

OPENING SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT OF BOTSWANA
DR. Q.K.J. MASIRE

Mr. Chairman, Honourable Ministers, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, it gives me great pleasure indeed to welcome you all to the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. I would like to extend a special welcome to our international guests especially as it is the first time for some of them to come to Botswana. It is my sincere hope that we shall be seeing more of you in the future when you will be coming perhaps in a private capacity.

I must confess that when we were first informed of the request to host this meeting we were rather sceptical about our country's ability to manage the conference at our present stage of development. We felt that the relatively small town of Gaborone just did not have adequate facilities to cater for a two-week conference involving at least 300 people. To start with we did not even have a big enough conference room. Even when your hard working and rather persuasive Secretary General suggested that a marquee tent could form an adequate conference centre we were still not convinced until we received the assurance of your Standing Committee. The long and short of the story is as you see yourselves today gathered in a tent. I can only hope that what we lack by way of adequate capacity to satisfy the needs of the Conference, we shall compensate with our warmth and friendship.

It is thus both an honour and a pleasure for my country, Botswana, to have been asked to host this meeting despite the shortcomings I have just described. We are indeed delighted to be associated with this rather young Convention, young because it is only ten years ago, on the 3rd March 1973, that the Convention was signed, and eight years since it has been in force. Its achievements however far exceed its age. The rather impressive membership itself, consisting as it does of some 81 sovereign states, is a testimony to the impact of this young Convention. It is my hope, Mr. Chairman, that the formula your Convention has used to gain such an impressive membership within such a relatively short period will continue to attract more and more countries to become parties to CITES.

We are all aware of why CITES came into being but there is no harm in reminding ourselves since the reasons are as valid now as they were in 1973. It was recognised that ecological degradation and over-exploitation of natural resources through over-grazing, slash-and-burn shifting crop-farming, pollution, deforestation, poaching and illegal trade in flora and fauna were posing a serious world-wide threat not only to nature conservation but also to the very survival of the human race since degraded lands and depleted resources could not sustain the ever-growing human population. It was also recognised then that wild fauna and flora in their many beautiful and varied forms were an irreplaceable part of the natural systems of the earth which must be protected for the present and future generations. This is still the case today. The contracting States were conscious of the ever-growing value of wild fauna and flora from the scientific, cultural, recreational and economic points of view. I am sure all of us here are aware of this ever-growing value of wild fauna and flora. It was recognised then that peoples and states are, and should be, the protectors of their own wild fauna and flora and, in addition, that international co-operation is essential for the protection of certain species of wild fauna and flora against over-exploitation through international trade. These truths have and will continue to weather the passage of time and are perhaps the main contributing factor towards the encouraging growth in the membership of CITES.

Mr. Chairman, growth in membership is not only an achievement in its own right but also an indication of the dynamism of an organisation. The future of several wild fauna and flora species which were included in the endangered list under the terms of the Convention may not yet be assured but, at least the situation is much better than it was before the Convention came into being. A glance at the varied topics on the agenda before you is an indication that our Convention is far from being static. On the contrary the Convention continues to face each challenge as and when it arises. The fact that the challenges continue to increase as reflected by the topics on the lengthy agenda is, of course, also a reminder to us not to become complacent. No doubt we will examine the achievements and outstanding issues since New Delhi from the various reports that will be tabled at this meeting.

I would like at this juncture to inform you of Botswana's modest contribution towards conservation in general and CITES in particular. We in Botswana also recognise that wild fauna and flora are an irreplaceable part of the natural systems of the earth which must be protected for this and generations to come. To this end we have set aside three National Parks and five Game Reserves which account for some 17% of the land area of Botswana. None of them can be said to be an ecological entity on its own. Taken together, however, they protect quite a representative array of the country's fauna and flora ranging as they do from the semi-desert Gemsbok National Park to the swampy Moremi Game Reserve. Two of the game reserves, namely, the Moremi and Khutse, are unique in that it was the residents of the districts who called for the setting aside of parts of their districts as sanctuaries for wildlife. The idea of protecting nature is thus not only a Government concern but is also shared by the people of Botswana.

