

AMENDMENTS TO APPENDICES I AND II OF THE CONVENTION

A. PROPOSAL

Maintenance of the Botswana population of Crocodylus niloticus in Appendix II, subject to annual export quotas.

B. PROPONENT

The Republic of Botswana.

C. SUPPORTING STATEMENT

1. Taxonomy

11. Class: Reptilia
12. Order: Crocodylia
13. Family: Crocodylidae
14. Species: Crocodylus niloticus
15. Common Names: English: Nile crocodile  
French: crocodile du Nil  
Spanish: Cocodrilo de Nilo

16. Code Numbers: A-306.002.001.006

2. Biological Data

21. Distribution: Both historically and at present the Nile crocodile's distribution is confined to the few perennial rivers of the country. These rivers are the Okavango River with its many tributaries and swamps, Lake Ngami, Linyanti/Chobe River, Boteti River and the Savuti Channel. The Okavango Swamps have a mean area of 10,000 km<sup>2</sup> while the Linyanti/Chobe River extends for about 300 km before joining the Zambezi River on the border with Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe.
22. Population: No proper census has been undertaken so far, partly because of lack of funds, but mainly because of the difficulty in conducting a census in the mainly Phragmites/Papyrus infested Okavango Swamps where the crocodiles are mainly found (Graham 1976). Qualitative observations, however, indicate that the population is not only healthy but rapidly recovering from the effects of past exploitation (Graham, 1976; Medem, 1981; Slogrove, 1985).
23. Habitat: Apart from drought, which causes some of the smaller rivers and streams to dry up, the crocodile's habitat is secure. There is, however, talk of taking water from the Okavango Swamps southwards for use by the mining industry and for human domestic use. A veterinary disease control cordon fence partly surrounds the Okavango Swamps and this separates the cattle and arable farming from the swamps. There is also a proposal, which has been accepted in principle, to declare most of the swamps a Wildlife Management Area and this should ensure even more

protection for the swamps and their crocodile populations. Some 3,880 km<sup>2</sup> of the Okavango Delta comprises the Moremi Game Reserve where no hunting or capture of any species, including the crocodile, is allowed. At least 100 km of the Linyanti/Chobe system falls within the Chobe National Park.

### 3. Trade Data

31. National Utilization: Botswana has an annual hunting quota not exceeding 150 crocodiles. In 1984 the annual hunting quota was 138, in 1985 it was 55 and in 1986 it was 50. This reduced hunting quota is only for the non-resident safari sport or recreational hunters. In addition two crocodile farms were allowed a combined quota of 1,600 crocodiles and 12,000 eggs for the purpose of setting up their farms and testing the market. One farm has so far captured 557 crocodiles and collected 3,991 eggs and it is to obtain its outstanding quota this year. The second farm started later and it has so far captured 131 crocodiles and collected 1,582 eggs and thus has an outstanding balance of 469 crocodiles and 4,418 eggs.
32. Legal International Trade: Since the licensing of the first crocodile farm in 1983 and as shown in 31. (above) the national hunting quota has been progressively reduced to its present level of 50 animals and this only for non resident safari hunters. This reduction was made to facilitate the setting up of crocodile farms and to accommodate their capture and export quotas. So far the Maun farm has, since its inception in 1983, exported 2,018 live animals, composed of wild captured adult crocodiles and hatchlings from wild collected eggs and eggs produced on the farm. They have not yet started exporting dead specimens. The Kazungula farm has, since it started operating in 1984, exported live animals, also composed of wild captured crocodiles and hatchlings from collected eggs. No dead specimens have been exported so far. All these live crocodiles have been exported to crocodile farms.

Even though we submitted the request for an export quota in September 1985, the matter dragged on all of 1986 and thus the effective date for the 2,000 p.a. quota is 3 January 1987. Obviously there is not much one can say about the utilization of this CITES, sanctioned quota since it is only less than two months since it became effective. Our previous exports were on the basis of our reservation.

33. Illegal Trade: Since no market exists locally for crocodile skins no report of illegal collection of crocodile or sale of crocodile products has come to light within the last ten years at least. Any extra killing of crocodiles, apart from licensed killing, is due to predation control in cases where crocodiles attack people and/or livestock. The killing of an animal in such cases is, however, legal according to the national fauna legislation. Illegal trade is thus very, very insignificant so far and while this is good news to conservationists it is bad news for the species since it means the animal is valueless and any attempted attack it makes on human life or livestock is likely to end up in its death as it is considered to be vermin.

