

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

Seventh Meeting of the Conference of the Parties

Lausanne (Switzerland), 9 to 20 October 1989

Report of the Secretariat

STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE SECRETARIAT

This document has been prepared and is submitted by the Secretariat.

At the 18th meeting of the Standing Committee in Lausanne (27 February to 3 March 1989) the Secretariat agreed to prepare for submission to the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties a long term or strategic plan for its operations. That plan is attached (Annex) for the consideration of the Parties.

STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE SECRETARIAT OF THE
CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora came into being at a Plenipotentiary Conference in Washington, D.C. in 1973 and entered into force on 1 July 1975. Now, 14 years later, the Convention has passed its initial growth period. By the middle of the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties there will be 103 members around the world. The initial period of listing species in the appendices has also likely passed, and the Parties to the Convention must settle down to the more difficult task of managing wild fauna and flora resources more effectively. The CITES Secretariat can and must help in this process. This Strategic Plan is intended to provide some guidance on how that assistance will be provided over the next five to seven years.

WHAT IS THE CITES SECRETARIAT?

The CITES Secretariat is established under the provisions of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, and specifically Article XII. This Article gives the Secretariat a very broad mandate to perform a number of tasks in the service of the Convention and the Parties that adhere to it. Included in the mandate are such broad responsibilities as "to undertake scientific and technical studies ..." [Art. XII, 2(c)], and "to invite the attention of the Parties to any matter pertaining to the aims of the present Convention" [Art XII, 2(e)]; not to mention the broadest section, "to perform any other function that may be entrusted to it by the Parties" [Art XII, 2(i)].

The last section quoted provides the basis for the large number of Resolutions of the Conference of the Parties that also call on the Secretariat to perform a wide range of specific tasks. Resolutions are the way the Conference of the Parties provides direction to the Secretariat.

It is equally important to understand what the CITES Secretariat can not do. The CITES Secretariat is not an international wildlife enforcement agency. It is not empowered to investigate allegations of infractions against national legislation in member states or to take legal action against either individuals or states. Nor can the CITES Secretariat dictate policy to the Parties, collectively or individually. The role of the CITES Secretariat is to assist Parties and to facilitate the implementation of the Convention, not to supplant the legitimate sovereign interests of its members. If the Secretariat is to successfully serve the interests of the Conference of the Parties it cannot serve only the interests of any one Party.

OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

Wild fauna and flora are important, sometimes even critical, resources for a country. More and more the people of the world and their governments are coming to realize the importance of their natural heritage. The crucial economic asset of renewable resources is the very fact of their capacity for renewal. The recognition that this capacity can be overtaxed has led to an increasing awareness of the need for sustainable development of renewable resources.

The environmental concerns of the late 1960's and early 1970's have been renewed and strengthened in the late 1980's with growing awareness of the rapid loss of the Earth's biological diversity, the disappearance of tropical forests, the depletion of the ozone layer, and environmental degradation of air and water. These concerns have been reflected in the World Conservation Strategy, the report Our Common Future (from the World Commission on Environment and Development chaired by Gro Harlem Brundtland), and increasing pressure on governments from their citizens to pay more attention to and spend more on the environment and conservation.

Governments are becoming more aware of the benefits of long term management versus short term over-exploitation. Unfortunately, a growing awareness of environmental concerns does not always translate immediately into more effective environmental protection. The major economic systems of the developed world still have difficulty accounting for the contributions of traditional renewable resource based economies. Burgeoning human populations create almost irresistible pressures on the land and its resources. Unfortunately, but understandably in some cases, long term solutions are being sacrificed to the imperative of short term needs.

LONG TERM GOAL

It should be clear that the long term goal of the CITES Secretariat will be stated differently than the long term goals of the Conference of the Parties as laid out in the Convention. The Secretariat goal must be responsive to the changing needs of the Parties, and the changing priorities they set within the overall framework of the Convention. The more limited goal of the Secretariat can be stated as:

To administer the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, in co-operation with Party Governments, international organizations, non-governmental conservation and wildlife trade organizations, and individuals, so as to ensure that no species of wild fauna or flora is threatened with extinction due to international trade.