Admittedly, we have not protected every piece of land that we would have wished to protect but, one has to acknowledge that fact that land is a scarce resource whose utilisation we would like to maximise even among competing needs. Thus choices have to be made. Botswana has thrived and will continue to thrive on cattle farming as one of the main pillars of its economy even though the mining sector has assumed the dominant role. Arable farming, both commercial and subsistence, also plays a significant part in the life of every Botswana. It is, after all, the wish of every country to be self-sufficient in food production as this would contribute to the world's ability to feed its global population. Looked at in this light, one can appreciate that having 17% of the country set aside specifically for the protection of wild fauna and flora is quite a significant achievement.

By setting aside the several game reserves and national parks we were not only mindful of preserving our national heritage for future generations but we were also trying to accommodate the aesthetic and recreational needs of the present generation by diversifying our country's economic base through the promotion of wildlife tourism. Several tour operators conduct game viewing and photographic tours in some of these parks and reserves and, as most of the tourists are from outside the country, the Game Reserves and National Parks are a significant source of foreign exchange for Botswana.

On the scientific side, organised research is allowed in all our wildlife areas and, at present, several government and non-government-sponsored research projects are being undertaken. Outside the National Parks and Game Reserves hunting, both as a sport and a subsistence activity, is allowed. During the 1982 hunting season, for instance, a total hunting quota of just over 73,000 animals was placed at the disposal of the hunting public. The potential value in hunting licence fees was P 700,000. We also cater for

international sport hunters who have to hunt through any locally-established Safari Company and, in fact, some 5,922 animals out of 73,000 were reserved for our international clients.

While we are aware of the potential value of wild fauna and flora it is also true that unless these resources are protected the value will only be realised by a few unscrupulous individuals such as poachers and illegal exporters and importers of wild fauna and flora. While we have adequate legislation in the form of the Fauna Conservation Act, the National Parks Act, the Forests Act and the Herbage Preservation Act to control local dealings in wild fauna and flora we are virtually powerless once a plant or an animal has left our borders either legally or illegally. It is for this reason that we are thankful that a Convention such as this one exists to regulate trade in wild fauna and flora at the international level.

It is encouraging to note that CITES does not prohibit or discourage legalised trade in wild fauna and flora but rather that it aims at controlling the trade so as to ensure the sustainable utilisation of the resource. Only poachers and other illegal dealers in wild fauna and flora need be apprehensive of this Convention and, indeed, the more apprehensive they are, the better. In our land use planning programmes we have identified and zoned areas according to suitability-criteria for each type of economic use in the context of our Tribal Grazing Land Policy and its sister Arable Lands Development Programme. Within the parameters of this land-use planning strategy, we have also passed legislation that provides for the identification and designation of selected major wildlife areas outside the national parks and game reserves system, such areas to include both subsistence and sport hunting, game cropping, capture of live animals and game farming and photographic and game-viewing tourism.

We believe in natural resource conservation in its widest sense, namely that while we will not fail to preserve such species as are likely to be endangered, we wish nonetheless to exploit to the optimum those resources that are not endangered. We are therefore also investigating the possibilities of utilising veld products for food and medicinal uses, domesticating local moths for silk production, domesticating some selected wildlife species and researching on timber-production based on local forests.

It is with encouragement that I note that at your New Delhi meeting you adopted a resolution on technical assistance to developing countries to help them in implementing the laudable aims of the Convention. I can only hope that those Parties which can afford the assistance will redouble their efforts. In this regard I am grateful to the CITES Secretariat for having included one of my officers who is dealing on a day to day basis with CITES implementation on a short intensive course on matters related to CITES. The course helped not only him but also the country as a Party to CITES. I am also thankful to the United Nations Environment Programme which facilitated Botswana's attendance at the regional 10-year review meeting in Nairobi late last year. It is through such help from our friends that we young countries develop the capability to make a contribution towards conserving the wild fauna and flora for our own benefit and for all mankind.

To conclude my remarks, Mr. Chairman, I have taken note of the fact that you have a rather long and demanding agenda in front of you and, for that reason, I wouldn't like to keep you any longer than necessary. It is therefore my pleasure to wish you a very fruitful meeting and to declare this fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora officially open.

