

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

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, Botswana, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia, Parties to the Convention, submitted proposals for amendment pursuant to the Resolution on "Ranching". These proposals were as follows:
 - Botswana: Maintenance of its population of Crocodylus niloticus in Appendix II
 - Madagascar: Maintenance of its population of Crocodylus niloticus in Appendix II
 - Malawi: Maintenance of its population of Crocodylus niloticus in Appendix II
 - Mozambique: Maintenance of its population of Crocodylus niloticus in Appendix II
 - Zambia: Maintenance of its population of Crocodylus niloticus in Appendix II.

2. In accordance with Resolution Conf. 3.15, recommendation d), the Secretariat communicated the proposals to IUCN and WTMU (both have agreed to undertake jointly a thorough review of amendment proposals) to obtain appropriate scientific and technical advice. A substantial answer was received from IUCN/SSC Trade Specialist Group (co-ordinator of the review) regarding the proposals submitted by Madagascar and Malawi. These comments were forwarded to the proponents which in turn, provided additional information (Madagascar) or a totally revised proposal (Malawi). Minor details were also requested from other proponents.

3. The amendment proposals and revised 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 30 May 1989 (see document Doc. 7.43 Annex 1).

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

4. Recognizing the importance of the Nile crocodile (Crocodylus niloticus) for several African countries, the Secretariat developed a project to provide high quality technical assistance to facilitate the establishment of the necessary national programmes and to prepare ranching proposals where appropriate. The project started in late 1987 in the following countries: Botswana, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia. When this document was drafted, the final report on the project had not yet been received and the Secretariat, therefore, cannot use it as a basis for its recommendations on the proposals.
5. It is worthwhile to note that all the Parties which have submitted a proposal pursuant to Resolution Conf. 3.15 have had their populations of Crocodylus niloticus listed in Appendix II since 1985 or 1987 (Botswana), but subject to annual export quotas (see also document Doc. 7.37 Annex 1).
6. When the recommendations below from the Secretariat were drafted, the final report of IUCN and WTMU had also not yet been received and the Secretariat, therefore, was not in a position to use it.

Recommendations from the Secretariat

7. 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 CITES project co-ordinator Jonathan Hutton (see item 4. above) and the IUCN/WTMU review (see item 2. above). However, it is worthwhile to note that Dr. Hutton has worked closely with the Management Authorities of most countries, including with regard to the preparation of the proposals.
8. Except for Zambia where a hunting ban was established in November 1987, all other proposing countries authorize/or intend to continue to authorize some form of exploitation (sport hunting, cropping, control hunting) of wild crocodiles besides the egg collection for ranching.

Resolution Conf. 3.15 does not address this problem at all, but as the populations for which a ranching proposal has been adopted are deemed to be no longer endangered and to benefit by ranching, and, therefore, are transferred to Appendix II as a whole, sustainable exploitation should be possible.

In addition, all five proposing countries have their populations presently listed in Appendix II subject to annual export quotas, which are constituted mainly or at least partly of wild-collected animals. It would not appear logical to prohibit all trade in wild animals after the adoption of a ranching proposal which is supposed to reflect a better knowledge of the wild population than what is required for a proposal under Resolution Conf. 5.21.

In any way, this issue should be carefully considered by the Conference of the Parties and a decision be made on what would be acceptable. The Secretariat does not feel that a resolution is necessary for that purpose, as the decision which will be taken regarding the five present proposals would serve as a precedent for the future proposals.

The Secretariat has also the feeling that the level of such exploitation of the wild population, if authorized, would have to be determined by the countries concerned themselves within their management programmes. This means that the Conference of the Parties should not have to agree on this level. As the Conference of the Parties has established a safeguard

against abuse of Resolution Conf. 3.15 [see Resolution Conf. 6.22, paragraph c), which provides for a procedure to propose the transfer of a population back to Appendix I], the countries concerned would not have any interest in over-exploiting their wild populations.

9. Proposal from Botswana: The proposal is well prepared and the Secretariat considers that it meets the criteria of Resolution Conf. 3.15. However, it appears that the two established ranches will not be authorized any more, after 1989, to collect eggs from the wild. They will, therefore, become captive-breeding operations. If this is really the case, the incentive to keep wild populations in good conditions might be reduced. Some clarification on this point would be useful, as well as the evolution of the situation regarding the development of two new operations mentioned in the document attached to the proposal.