MEDIUM TERM GOALS

Long term goals are seldom if ever completely fulfilled. More specific direction is needed for shorter terms, otherwise there is a danger that activities will be poorly focussed and unco-ordinated. Thus a set of medium term goals have been elaborated. These statements provide more specific information about how the CITES Secretariat plans to make progress towards fulfilling its long term goal over a period of the next five to seven years.

1. Encourage the Conference of the Parties to make more effective use of the full authority of the Convention.
 - The potential of the provisions of the current Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora has not yet been fully exploited, while at the same time there are calls for additional international instruments to counter problems that could be effectively attacked within the framework of the existing Convention.
2. Extend the membership of CITES to include better representation in Asia, Eastern Europe, and the Arabic world.
 - The map of CITES Parties has some noticeable blank spots that are important in the context of wildlife trade.

3. Provide enhanced support to Parties for the more effective implementation of the Convention.
 - Many Parties, especially those new to the Convention, require more consistent and readily accessible assistance in the implementation of the Convention.
4. Support the development of the permanent Committee system of the Convention.
 - The Committee system established by Resolution Conf. 6.1 is just beginning to take effect and will need some assistance to reach its full potential.
5. Develop more understanding at the upper and middle echelons of government, as well as grass roots public awareness of the importance of making CITES work.
 - It is essential that everyone who should know about the Convention, does know about it.

It should be clear that these goals do not cover the full range of activities of the Secretariat. It is understood that the routine work must also be accomplished, although it is not emphasized in this list or in the list of specific objectives that follows.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

Even more detailed planning is required for the short term. Specific objectives need to be established before detailed budget planning can begin. In fact, the regular budget cycle provides a convenient and useful framework for the presentation of the specific actions the CITES Secretariat needs to undertake in the next two years. Like the financial budget this planning budget is subject to the effects of changing circumstances and will need to be updated annually in the same manner.

Specific objectives are also useful in helping determine whether real progress is being made towards the longer term goals of the organization. To do this effectively it is necessary that the specific objectives be measurable, and that some system be put in place for collecting and assessing the information so gathered.

The specific objectives can be loosely grouped to correspond with the five Medium Term Goals, and are presented here in the same order.

1. Broaden authority

1.1 Establish an iterative long term planning and reporting process.

- Progress towards meeting this objective will be measured by whether such a system is in place and accepted by the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties

- 1.2 Assist in the development of national legislation for the implementation of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.
 - It is intended that model legislation for states operating under the principles of Islamic law be prepared, and that specific assistance be provided directly or through the offices of the CITES Secretariat for at least 5 Parties per annum.
- 1.3 Ensure that all Parties to the Convention have properly registered both Management and Scientific Authorities before the end of 1991.
 - Progress will be self-evident.
- 1.4 Develop CITES projects that demonstrate the range of actions possible under the influence of the Convention.
 - A minimum of 3 projects per year will be developed that will serve as examples, in the different regions, of the range of activities supported by the Convention.
2. Extend membership
 - 2.1 Establish a set of criteria to determine the states it is most important to add to the CITES family, and make direct contact with the ten states judged the highest priority.
 - It should be possible to convince five additional states to accede to the Convention during the planning period.
3. Enhance support to Parties
 - 3.1 Provide direct assistance to the Management Authorities of all new Parties, and to others that request such assistance, in the implementation of the basic systems of the Convention.
 - All new Parties should receive a personal visit within six weeks of accession, and other Parties should be visited within six months of their request for assistance.
 - 3.2 Develop a training programme that contributes to a better understanding of the Convention and its implementation.
 - Progress in this field will be measured by the number of individuals trained in courses and/or seminars developed, sponsored or initiated by the CITES Secretariat.
 - 3.3 Establish a translation service within the Secretariat.
 - The Standing Committee has recommended the addition of two full time staff translators to facilitate the operation of the Secretariat in all three working languages. The effectiveness of this objective will be measured by a decrease in the amount of time required to obtain translations of important documents and an increase in the amount of material provided to Parties in the working language of their choice.