SPEECH BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE, MR. SAMAR SINGH

Your Excellency, Honorable Ministers, distinguished guests, fellow delegates and participants to the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES.

On behalf of the Standing Committee as well as on my own behalf, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to this historic meeting.

We are greatly honoured by His Excellency Dr. Masire, the President of the Republic of Botswana, who has so kindly agreed to grace this opening ceremony and to address us. This is a measure of the importance His Excellency attaches to the purposes of this meeting and the serious concern which his Government feels about the need to ensure more judicious use of the rapidly dwindling living natural resources of the world. We are very happy that the Honorable Minister of Commerce and Industry and the other dignitaries of the Government of Botswana have found time to be with us this morning and I welcome them warmly on behalf of all the Parties to CITES. We are also most appreciative of the presence of Dr. Mostafa Tolba, the Executive Director of UNEP, who needs no introduction to this august gathering.

I refer to this meeting as historic for more than one reason. First and foremost is the fact that this meeting is being held for the first time in the continent which has at present more than one-fourth of the total number of Parties to the Convention. When we last met in New Delhi at the beginning of 1981, twenty states from Africa were Parties with the Republic of Central Africa as the last to join before the meeting commenced. However, before the meeting concluded, Rwanda and Zambia also joined and during the last two years we have welcomed to this brotherhood from this great continent the states of Liberia, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, the United Republic of Cameroon, Malawi and the Sudan. As this present meeting concludes, the Convention will enter into force with respect to Congo, thus raising the total number of Parties to 81 on 1 May 1983, out of which 28 will be from Africa. On behalf of the Standing Committee representing the interests of all the Parties, I wish to felicitate the governments of all these states for their wisdom and sagacity in coming forward to strengthen the Convention. I look forward with great hope and expectation to their example being emulated by not only the other African states who have yet to join but also by all others who must recognise that it is only through international co-operation that they can secure the full and continuing benefit of their own natural living resources.

The other main reason for calling this meeting historic is that this year CITES completes a decade of its existence. Ten years ago, 66 states joined together at Washington to give birth to the Convention. Now, ten years later, 81 nations of the world, covering well over three-fourths of the land area of the globe and representing such a wide variety of situations, conditions and interests, are Parties to the Convention. Of these, 59 are present here to review what has been achieved in this first decade as well as to find ways and means to strengthen further this most widely accepted international agreement on natural resources in existence today. It was in one of the main "consumer" countries that the Convention was born. It is most appropriate that the tenth anniversary is being witnessed here in a region with the largest number of "producer" states. This is very significant because the entire philosophy of CITES is founded on the bed-rock of deep concern and co-operation between the producing countries and the consuming countries of the world.

It is a tribute to the great wisdom of the governments of all the "producer" states which are Parties to the Convention, and largely represent the developing world, that recognising the urgent need for international co-operation to conserve the irreplaceable life support systems and resources of the earth, they have come forward so positively and in such large numbers as to form now more than 2/3rd of the total membership of CITES. This development is now in the nature of a worldwide movement, which needs not merely to be widely acclaimed but more importantly should secure the full understanding, support and co-operation of all those whose demand and consumption is the major cause of the world-wide depletion of natural resources, particularly of wild fauna and flora. Effective control and regulation and indeed restraint of such consumption, to preserve the genetic diversity of the world and to ensure sustainable benefits to present and future generations, is the one and only way to ensure the future survival of mankind.

On an occasion like this, one is tempted to look back to the past for a moment, I am reminded that it was at the United Nations Conference on Human Environment at Stockholm in 1972 that the "Wildlife Principle" was unanimously adopted by the 113 nations represented there. These were the historic words in which the principle was enunciated:

"Man has a special responsibility to safeguard and wisely manage the heritage of wildlife and its habitat which are now gravely imperilled by a combination of adverse factors. Nature conservation including wildlife must therefore receive importance in planning for economic development."

It is worthy of note that it was the leader of the Indian Delegation at this Conference, Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi, who took the initiative in introducing this principle and in securing its unanimous adoption.

