

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

Consideration of Proposals for Amendment of Appendices I and II

PROPOSALS SUBMITTED PURSUANT TO RESOLUTION ON RANCHING

Submitted Proposals

1. In accordance with the provisions of paragraph d) of Resolution Conf. 3.15, five Parties - Australia, France, Indonesia, Suriname and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland each submitted a proposal for amendment pursuant to this Ranching Resolution. These proposals are as follows:
 - Australia
Transfer of the Australian population of Crocodylus porosus from Appendix I to Appendix II.
 - France
Transfer of the populations of Tromelin and Europa Islands of Chelonia mydas from Appendix I to Appendix II.
 - Indonesia
Transfer of the Indonesian population of Crocodylus porosus from Appendix I to Appendix II.
 - Suriname
Transfer of the population of Suriname of Chelonia mydas from Appendix I to Appendix II.
 - United Kingdom
Transfer of the captive population in the Cayman Islands of Chelonia mydas from Appendix I to Appendix II.
2. Although the proposals from Australia and Indonesia were received in accordance with the provisions of paragraph d) of Resolution Conf. 3.15, the detailed supporting statements were received a long time after the 330 days deadline also established by this Resolution. This procedural difficulty is discussed in document Doc. 5.35, which includes the

Secretariat's recommendation on the matter. Despite this problem, the Secretariat has sought appropriate scientific and technical advice to verify that the established criteria have been met.

3. The amendment proposals and supporting statements were sent by the Secretariat to all the Parties, in accordance with the provisions of Article XV of the Convention, through the Notification to contracting or signatory States of 14 December 1984 (see the document Doc. 5.45 Annex 1). These supporting statements are attached to this document as Annexes 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5*. However, as far as the proposals from Australia, France and the United Kingdom are concerned, the rather voluminous attachments to the supporting statements are not attached as the Parties have already received them.

Recommendations from the Secretariat

4. After having carefully considered the statements presented by the Parties concerned, taking into consideration the discussions held in Brussels during the first meeting of the Technical Committee (June, 1984) and also the comments received from experts consulted, the Secretariat is making the following recommendations.
5. Proposals concerning the green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*)

The Secretariat did not receive comments on these proposals directly from the IUCN Marine Turtle Specialist Group. However, a copy of a letter addressed to a third person was received from the Chairman of this Group. In his letter, the author declared that the comments are his own, and do not necessarily represent the Group's opinion. The Secretariat does not know whether this means that the Group is not unanimous on this matter, or that it has not been consulted, or both. Nevertheless, the key point seems to be that the Chairman of the Group is opposed to the various proposals concerning the green turtle because he is opposed to the farming and ranching of marine turtles. This position is similar to that taken by the former Group Chairman as expressed in document Doc. 4.39 which presented the ranching proposals submitted at the fourth meeting of the Parties.

It should be noted that the Parties have accepted the principle of ranching in Resolution Conf. 3.15. The Secretariat feels that the proposals should, therefore, be considered on their respective merits, and that objections in principle are irrelevant and should be ignored, unless the Parties wish to reconsider Resolution Conf. 3.15. In addition, this objection with respect to turtle ranching was not accepted by the Conference of the Parties at its fourth meeting, since by 43 votes in favour and 3 against, it committed itself to the proposal from Suriname, asking for the transfer of its population of *Chelonia mydas* from Appendix I to Appendix II, once this country had supplied further information on acceptable marking and certification procedures.

The problem of marking of products was subject to major discussion at the Brussels TEC meeting, and TEC recommended that, prior to the meeting in Buenos Aires, the authors of ranching proposals provide the Secretariat with samples of the labels and packages to be used, failing which the proposals should not be accepted. When these Secretariat recommendations were drafted, none of the authors of proposals pursuant to Resolution Conf. 3.15 had supplied such samples.

* As indicated in the "Foreword", these Annexes are not reproduced in these Proceedings. (Note from the Secretariat).

6. Proposal from France

The French proposal is identical to that presented in Gaborone and then withdrawn, but the accompanying supporting statement is much more complete and includes new elements. In addition six international experts visited one of the places where the young specimens are collected and the CORAIL ranch, and they have presented detailed reports.

It appears from the documents that the operation and the French authorities have largely taken into consideration the remarks made by the Secretariat and others at the fourth meeting. In general, the Secretariat considers that the criteria set forth in Resolution Conf. 3.15 are met, and this is also the opinion of almost all the experts who participated in the scientific mission, only one of whom considered that the proposal is still premature (Dr. Frazier).

From the expert reports it appears obvious that certain improvements have still to be made to the overall operation, which include especially the management of the green turtle populations on Europa and Tromelin and the conservation of the environment on these islands (problems of introduced animals, of the lighthouse, of garbage, etc.). Concerning the actual ranching operation, the problems of skin necroses and cannibalism have still to be solved.

Regarding the marking of products, the Secretariat is still waiting to receive labels and other packaging material samples.

Lastly, there is the question of the economic success of the operation. The Secretariat has been informed that the operation changed hands recently and that it has now been taken over by Reunion interests. Economic problems apparently exist, but they seem to be linked, to a large extent, to the fact that the operation cannot work economically as long as the international markets are closed to it.