34. Potential Trade Threats:

341. Live specimens. As already stated live specimens have so far only been in trade since 1983 and export has been from Government licensed crocodile farmers to crocodile farms in South Africa. Even though Botswana has a reservation on crocodiles our Fauna Conservation Law is, if anything, even more demanding than CITES as we issue permits for even the smallest item of a wild animal. Trade in live specimens is also under strict control from the veterinary side as they also have to issue a permit before any live animal can be exported, and even within the country they have zones and one requires a permit to take an animal from one veterinary zone to another. Finally the Customs Department at the point of exit also requires to see valid export permits. There is thus little chance of trade in live specimens proving a threat to the species

342. Parts and Derivatives. The Fauna Conservation Act requires possession of an export permit for exporting any skin or other parts of a crocodile and similar restrictions are imposed by the veterinary authorities as for live specimens. Locally, because of the small size of the crocodile quota, there is no market for crocodile skins and this has enabled us to this year cancel the quota normally given for residents to hunt since it was hardly ever used. The only skins to be exported will be trophy skins for licensed foreign hunters and even then the law only allows one animal per hunter per year. There is thus no incentive for illegal trade in the species.

4. Protection Status

41. National: The Fauna Conservation Act (Chapter 38:01 of the Laws of Botswana) has as its preamble: "An Act to make further and better provision for the conservation and control of the wild animal life of Botswana...". A crocodile is a game animal and can be hunted on licence or captured on the strength of a permit issued in terms of the Fauna Conservation Act. As for any other animal, crocodile may not be hunted or collected in a Game Reserve or National Park. A crocodile or its parts and derivatives may only be exported on the strength of an export permit issued in terms of the Fauna Conservation Act. As stated elsewhere the annual quota for hunting crocodiles has been 150 or less and this year has been reduced to one third its normal size so as to discourage individual hunting by residents who do not have a reliable market anyway and find themselves losing money on buying crocodile licences only to end up with skins which have no buyers.

42. International: Botswana depends a lot on its own internal laws for protecting its wildlife resources and any wild animal specimen, whether live or dead, has to have a permit, either import, export or re-export. Crocodiles fall under the category of animals for which export permits are required. The strength of this domestic legislation made it only natural that Botswana should become a Party to CITES. The difference has been that Botswana had a reservation as it did not believe that the Botswana population of crocodiles deserved a CITES Appendix I status. This has now been resolved by the decision to place

crocodile populations in Appendix II on the basis of a set wild export quota. This should ensure adequate international protection of this species since both Botswana and CITES have now agreed on a common status for the species.

43. Additional Protection Needs: None considered necessary.

5. Information on Similar Species

Only the Nile crocodile occurs in Botswana.

6. Comments from Countries of Origin

Comments on the accepted proposal for the Botswana case were circulated by the Secretariat. Botswana was encouraged by the confidence shown by the Parties on its strong conservation policies in the way they supported the downlisting proposal despite lack of quantitative scientific data. Botswana therefore undertakes to use the interim period to gather preliminary data on the crocodile populations for presentation at the Canada meeting of the Conference of the Parties. This will just be the beginning of a long term project aimed at establishing the size of the crocodile populations. We have just employed a researcher to undertake this important project. We can only hope that in future when the CITES Secretariat employs a consultant Botswana will be included, unlike in this case where a crocodile study was commissioned but it excluded Botswana, which made our request for downlisting an uphill struggle.

7. Additional Remarks

71. Quota. Botswana proposes an extension of the 2,000 wild crocodiles per annum for 1988, 1989 and 1990 on the understanding that after the Botswana-based crocodile farms have been registered with the CITES Secretariat they will be able to export, in their own right, any number of farm-bred crocodiles.

72. Reservation. Technically, Botswana no longer has any reservation on the Nile crocodile for as long as it remains in Appendix II. Administratively the matter still has to be formalised. Clarification will be sought on the case with which or on the circumstances under which someone can arbitrarily decide that we shall get a zero quota or our population will be retransferred to Appendix II. We would like to be reassured that retransferring the Botswana crocodile population to Appendix I is not an easy administrative decision which can be taken at any time but a serious decision which can only be taken by the Conference of the Parties on the basis that the population is endangered.

73. Marking System. We already have a supply of suitable tags from the Secretariat which we will start using this year.

74. Rationale Behind the Request. As indicated elsewhere, due to the delay in the acceptance of our transfer request, we only got the 2,000 per annum quota with effect from 3 January 1987. We therefore have not had time to monitor it. We feel, however, that the quota will suffice until 1990 as long as once our crocodile farms are registered (one of them is already registered) they will be allowed to export farm bred crocodiles or products in their own right without being limited to the 2,000 p.a. which is only for wild captured crocodiles.