</b>	
<b>Brazil</b>	ABSENT
<b>Honduras</b>	ABSENT
<b>Dominican Republic</b>	Nelson García Marcano
<b>Ecuador (alternate)</b>	ABSENT
<b>Nicaragua (alternate)</b>	Judith Perez
<b>Cuba (alternate)</b>	Viana Barceló
<b>EUROPE</b>	
<b>United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland</b>	Caroline Daisley Dornford Rugg
<b>Georgia</b>	Teona Karchava
<b>Belgium</b>	Elke Malfait Miet Van Looy
<b>Poland</b>	Karol Wolnicki Wojciech Piwowarski
<b>Belarus (alternate)</b>	ABSENT
<b>Israel (alternate)</b>	ABSENT
<b>Spain (alternate)</b>	Carolina San Martin
<b>Ireland (alternate)</b>	ABSENT
<b>NORTH AMERICA</b>	
<b>United States of America (SC Chair)</b>	Rosemarie Gnam Annie Arbuthnot Naimah Aziz Shireen Yousef
<b>Canada (alternate)</b>	Erin Down
<b>OCEANIA</b>	
<b>New Zealand</b>	Sarah Bagnall
<b>Australia (alternate)</b>	Harriet Simes Rhedyn Ollerenshaw

<b>DEPOSITARY</b>	
<b>Switzerland</b>	Matthias Loertscher
<b>PREVIOUS HOST COUNTRY</b>	
<b>Panama</b>	ABSENT
<b>GUEST</b>	
<b>Uzbekistan</b>	Jakhongir Talipov
	Javokhir Abdukhalikov