It was also at this UN Conference that another principle of great significance was enunciated. This recognised that all species form part of the common patrimony of humankind, and that the developed world might well assume a greater share of the costs of conserving this global heritage. Known as the "Additionality Principle", it proposed that compensation payments on an appreciable scale be made by the community of nations - mainly by those who could afford it - to the developing world, in order to offset adverse repercussions on the emerging economies from measures for conservation and environmental protection. It was not proposed that this additional assistance should be made available out of a spirit of charity. Rather it should reflect a recognition of joint responsibility for the depleting assets of a common heritage.

Wild flora and fauna are at greater risk today than ever before. Numerous studies commissioned by governments and concerned organisations indicate that if the present trends continue, by the year 2000, about 20% of all present living species of animals and plants will be extinct. Extinction on this scale is without precedent in human history and the consequences are too staggering to contemplate. In such a situation, CITES has a role of the greatest importance to perform. It is a matter of great satisfaction that it has today such a large coverage as well as such wide acceptability. Yet, so long as there remain significant gaps in its coverage and unscrupulous trading interests continue to be left scope to operate, the effectiveness of CITES cannot but be severely limited. It is of course essential that member nations perform their duties in the manner expected of them and implementation follows both the letter and the spirit of the Convention. These and related issues are matters to which we will be addressing ourselves during the next few days and the outcome will hopefully further strengthen the purposes and effectiveness of the Convention.

In this context, the non-government organizations have a vital role to play. CITES is a unique arrangement which brings together a wide variety of interests for a common cause. The fact that such a large number of international and national level non-governmental organizations are represented here today is, I believe, an indication of their sense of responsibility towards ensuring the effectiveness of the Convention. May I appeal to all the NGO's represented here, and through them to the community of NGO's worldwide, to redouble their efforts for spreading the gospel of conservation in its true sense. In a world dominated by the ethics of consumerism, theirs must be the endeavour to change this to one of frugal use of natural resources, for ultimately it is in this alone that our salvation lies.

One of the crucial issues to which this meeting will address itself is the question of the financing and the relationship with UNEP and IUCN. We are all well aware of the direct support provided and the catalytic role played by UNEP for CITES in the past decade. I have heard it widely said that CITES has now come of age. I have no doubt, therefore, that mature and responsible solutions will be found with the genuine co-operation of all concerned. I am particularly happy that keeping with the importance of the meeting, the Executive Director of UNEP Dr. Mostafa Tolba is with us today to lend support to finding a practical way ahead in this matter.

Perhaps the most important task of the Standing Committee has been to prepare for this meeting. On this occasion I would like to express our deep appreciation and gratitude to the Government of Botswana not only for agreeing to host the Conference but also for establishing the Organization Committee. This, along with the Secretariat, has worked assiduously and with remarkable devotion and competence to making all the preparations and arrangements required for the meeting. On behalf of all of us here, may I take the liberty of thanking our host country for the warm hospitality we are being shown. Put together, all of this is so essential to the process of effective communication on such an occasion.

We have a heavy agenda before us for the next few days. Let us set ourselves to the tasks ahead of us full of hope, confidence and determination - hope and confidence in the ability of all of us to fulfil the grave mutual responsibilities and we have assumed, the determination to live up to the expectations of those whom we represent to uphold and implement the principles and objectives of the Convention.

SPEECH BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF
THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME, DR MOSTAFA K. TOLBA

Your Excellency, Dr. Masire, Mr President of the Republic of Botswana, Mr Chairman of CITES Standing Committee, Mr. Secretary General of the Convention, Your Excellencies, Members of the Government and Diplomatic Community, distinguished participants and observers. It is indeed an honour and privilege to address the fourth meeting of this Convention's state Parties in the tenth anniversary year of the Washington Plenipotentiary Conference. A Conference which laid the groundwork for a Convention that in less than a decade has become the most widely supported of all the conservation conventions.

Mr. President, Distinguished Participants, let me start by expressing our deepest gratitude to the Government and People of Botswana for hosting this conference and for going out of their way to accomodate all its requirements. The kindness and hospitality with which we have been met will certainly play a crucial role in the successful deliberations of this meeting. Your presence here in person today, Mr. President, is greatly appreciated by us and I am sure by all those attending the conference.

