

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

Fifth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties

Buenos Aires (Argentina), 22 April to 3 May 1985

Interpretation and Implementation of the Convention

Report on National Reports under Article VIII,  
Paragraph 7, of the Convention

SECRETARIAT REPORT

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The text of the Convention (particularly Article XII) includes as one of the Secretariat's functions the study of the Parties' reports and the preparation of comments and recommendations on this subject. At the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties this issue received considerable attention through the presentation of document Doc. 4.18. As a result, the Technical Committee established a Working Group which prepared a report for the TEC meeting held in Brussels (Belgium) in June 1984. The Working Group's report, document Doc. TEC. 1.12 (already distributed to the Parties with a Notification), was accepted by TEC and its recommendations agreed, including the draft resolution presented to this meeting as document Doc. 5.19.
- 1.2 In order to continue to monitor the Parties' performance and the implementation of the Convention, the Secretariat included in the WTMU consultancy contract work programme a follow-up report. This report is document Doc. 5.17 and it demonstrates that, although there have been some small improvements in some areas, the overall situation is still very far from satisfactory and certainly does not justify any complacency.
- 1.3 It has been agreed that annual reports serve two major purposes in the operation of CITES:
- (i) To monitor the implementation of the Convention by Parties.
  - (ii) To monitor the quantity of trade occurring in specimens of species listed in the appendices and thus allow assessments to be made of the effect of this trade on wild populations.

It has also been agreed by TEC that neither of these functions is being effectively fulfilled, and the recommendations approved by TEC in document Doc. TEC. 1.12 are aimed at initiating a series of procedures and measures designed to improve the situation.

## 2. ANNUAL REPORTS

2.1 There are four main areas where problems exist with respect to the submission of annual reports:

- (i) Failure to submit an annual report.
- (ii) Late submission of an annual report.
- (iii) Submission of an annual report which substantially departs from the recommendations of the "Guidelines for the Preparation of CITES Annual Reports" in its format, presentation or methods of recording trade.
- (iv) Submission of an annual report which omits data or substantial sections of trade and/or which contains substantial inaccuracies.

2.2 Failure to Submit an Annual Report: In recent years, only half of the Parties have met the mandatory requirement of the Convention to submit an annual report. Table 1 gives the figures for this.

Table 1

<u>Year</u>	<u>No. of Parties</u>	<u>No. of reports</u>	<u>% of Parties reporting</u>
1980	61	34	56%
1981	74	39	53%
1982	77	41	53%
1983	81	36	44%

2.3 Late Submission: In order for the statistics to be of effective use, it is essential that the information is available as soon as possible. Resolutions Conf. 2.16 and Conf. 3.10 recommended 31 October as the deadline for submission of reports. In 1983, only 28% of the Parties met this deadline, they were:

Bolivia (partial report only)	Liechtenstein
Cameroon	Mozambique
Central African Republic	Nepal
Chile	Norway
China	Saint Lucia
Congo	Suriname
Germany, Federal Republic of	Switzerland
Ghana	Tanzania, United Republic of
Guatemala	Togo
India	Tunisia
Indonesia	Venezuela
Liberia	

In addition, the following Parties submitted reports for 1983 after the deadline:

Argentina	Malaysia
Bangladesh	South Africa
Canada	Sweden
France	United Kingdom
Italy	United States of America
Japan	Zambia
Madagascar	

As a result of the late submission of reports by most of the major trading Parties, the Secretariat was forced to delay production of the 1983 comparative tabulation of CITES trade statistics until 28 February 1984. Even with this undesirable postponement of publication of the statistics, some major trading Parties failed to send their data in time for inclusion.

- 2.4 Submission in Non-Standard Form: Many Parties still do not follow the recommendations of the "Guidelines for the Preparation of CITES Annual Reports". This leads to considerable numbers of unnecessary discrepancies between annual reports. The "Guidelines" were drawn up on the instruction of the Conference of the Parties to ensure maximum uniformity and thus comparability of the data from different Party's annual reports. Very few Parties follow the "Guidelines" perfectly, but many manage to comply with the most important aspects. Unfortunately, some Parties continue to apparently ignore the "Guidelines" and report trade in such a way that the data provided are of very little use for the purposes for which they are intended.
- 2.5 Submission of Incomplete or Inaccurate Reports: Many annual reports are lacking data on large sections of the trade in CITES specimens. This lack may be due to a variety of factors such as inadequate legislation, inadequate enforcement and poor compilation of statistics or more technical factors such as trade through free ports. Such omissions account for large numbers of discrepancies between reports.

### 3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 In general, there is vast scope for improvement in the reporting procedures of most Parties. The Secretariat must emphasize that submission of annual reports is mandatory and, thus, commends the draft resolution proposed by TEC in document Doc. 5.19. Also, the Secretariat believes that the effectiveness of the Convention relies heavily upon the submission of accurate and complete trade statistics and that these data provide the best means of monitoring and measuring the effectiveness of CITES implementation. For these reasons, the draft resolution in document Doc. 5.20 is also commended. Furthermore, TEC has considered the options of either increasing financial support for trade monitoring work or decreasing the scope of such work. TEC agreed that it was essential to provide further funding for this work rather than restrict the activity and, therefore, the draft resolution in document Doc. 5.21 is also supported by the Secretariat.
- 3.2 The Secretariat has initiated, or will initiate action with respect to those recommendations arising from the report of the Working Group on Annual Reports which require such action:
- (i) Enquiries to determine the reasons for failure to submit annual reports, follow-up action to provide technical assistance where requested and, where necessary, pursuit of the subject through diplomatic channels.
  - (ii) Studies of the annual reports to determine how and why sections of trade are omitted for some (this to be reported to TEC).
  - (iii) Issuance of a Notification to the Parties on the subject of compliance with the "Guidelines for the Preparation of CITES Annual Reports" clarifying the use of the "Guidelines" and emphasizing the major points.

3.3 On the basis of the conclusions of document Doc. 5.17, and as a result of its own work, the Secretariat also wishes to emphasize the following specific recommendations:

(i) Annual reports should record trade transactions on a shipment by shipment basis, giving permit or certificate numbers for both exports/re-exports and imports. This measure alone, if taken by all Parties, would represent a great improvement in quality and comparability of the data.

(ii) Actual numbers of specimens traded should be recorded wherever possible (rather than merely specifying the number appearing on the permit).

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1 The Secretariat believes that trade monitoring, and thus the timely submission of accurate annual reports, are essential parts of CITES activities and vital to the achievement of effective implementation of the Convention.

4.2 Criticism of the comparative analysis of the Parties' annual reports on the grounds that the quality of the data is inadequate is, at least to some extent, justified. However, this criticism is a double-edged sword since the inadequacies of the data reflect the shortcomings of the Parties.

4.3 Therefore, there can be no doubt that CITES needs great improvements in this area before it can be considered to be effective to any measurable degree. There has been some improvement since the last meeting of the Conference of the Parties, but further progress is certainly required.