

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

Eighth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties
Kyoto (Japan), 2 to 13 March 1992

Matters Related to the Standing Committee

REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN

Introduction

The work of the Standing Committee in the biennium since the last meeting of the Conference of the Parties was heavily influenced by the lack of a Secretary General in the period between the departure on 30 November 1989 of Mr. Eugene Lapointe and the arrival on 1 July 1991 of Mr. Izgrev Topkov.

The number of Parties grew rapidly in the period since the last meeting of the Conference of the Parties, from 102 to 112 at the time of writing this report. We welcome all of the new Parties.

The Standing Committee, and conservation generally, lost a friend and tireless advocate with the death of Dr. Felipe Benavides in 1991. We will miss his energy and advice.

Mandate of the Standing Committee

The past biennium saw the implementation of two important changes to the Standing Committee. The first was the involvement of Alternate Regional Representatives, which brought about the participation of the representative of Trinidad and Tobago in the 23rd meeting of the Standing Committee and the working group on the development of the Terms of Reference on the Administration of the Secretariat. The second was the establishment of procedures for the review and approval of externally funded projects and project donors in response to Resolution Conf. 7.2.

Meetings of the Standing Committee

During the reporting period the Standing Committee held three regular and one special meeting.

21st Lausanne, Switzerland, 5-8 February, 1990 (regular)
22nd Nairobi, Kenya, 8-10 August, 1990 (special)
23rd Lausanne, Switzerland, 8-12 April, 1991 (regular)
24th Lausanne, Switzerland, 20-21 January, 1992 (regular)

In addition, representatives of the Standing Committee met twice as members of the selection panel to interview candidates for the post of Secretary General.

Minutes of the first three meetings listed above have been circulated to the Parties. A brief summary of the highlights of the meetings follows.

21st Meeting

At this meeting the Standing Committee established the outlines of the operating budget for the triennium and the first detailed guidelines for the review and approval of externally funded projects. The latter work was undertaken to fulfil the charge to the Standing Committee from Resolution Conf. 7.2, as well as the inclusion of funding in the core budget for significant trade studies and their co-ordination.

The Standing Committee also established the beginnings of a system for the appraisal of the performance of the Secretariat, and the Secretary General in particular. It was during the course of this meeting that the Standing

Committee was informed of the intention of the Executive Director of UNEP to replace the Secretary General. After considerable discussion it was agreed that the Standing Committee must have a role in decisions related to the staffing of the position of Secretary General, and the Chairman was given a mandate to discuss the matter with the Executive Director.

22nd Meeting

This special meeting was called at the request of the Chairman to discuss the very difficult situation that had developed with respect to the decision of the Executive Director not to renew the contract of Mr. Eugene Lapointe, as well as several other staffing issues. At this meeting it was agreed that representatives of the Standing Committee would be involved in the selection process for a new Secretary General, and that a mechanism would be established to ensure that the Standing Committee had input into the annual performance appraisal process. Malawi, Canada, Japan, and Switzerland were chosen to represent the Standing Committee on the selection panel.

At this meeting the Standing Committee directed the Secretariat to prepare for its consideration a draft of a memorandum of understanding between the Standing Committee and UNEP with respect to the administration of the Secretariat.

Subsequent to the 22nd meeting the Selection Panel met twice to interview candidates for the position of Secretary General. Both times they found at least one candidate qualified for the position. However, the Executive Director refused to confirm the appointment of the first candidate qualified by the Selection Panel.

23rd Meeting

This meeting was dominated by discussions about the relationship between the Conference of the Parties, the Standing Committee, and UNEP. In particular, the role of UNEP and its Executive Director in staffing matters was of obvious concern to Standing Committee members. After some discussion with the representative of UNEP the Terms of Reference for the Administration of the Secretariat were modified, and the Chairman was given a mandate to negotiate a solution with the Executive Director before the first of August 1990. At the same time a small working group was struck to transform the document into a draft resolution for consideration at the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties if negotiations were unsuccessful.

The meeting also considered some minor modifications to the guidelines for the review and approval of externally funded projects, and several very serious concerns about infractions to the Convention in certain countries. As a result of information provided to the members the Standing Committee recommended a total ban on CITES trade with Thailand, and directed the Secretariat to notify the Parties of a similar ban with respect to Grenada after 30 days if the situation there did not improve dramatically in line with the undertakings provided by that government.

The Standing Committee also heard a report from the Government of Japan concerning preparations for the next meeting of the Conference of the Parties. After careful consideration of the undertakings provided by Japan, the Standing Committee expressed its satisfaction with the preparations, and reconfirmed the decision of the Conference of the Parties to hold the ninth meeting in Kyoto, March 2-13, 1992.

24th Meeting

The 24th meeting was principally concerned with the preparations for the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. In particular, the ongoing difficult negotiations between the Host Country and UNEP with respect to a host country agreement were of great concern to the members of the Standing Committee. While it seemed that significant progress was made in determining the exact areas of disagreement, final resolution of the problem was not possible during the course of the meeting.

Several other arrangements with respect to the next meeting of the Conference of the Parties were agreed, including several changes to the Rules of Procedure, changes to the Working Programme, and the nomination of the Chairmen of the meeting and of Committees I and II and the Budget Committee, as well as approval of a small pamphlet of helpful hints for participants in the meeting.

The Standing Committee also approved a final negotiating version of a draft agreement on the Terms of Reference for the Administration of the Secretariat by UNEP, but once again final resolution of the subject had to wait, pending a decision by the Executive Director of UNEP. The Standing Committee did agree that it would participate in the annual review of the performance of the Secretary General, and delegated that task to the Vice-Chairman (Canada).

The meeting also confirmed the continuation of the Notifications requesting a ban on trade with Thailand and Grenada, approved the Secretariat projections for core budget expenditures in 1992, and approved several new externally funded projects. After some discussion the Standing Committee also gave the Secretariat a mandate to monitor carefully the progress of Italy in implementing new legislation for CITES and its progress in improving the implementation of the Convention in general. The Standing Committee established a deadline of three months for Italy to make significant progress, and if such progress was not evident the Secretariat was given the mandate to issue a Notification calling for a ban on all CITES trade with that country. However, the Standing Committee also decided to review the situation when meeting immediately prior to the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, on 1 March 1992.

Future Considerations

It is becoming increasingly clear that the long and growing list of Resolutions adopted by the Conference of the Parties is in need of review and consolidation. Many of the Resolutions have been superseded, or portions have been overtaken by later decisions. Some are contradictory. It is the belief of the Standing Committee that the administration of the Convention could be made more efficient if the Resolutions were reviewed and consolidated, with appropriate amendments suggested where necessary. The Standing Committee therefore seeks the approval of the meeting to undertake the direction of such a complete review of the Resolutions, with a mandate to bring the results to the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties for consideration, and hopefully adoption.

I wish to express my sincere appreciation, on behalf of myself as Chairman and my fellow members of the Standing Committee, for the great co-operation and assistance provided by the Secretariat during the past two and a half years. This has been a difficult time for CITES, and for the Secretariat, but through it all the members of the Secretariat have shown a spirit of professionalism and undying devotion to the ideals of the Convention. Without their assistance our Convention would not have been able to make the many important gains it has. I know that the incoming Standing Committee will enjoy the same excellent support, and will be able to carry on with the many important challenges it will face.

Matthew W. Matemba
Chairman of the Standing Committee