At the Washington Conference ten years ago fears were expressed that the proposed convention might be manipulated into a tool to prevent the trade in wildlife resources; those fears have not been realised as CITES has matured into an effective regulatory body helping developing nations to safeguard their valuable stock of wild plant and animal species. The fact that CITES has now been ratified by 81 countries - including most of the world's major producing and consumer countries - is ample testament to the speed with which it has proved its usefulness to governments, some of which I think it is fair to say were sceptical at first about the potential value of such a convention.

But then ten years ago some governments, particularly those in the Third World, were similarly sceptical about the value of conservation in general. This view has been overturned at the conceptual and practical levels as we have come to see that conservation of wildlife and other living resources is an indispensable component of sustainable development.

By demonstrating the economic importance of controlling the trade in wildlife and wildlife products, CITES has played a significant role in this about-turn. CITES' rapid maturity has mirrored a similar development in the conservation movement as a whole. Thus today we can say without fear of bias that membership of this Convention is one litmus test of whether a nation is serious about implementing the policy of conservation for development prescribed by the World Conservation Strategy.

The steadily increasing support from, and assistance shown by, member governments are the main reasons for the Washington Convention's success story. Just one indication of governments' support has been their readiness to contribute to the Trust Fund.

However, I am certain the Parties would join me in acknowledging the vital role played by NGOs. The invitation to address this meeting has provided me with a welcome opportunity to pay tribute to their valuable contribution. This goes far beyond the Conference lobbying and interventions which make the meetings of Parties' such lively and constructive occasions; the week-in week-out vigilance of concerned organisations has turned CITES' regulations into the undisputed yardstick for international trade. The NGOs' activities

have served to keep us all on our toes. Without the hard data supplied essentially by the TRAFFIC groups on species status, on taxonomy and trading conditions, CITES would not be as workable or as effective.

Here I pay special tribute to the WWF and the IUCN. Both have selflessly funded together with UNEP a comprehensive range of activities in support of CITES. For example, the report on the international trade in rhinoceros products revealed that many horns from Africa ended up as handles for ceremonial daggers in a West Asian country - that government has subsequently used the information to start eliminating the use of rhino horn.

IUCN through its Species Survival Commission in general and the UNEP-supported Conservation Monitoring Centre in particular supplies the base data for the designation of the appendices. Special mention should be made of the Threatened Plants Unit which has helped focus governments' attention on the irreplaceable role wild plants play as sources of genetic material for agriculture and industry.

You would agree that the small Secretariat staff in Switzerland, by never forgetting that CITES first and foremost exists to serve governments has ensured that the Convention has remained resolutely independent of any pressure group. UNEP has helped to fund the Secretariat's provision to governments of the kind of practical services such as forgery proof permits, identification documents, cross-checking on which the day to day functioning of this Convention depend.

CITES hallmarks of professionalism and independence have helped to win over the responsible commercial trading interests. They have come to appreciate that conservation of flora and fauna stocks serves their best interests.

Their misfortune has been to be wrongly associated with the unscrupulous trading elements which pay heed not to the future welfare of the trade but to quick profiteering. I am sure you have all noticed a recent public remark by a European dealer in skins who said - and I quote "I can beat this Convention anytime...and legally too". At all times the major thrust of policing should be to track down and prosecute such unscrupulous traders. It is these people who exploit the poacher in the bush. The small-time poacher, who is invariably paid a pittance and thinking mostly of a hungry family is as much the victim as the animal he kills. I appeal today to governments represented here to see to it that much more is done to ensure that these traders who exploit the poverty of the poachers are given fines and prison terms commensurate with the damage they cause and the profits they make. These "Mr Bigs" should be dealt with as severely as narcotic smugglers - nothing less will do.

In UNEP we understand that developing nations cannot garrison their frequently very long and isolated borders in the way they would wish. We must accept, therefore, that porous borders are a fact of life. Most responsibility rests with the rich consumer nations to educate domestic demand. Governments in co-operation with UNEP, NGOs, importers and the media must step up efforts to inform the customs official, trader, shopowner and customer about what should and should not be purchased. In this connection I sincerely hope you will give ample time to consider specifically ways and means of improving the flow and effectiveness of public information.