The Secretariat recommends that the proposal be accepted.

10. Proposal from Madagascar: This proposal is rather poor and expresses more intents than effective development. As indicated under item 2. above, initial comments have been made by IUCN on this proposal, which were communicated to Madagascar. The answer from Madagascar has been attached to the supporting statement (Letter of the Directeur des Eaux et Forêts to Monsieur le Secrétaire Général de la CITES dated 5 Mai 1989).

The letter confirms that hunting will be limited (sic), for the season having started in early 1989 to 4,000 crocodiles, including 1,000 for export. Such a number is certainly not sustainable if the population is of about 22,000 crocodiles (Béhra and Hutton, 1988) or even if the exploited population is of 20,000 - 30,000 animals (section 22. of the proposal). In addition, it is obvious that the skins to be used locally will produce finished articles (bags, etc.) to be exported one way or another. All these exports are in excess of the quota granted by the Conference of the Parties, as 1,000 skins (equivalent to the quota) are exported as such.

If the farm of Société REPTÉL has now been registered as a captive-breeding operation, the Secretariat has been informed (anon., pers. comm.) that Mr. de Lanessan has eliminated all his breeding animals by mid 1989. This has not been confirmed yet.

On the basis of the information presently available (early August) the Secretariat agrees with IUCN that Madagascar should pursue a management programme for the species based on captive-breeding/ranching and submit a more complete proposal, based on actual rather than projected results to the eight meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

The Secretariat, therefore, recommends that the proposal be rejected, but that the population of Crocodylus niloticus of Madagascar be retained on Appendix II subject to a quota established essentially in connection with the expected production of the ranches and captive-breeding operations and imperatively including the number of skins to be manufactured within Madagascar.

11. Proposal from Malawi: As indicated earlier, this proposal has been totally redrafted after Malawi had received the preliminary comments from IUCN on its initial proposal. The new draft is certainly much improved and the attached documents provide useful information. It is particularly important to notice that the number of animals to be wild-collected has been considerably reduced following King's (1988) recommendations.

A representative of the Secretariat has visited the Dangwa Crocodile Ranch in early 1989 and was impressed by the quality of its management. However, it appears from the discussion with the Head of the ranch as well as representatives of the Management Authority that the proposed change in the crocodile legislation which will bring this animal under the control of the Department of National Parks and Wildlife instead of the Department of Fisheries would be a very important step forward for the conservation of the resource, and for the implementation of a sound management programme including the ranch. For the time being, the ranch manager is very concerned by the conservation of the species; it is nevertheless not acceptable that the activity of the ranch not be better monitored by the Government, in particular regarding the egg collection and the release of a certain number of ranched animals for restocking.

Regarding the collection of wild animals, the decision to reduce the quota is certainly appropriate. Presently, a minimum size limit has been established, but not a maximum size limit. As hunters do not appear to be well controlled by the Department of Fisheries, it would not be surprising that small animals be occasionally replaced by larger ones, even if the quota has been reached. Here also the change in the administration would be favourable.

The Secretariat recommends that the proposal from Malawi be accepted, subject to further discussion regarding the export of skins of wild-collected animals.

12. Proposal from Mozambique: This proposal has been well prepared in close co-operation with the Co-ordinator of the CITES project, Dr. J. Hutton. The co-operation of Zimbabwe, the leader in the ranching of the Nile crocodile, was apparently also useful for Mozambique to develop its ranching programme.

The main concern regarding Mozambique is the political situation. Its effect on wildlife in general and crocodiles in particular is unknown. Even if this should not affect the ranching scheme, it might be worthwhile to take it into consideration regarding cropping which should in any case (see section 342.) be reviewed.

The Secretariat recommends, however, that the proposal be accepted, unless new information would justify another position.

13. Proposal from Zambia: Zambia is, with Zimbabwe, the country in which crocodile ranching has known the greatest development. The ban on commercial hunting decreed by the President of the Republic in November 1987 does not affect egg collection and, therefore, will not harm the ranching programme in the country.

The Secretariat recommends that the proposal from Zambia be accepted as meeting the agreed criteria.

Comments from the Parties

14. The Secretariat received no comments from the Parties on ranching proposals.