To conclude, subject to the supply of satisfactory labels and packaging samples, the Secretariat considers that it can recommend the adoption of the French proposal. If the proposal is adopted, the French Government should commit itself to take into account, as far as possible, and as soon as possible, the comments and recommendations made by the experts. These recommendations were made several months ago and the Secretariat hopes that the French delegation in Buenos Aires will be in a position to inform the Conference of the Parties on what has already been accomplished in this field.

7. Proposal from Suriname

As mentioned earlier, the Conference of the Parties, at its fourth meeting, accepted the merits of the proposal from Suriname, but actually rejected it because the product marking procedures were not sufficiently worked out. Suriname, as it was requested, submitted a revised statement to the Technical Committee, including a detailed description of its marking system.

After a lengthy discussion on the marking problem in general, the Technical Committee conditionally approved, by 31 votes in favour and none against, the marking system presented by Suriname. The condition is that mentioned in item 5 above on the supply of samples of labels, marks, packaging material, etc., prior to the Buenos Aires meeting.

In conclusion, subject to the supply of sample labels, marks, etc., the Secretariat can only recommend the approval of the proposal from Suriname.

8. Proposal from the United Kingdom

As it stated in Brussels at the Technical Committee meeting, the Secretariat feels that this proposal does not qualify as a ranching proposal.

To support its position, the Secretariat merely wishes to recall the ranching definition as given in the report of the Ranching Committee (Doc. 3.13 Annex 2, page 539 of the New Delhi Proceedings):

"The exploitation of animals conceived in the wild but taken into a substantially controlled environment for a significant part of the remainder of their lives with the likely result that more animals survive to maturity or exploitable age than could otherwise have reasonably been expected, such surplus being the stock available for exploitation by trade"

and the ranching definition as given in Resolution Conf. 3.15:

"the rearing in a controlled environment of specimens taken from the wild".

In addition, during the discussions held in New Delhi on the ranching issue, the delegation of the United Kingdom stated that "the Cayman Turtle Farm is a captive breeding operation and that it had nothing to do with ranching" [New Delhi Proceedings, document Plen 3.8 (Rev.), page 121].

The Secretariat recommends, therefore, that this proposal be rejected on the grounds that it does not qualify as a ranching proposal.

However, the Secretariat wishes to re-emphasize its strong support for a positive solution to the problem of the Cayman Turtle Farm, and in particular for a specific resolution on the subject (see document Doc. 5.32).

9. Proposal from Australia

Although Australia submitted its supporting statement late, the IUCN/SSC Crocodile Specialist Group was able to consider it at its meeting held in Caracas, in October 1984. After careful examination of the document, the Group decided to urge "the Parties to CITES to approve the Australian proposal in transferring its populations of C. porosus from Appendix I to Appendix II of CITES".

The Secretariat reached a similar conclusion since the information provided by Australia demonstrates that the criteria of Resolution Conf. 3.15 are now met.

However, although there seems to be unanimous support in general, some concern has been expressed over certain details of the proposal, and the Secretariat recommends that the Australian Government should consider taking some additional measures suggested by NGOs to ensure the greatest benefit to the conservation of the species.

In conclusion, the Secretariat recommends that the Australian proposal be approved.

10. Proposal from Indonesia

The supporting statement submitted by Indonesia is largely insufficient to allow the approval of its request for transfer of its population of C. porosus from Appendix I to Appendix II, either as a ranching proposal or as an ordinary proposal.

The IUCN/SSC Crocodile Specialist Group arrived at the same conclusion and noted that even if it could be argued that the Irian Jaya population should be transferred, the fact that the other populations of Indonesia, whose status appears very poor, do not receive adequate protection would jeopardize the Irian Jaya population if such a transfer were to be accepted.

In addition, and this seems even more important, the Secretariat recently received a copy of a progress report on an Irian Jaya field survey due to be completed in January 1985 in which it is stated: "It is clear from these preliminary findings that accessible habitats have been heavily hunted and that the crocodile which prefers large rivers and estuarine areas (Crocodylus porosus) is seriously depleted throughout the Province, yielding only about 5% of the total skins taken".

The Secretariat acknowledges the serious problems that exist in Indonesia and the fact that successful conservation, especially of crocodiles, may be heavily dependent on economic arguments. However, the economic argument is not strong when C. porosus provides only 5% of the skins taken from the wild, and when successful captive breeding has been achieved.

To conclude, the Secretariat can only recommend that this proposal be rejected and that the Indonesian Government take the appropriate measures to promote recovery of the populations. However, the Secretariat also wishes to urge the more developed countries to provide assistance to Indonesia in establishing a sound crocodile conservation and management programme which will allow it to submit a new proposal in due course.

11. Comments from Parties

Switzerland is the only Party who submitted comments on a ranching proposal, that of Indonesia. They are the following:

"The status of the wild population is only poorly documented. As far as the ranching part of the proposal is concerned, more information on the 15 rearing stations is required, including e.g. number of specimens in stock, number of eggs/juveniles collected annually, number of specimens released/slaughtered annually.

It should be noted that the species has been transferred from Appendix II to Appendix I at the San José meeting, but that the supporting statement did not include the information required by the Berne criteria. Therefore Indonesia should be obliged to observe a quota."