It seems to me that we should not allow debate over the appendices to inhibit consideration of the ways and means to make those devices more effective as regulations for international control.

In this vein I should like to make a few brief remarks:

CITES does of course allow Parties to make reservations in certain circumstances. However, reservations can hinder the efforts of non-reserving Parties to protect endangered species. It is gratifying to note that Canada and the Federal Republic of Germany have already withdrawn their reservations, and that Switzerland has withdrawn some of its reservations. I understand that all member states of the EEC will be withdrawing their reservations on 1st of January 1984. It is thus my earnest hope that Parties with reservations should consider withdrawing them and as soon as they can. Such a move, if taken by all Parties with reservations, would have the welcome and important effect of affording the endangered species the protection or control the majority of the Parties feel they deserve.

Parties may wish to begin considering whether the definition of threatened as applied throughout the Convention should be re-assessed, in the light of new data and improved methods of its gathering, the more profound understanding of species biology that exists in case of some animals, and the changing nature of threats and the intensity with which they affect both animals and plants. UNEP and IUCN are co-operating in research in this field which may prove of particular interest to Parties.

An extraordinary meeting of the Parties will take place here on April 30 to discuss an amendment that would allow the accession to the Convention by the European Economic Community and other economic unions. This could be an important step. However, in the light of the difficulties faced because of the financial amendment adopted in 1979 but not yet in force, it may be worthwhile that the Parties consider introducing new amendments only if they lead to distinct positive impacts on the effectiveness of the Convention.

Mr. President, Distinguished Participants, I am aware certain states Parties have expressed concern over UNEP's Governing Council decision to cease making regular fund contributions by the end of this year. This decision should not be interpreted as a sign that UNEP is about to summarily cut-off its financial support to CITES.

I should perhaps remind you that the brief handed to us by Stockholm - and confirmed last year at the Nairobi special session - is a catalytic one. UNEP's view is that we have fulfilled that catalytic role: since CITES inception we have contributed US\$ 1.6 million in direct financial support. And despite the current parlous nature of UNEP's overall funding we have carried out the undertaking at Costa Rica to make a final contribution for the period 1982-83 of US\$ 175,000.

The combined total takes no account of UNEP's direct financial support for regional meetings, and, indeed, our indirect support such as the contribution to the overall IUCN programme.

Our view in UNEP is that this Convention has come of age. Since CITES has so palpably demonstrated its worth to governments, we feel the time has come for the Parties to assume the full burden of regular funding. However, if you so wish UNEP would be willing to continue to administer the Trust Fund.

I am aware that some Parties are concerned about the 13 per cent level of deduction UNEP makes in return for fulfilling this obligation. This figure is fixed by the United Nations and is not subject to negotiation. Nevertheless I would remind the Parties that under our agreement with IUCN one half of the deduction is paid to the Union to meet part of the administrative costs of the CITES Secretariat. So in real terms we are

talking of a six and a half per cent deduction. I do not believe this is unfair since it falls to UNEP to do the costly and time-consuming work of project management, accounting and chasing up unpaid contributions.

Existing arrangements for the Trust Fund will expire on 31 December 1983. If it is your wish that contributions should continue to be made to a U.N. Trust Fund, it is imperative that this meeting pass a decision requesting me to seek the approval of Governing Council 11 next month and the Secretary General of the United Nations to an extension of current arrangements for a term to be decided by you.

Mr. President, distinguished participants, I am anxious to assure you that your decision on the Trust Fund will not affect UNEP's continued support for CITES. Though our role as the guardian of this Convention is at an end, we look forward to maintaining our support in the context of a partner. In this new role I pledge we will carry on supporting priority activities, and we will continue to consider favourably, within our available resources, requests for financial and logistic aid on a project-by-project basis. In this regard you may wish to know that we are already funding two existing projects over and above the basic UNEP contribution.

Mr. President, distinguished participants, it remains now only for me to urge all those governments which have not yet ratified or acceded to this Convention to do so with all possible speed and for existing members to redouble their efforts to improve CITES implementation. Thank you very much.

