

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

Sixth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties

Ottawa (Canada), 12 to 24 July 1987

Consideration of Proposals for Amendment of Appendices I and II

PROPOSAL SUBMITTED PURSUANT TO RESOLUTION ON RANCHING

Submitted Proposal

1. In accordance with the provisions of paragraph d) of Resolution Conf. 3.15, France, a Party to the Convention, submitted a proposal for amendment pursuant to the Resolution on "Ranching". This proposal is as follows:

Transfer of the populations of Tromelin and Europa Islands of Chelonia mydas from Appendix I to Appendix II.

2. The amendment proposal and supporting statement 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 3 March 1987 (see document Doc. 6.46 Annex 1).
3. Prior to that and in accordance with Resolution Conf. 3.15, recommendation d), the Secretariat communicated the proposal to several organizations to obtain appropriate scientific and technical advice. A substantial answer was received from the IUCN Conservation Monitoring Centre (CMC) and some comments from other sources, which were communicated to the French Management Authority.

In addition, in the framework of a CITES project conducted by CMC, one of CMC's staff visited Reunion Island and Tromelin Island in December 1986.

4. On the basis of the information received and as a result of the above-mentioned visit, the French Authorities revised the proposal. The revised version is attached to this document as Annex*. The Secretariat received also copies of the many documents referred to in the proposal, as well as copies of the relevant legislation documents. It received again copies of the reports of the members of the mission of experts who made an evaluation of the ranching operation in March 1984. These reports were communicated to the Parties prior to the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties and are, therefore, not attached to this document.

* As indicated in the "Foreword", this Annex is not reproduced in these Proceedings. (Note from the Secretariat).

5. At the second meeting of the Technical Committee (Lausanne, June 1986), France submitted a document (Doc. TEC. 2.15) on the marking of products of the Reunion ranching operation pursuant to Resolution Conf. 5.16 on "Trade in Ratched Specimens". With some clarifications, the Technical Committee approved the marking system as outlined in document Doc. TEC. 2.15. This system is described in the attached supporting statement.

Recommendations from the Secretariat

6. Firstly, the Secretariat would like to note that the following recommendations are provisional and may be changed at a later stage on the basis of information it is expecting from various sources, in particular the study conducted by the IUCN Conservation Monitoring Centre, as a consultant to the CITES Secretariat, on the biological and trade status of Chelonia mydas and Eretmochelys imbricata (see document Doc. 6.30).
7. An apparent political problem has been identified in relation to the status of Europa and Tromelin Islands with respect to CITES, and the possible effect of this on the French proposal requires clarification. The question is the following: should the transfer of Chelonia mydas specimens from Tromelin and Europa Islands to Reunion Island be considered as in violation of CITES?

Neither when France approved CITES, nor afterwards, were Tromelin and Europa Islands officially declared as covered by the Convention, as was Reunion Island, for example. Although both islands are administered by the Préfet of Reunion Island, they are apparently not part of this overseas Department.

In addition, as indicated by IUCN/CMC (comments attached to a letter to the Secretariat of 12 December 1986), since 1 January 1984 it has been illegal to import specimens of species listed in Appendix I of CITES into the EEC for primarily commercial purposes. Although Reunion is part of the EEC, Europa and Tromelin are not and, therefore, the import of all hatchling stock to Reunion since 1 January 1984 appears to have been illegal.

The Secretariat is not sure whether or not the ranching operation in Reunion Island should be considered as being created in violation of CITES, but it believes that France, and possibly the EEC, should clarify the situation as to whether or not Tromelin and Europa Islands should be considered as non-Party entities.

Therefore, a decision should be made first as to whether or not the French proposal can be accepted for consideration.

8. If the Conference of the Parties agrees that the proposal is eligible for consideration under CITES rules, the Secretariat recommends that the proposal be accepted. The Secretariat made a similar recommendation with respect to the proposal submitted for consideration at the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (Buenos Aires, 1985) (see Proceedings of the 5th meeting, document Doc. 5.44, p. 533). The ranching operation itself has been considerably improved, in particular with respect to the marking of specimens and to conditions under which the animals are kept. In addition, the revised proposal has been improved to more accurately reflect the actual conditions of the operation.

The question of whether or not approval of the proposal will increase the illegal trade in sea turtle specimens is still controversial and cannot be answered satisfactorily. Arguments for and against can be found. With regard to the turtle scale, it appears from the proposal that ratched Chelonia mydas scales can be used as a substitute for wild Eretmochelys imbricata scales. This is certainly an argument in favour of the proposal.

Resolution Conf. 3.15 states that the operation must be primarily beneficial to the conservation of the local population (i.e., where applicable, contribute to its increase in the wild). It states also that the operation should be beneficial to the wild population through reintroduction or in other ways. The question of reintroduction of sea turtles to the wild is also controversial. In addition, it appears that the status of the populations of Tromelin and Europa is excellent and it is difficult to see how further significant benefit to the populations can be provided (Luxmoore, pers. comm., 1987). Therefore, the elements described in the French proposal as other beneficial actions in relation to the operation are considered by the Secretariat as sufficient to consider that the proposal also meets the criteria of Resolution Conf. 3.15 in this respect.

9. In summary, the Secretariat recommends that the apparent political problem discussed under 2 above should be resolved first. If it is decided that the proposal is eligible for consideration by the Conference of the Parties, the Secretariat recommends that it be approved.

Comments from Parties

10. Ghana

Ghana has no objection to the amendment proposal.

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Proposal Submitted Pursuant to Resolution on Ranching

STATUS OF THE ISLANDS EUROPA AND TROMELIN

1. The Management Authority of France has informed the Secretariat that the îles Eparses, which include Europa and Tromelin, in the same way as all territories under French sovereignty, are covered by CITES with regard to trade in endangered species.
2. As a result, the apparent problem mentioned in paragraph 7 of document Doc. 6.45 does not exist and the Secretariat invites the Conference of the Parties to ignore this aspect when considering the amendment proposal submitted by France.