3.4 Modernize the office equipment of the CITES Secretariat.

- The capital equipment of the Secretariat, especially the word-processing/computer system needs to be updated. A new office automation system will mean easier integration of efforts among staff members and will increase the opportunities for direct contact with various users and contributors.

3.5 Develop CITES projects that respond to the information needs of the Parties.

- Many Parties need assistance to develop and implement the necessary basic biological studies to gather the information to properly manage species, whether they be endangered or simply economically important.

3.6 Establish a better capability within the Secretariat to respond to requests for assistance from Parties.

- Progress towards meeting this goal will be most rapid if the Secretariat is able to staff the regional and investigations officer positions that it has proposed. Expected results of staffing the positions include a shorter response time to requests for assistance, an ability to respond to more detailed requests for assistance such as confirmation of an increased number of permits, and an ability to provide professional assistance with respect to enforcement problems.

4. Support the permanent Committee system

4.1 Establish a better capability within the Secretariat to respond to issues concerning plants.

- Progress towards meeting this goal will be evident if the Secretariat is able to staff the proposed Plants Officer position, the need for which has been evident for several years now. Expected results of staffing the position include an increased awareness among Parties of the problems of the plant trade and better implementation of the Convention with respect to plants.

4.2 Establish budget allocations for Committee operations.

- While the principal responsibility for this objective rests with the Parties themselves through their approval of the budget, the Secretariat can assist by devoting a portion of its fundraising activities to the problem of operating funds for these Committees. Past experience has shown, however, that donors are very reluctant to contribute to what they see as the core work of the Convention, preferring that the Parties fund these activities through the main budget.

5. Expand public awareness of CITES

5.1 Develop an expanded public awareness programme that explains why it is important that the Convention succeed.

- Progress in meeting this objective will be evident from increased contact with the various media, including the press, radio, and television, as well as special audiences such as airline companies

and travel agents. Other indicators will include the number of publications produced by a revitalized publication programme, and the number of other specific products such as audio/visual packages produced.

5.2 Promote the concept of sustainable development, especially within the CITES family.

- While measuring progress towards this objective will be difficult it is nonetheless important that the Secretariat continue its efforts to educate those involved in the trade of wildlife about the importance of limiting the trade to sustainable levels, and to educate those opposed to trade in wildlife about the important role wildlife utilization can have in the protection of species and ecosystems.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Meeting the goals and objectives established for the CITES Secretariat will require resources, both human and financial. The budget presentations of the Secretariat have been developed in conjunction with this long term plan and provide a detailed estimate of what will be needed to make significant progress towards achieving the stated objectives. The two forecasts go together; it is not reasonable to approve an ambitious set of goals and objectives and ignore the need for appropriate resources. Nor is it reasonable for the Secretariat to submit a request for substantial funding without explaining what it hopes to accomplish if the resources are provided.

For the next budget cycle several new and important initiatives should be highlighted. Funding is being sought to establish for the first time officers of the CITES Secretariat in the three principal producer regions. These positions will be key in meeting our objectives for better communication with the Parties. Two additional professional staff members are being sought to work in areas that have not received sufficient attention to date, namely Plants and Investigations.

The Secretariat is also seeking a major block of funding to modernize its own internal communications and make the office more efficient.

REVIEW OF THE PLAN

Long term plans are an attempt to predict and influence the future of an organization. At the very best they can make an educated guess about the factors that will come to bear on the organization over the life of the plan and suggest how the organization should react. The guesses will not always (and sometimes not even often) be right and adjustments will have to be made. The long term planning process must include regular reviews to be useful. The long term plan of the CITES Secretariat should be reviewed at every meeting of the Conference of the Parties. Different sections of the plan will change at different rates. Specific Objectives for each budget cycle will probably be very different than the ones preceding. Medium Term Goals should undergo a slower evolution, and the Long Term Goal should be stable unless there is a major change in emphasis for the Convention, and therefore for the CITES Secretariat.