SPEECH BY DR. F. WAYNE KING, FOR THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE
INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR CONSERVATION OF NATURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Your Excellency, Honorable Ministers, distinguished guests, fellow delegates and participants to the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES.

The fourth meeting of the Conference of CITES Parties may rightly be considered as a 10-year anniversary meeting - 10 years after the adoption of the Convention in Washington on 3 March 1973. In fact, it also is a 20-year anniversary - 20 years after the 1963 Resolution of the IUCN General Assembly in Nairobi, formally recommending that the Convention be drafted. It is important to remember that CITES did not originate in Washington but right here in Africa. This is why we are particularly pleased to see the present anniversary meeting taking place in the continent which gave birth to the Convention.

The proposal to control international trade in wildlife trophies was initially formulated in 1961, at the Arusha "Conference on Conservation in Modern African States", sponsored by IUCN and co-sponsored by FAO and Unesco. It recognized that the efforts of the developing countries to control poaching could only be successful if the developed countries also took concerted action to control the demand for endangered wildlife and wildlife products. Subsequently, as a result of the Nairobi Resolution, IUCN prepared the first drafts of the Convention, which were widely circulated for comments to the entire membership, and together with the draft prepared by the Government of Kenya and with a strong recommendation from the 1972 Stockholm Conference became the basis for the Plenipotentiary Conference in Washington. The fact remains that CITES has its roots in Africa, and it is therefore particularly gratifying to IUCN that there are now 27 African states Parties to the Convention.

Together with UNEP, we have had the honour to be associated with the implementation of this Convention from the very start. On behalf of the Director General and of the Council of IUCN, I wish to confirm our full satisfaction with the ongoing arrangements whereby IUCN administers the Secretariat on behalf of UNEP and of the states Parties to the Convention, and our willingness to maintain these arrangements which we consider as mutually beneficial. This includes the provision of administrative and financial management facilities at IUCN headquarters; the scientific advisory services of the IUCN Species Survival Commission, the compilation, processing and analysis of data on trade, conservation and legislation by the IUCN Conservation Monitoring Centre and the IUCN Environmental Law Centre; and the public information and communications network established together with the World Wildlife Fund through the existing "TRAFFIC" offices around the world.

I also wish to express our satisfaction with the excellent working relationship with the Management Authorities and Scientific Authorities of the Parties to the Convention; the close co-operation with our colleagues from UNEP in the administration of the Secretariat; and the support received from World Wildlife Fund and other non-governmental donors for specific projects to assist the implementation of the Convention. We are particularly pleased to note that our negotiations with the Swiss authorities on the granting of international status are now well advanced and will also provide a beneficial legal basis for the work of the CITES Secretariat.

In a world where dialogue between "North" and "South", between developed and developing countries, has become more and more difficult, it is good to see that in spite of economic and political divergence, effective technical co-operation remains possible for our common cause of conservation.

ADDRESS BY THE HONOURABLE M.P.K. NWAKO,
MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY
AT THE CLOSING OF THE FOURTH MEETING OF THE
CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO CITES

Mr. Chairman, Honourable Ministers, Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen.

At the onset I would like to say how pleased and honoured we have been to have had your company for these past two weeks.

To us the fourth meeting of CITES will be an occasion to remember for many years to come.

For example, the very likely possibility that some of the resolutions adopted at this meeting may better be remembered at future CITES meetings as "the Gaborone Resolutions" could, in itself, be a source of pride and encouragement in the efforts of this young and developing nation to fulfill its own obligations in the implementation of the Convention. I am also confident that this august meeting will have played a significant part in heightening conservation awareness among our people in the country at large, in demonstrating quite clearly that the conservation task the nation shoulders is not only on its own behalf but also in the service of mankind, and furthermore that it is a responsibility that any nation shares with the world community at large.

Clearly it would be a surprise if the highly-pitched fauna and flora conservation message of this two weeks' meeting would follow the same fate in Botswana that the biblical seed which fell on rocky ground encountered. You too, I am sure, will have had the opportunity to assess the conservation situation in Botswana as critically as your stay in the country allowed, particularly with regard to the conservation policies and measures we have adopted and the limitations we face in the implementation of the Convention.

I am aware that the main reason for your two weeks' stay was to come and review the past performance of your Convention and to plan for the future. In this regard you have discussed matters pertaining to the future of your Standing Committee, the financial matters of the Convention, the reports of the various committees and of the individual Parties and the implementation of the Convention. You have also undertaken the first Ten Year Review of the Appendices to determine their current relevance and you have as usual dealt with individual country requests for the amendment of the appendices.

As you very well know, Botswana is at present among the most richly endowed countries of the world in the diversity and abundance of its wild fauna and flora. The country firmly subscribes to the principle of efficacious utilisation of these resources for the economic benefit of its inhabitants. At the same time, due to a number of pressures on its environment, Botswana is probably among the most in need of improving the awareness of its people for the conservation of these resources if she is not to deplete those resources and, paradoxically end up the poorer of the nations of the world. I believe, other less developed countries and regions sail in more or less the same boat but, obviously, the way that such issues are dealt with varies from country to country. I am informed that this meeting has been tackling these issues and formulating its resolutions in the most realistic and pragmatic way possible and that you resisted temptation to succumb to the extremist views of the utilitarian and the preservationist lobbies. Botswana

welcomes this development and further believes firmly that excessive legislation, both at the national and the international level, is costly and usually counter-productive. For, while we share with other Parties to CITES the fear that unrestricted trade in the leopard might threaten the survival of this species in other regions of the world we hold the view that the encouragement of controlled trade rather than the banning of all trade in the species is the surer means of its survival in Botswana because the critical factor that has to be weighed whenever its range is being assessed for other competing views is its economic value at a given point in time, not the unknown future. It goes without saying that any unnecessarily restrictive resolutions might in some cases devalue the potential conservation benefit that trade confers on wild fauna and flora. Doubtless, certain theoretical perceptions may sometimes be more appealing on their face value than practical consideration.

However, it is my firm conviction that the future of this Convention also lies in the adoption of a realistic approach which not only addresses the problems at hand but also takes account of capabilities and limitations and the diverse and sometimes competing interests in each nation or region. I have no doubt that this meeting has come up with appropriate decisions in each case.

I would hope however, that each delegation will now go back and present the decisions or recommendations of this meeting to their Governments so that they may be implemented and that your two weeks' stay in Gaborone bears the necessary fruits of your hard labour. We in Botswana will do our best to implement those recommendations or decisions that we are able to implement.

We also believe, Mr. Chairman, that while CITES should not aim at stopping states from trading in those species which are in no way presently endangered, one would hope that, where species are obviously endangered and scientific facts are there to show this the Parties will then not adamantly refuse to listen to reason. A happy compromise is likely to achieve quite a lot considering that CITES like any other organization can only be as strong as its members want it to be. The fact that you have discussed not only the Ten Year Review of the Appendices but also the normal requests for amendments as considered necessary is a sign that yours is a flexible organisation which keeps up with the existing conditions at any time. You deserve to be congratulated on this flexibility.

Mr. Chairman, your Convention has among other things discussed ways of how to combat the illegal trade in African elephant products by strictly monitoring their legal trade. This is of particular interest to my country since, for reasons such as poaching and illegal trade in elephant products, we have had to suspend elephant hunting with effect from this year. We will closely monitor the situation until such time that we are satisfied that the re-introduction of elephant hunting is so controllable as not to endanger the African elephant in Botswana. I sincerely hope that you will assist us in our endeavour to conserve the African elephant by, for instance, being on the look-out for any permits or transactions relating to elephant products which appear questionable and then taking the appropriate action.

As we will have to undertake a study into the actual population and dynamics of the elephant but are presently short of funds due to the worldwide recession and the drought which has affected our country for the second successive year, we will appreciate any assistance we can get from anyone.

Mr. Chairman, I know you have been quite busy and as such I will not detain you any longer. I would however, like to reiterate, on behalf of the Government and people of Botswana, our pleasure in having had you with us and our hope that you will have safe journeys back to your home countries.

