

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

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Reports and Recommendations of Committees

PLANTS COMMITTEE

This report covers the last quarter of 1989 through 1991, during which time the Plants Committee (PC) held its second through fourth meetings (PC2-PC4) and the Secretariat first gained a Plants Officer, with consequent changes in PC duties. Although few Parties and individuals are familiar with the plant aspects of CITES, enough have participated for both continuity and progress in plant considerations.

1. Perspective

Orientation and background for the Plants Committee are in documents listed at the end of this report. The PC was preceded (1983-1988) by the CITES Plant Working Group (PWG), which was initiated at COP4 (April 1983) and met annually: PWG1, February-March 1984 (Tuscon); PWG2, April-May 1985 (Buenos Aires, COP5); PWG3, June 1986 (Lausanne, TEC2); and PWG4, July 1987 (Ottawa; COP6). The PWG efforts are summarized in CITES PWG 1989 (which includes the original PWG3 and PWG4 reports). Materials from the November 1988 Plants Committee first meeting (PC1) are in CITES PC 1989; cf. MacBryde 1988a, 1988b. In all of these meetings effective implementation of CITES has been the predominant subject, rather than the review of taxa for the appendices.

2. PC2 (Lausanne, 1989: Activities Concurrent with COP7), through half 1990

Somewhat as PWG2 and PWG4, PC2 (October 1989, Lausanne) was simultaneous with COP7 during the majority of time when most were occupied by non-plant matters (although increasing time conflicts support carrying out more plant activities in Committees I and II). Improved awareness generally is needed to recognize PC (and prior PWG) inherent functions, and the functions assigned to a plants group as part of a meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP). Participants on such plant matters may assemble with responsibilities under either or sometimes both auspices.

For example, at COP6 and COP7, Committees I and II encharged a Plants Working Group to review the proposals to amend the appendices, and the resolutions and/or other management issues. The work (in four sessions) of that COP7 Committee I Plants Group was summarized in Com. 7.21: PC2/1-4, and was reported in Com.I 7.4 and Com.I 7.7 (cf. Com. 7.1). The Secretariat's forward commentary (CITES Secr. 1991) to all the October 1989 plant sessions does not recognize the authorization to review issues by COP7 Committee II (in Com.II 7.4). A summary of pertinent results from the Group's ensuing seven sessions (Com. 7.21: PC2/4-10) was reported back to Committee II (in Com.II 7.11; cf. Com. 7.21: PC2/11). The distinct PS2 topics (those not straightaway relevant for COP7) were considered in ten sessions (PC2/4-13).

The summary of all these October 1989 plant sessions (as PC2/1-13) was provided along with the COP7 Proceedings (see CITES PC 1991), which is the first time such PC documents have been available so conveniently. The CITES Nomenclature Committee (NC) also used the occasion of COP7 for meetings, during which the NC including a PC representative planned continuing NC-PC co-operation and interaction (thus quickly resolving a PC2/11 concern) and allocated funds towards completion for COP8 of the checklist of Cactaceae (cacti).

As expected from planning during PC2, the Secretariat (in March-April 1990) obtained a Plants Officer, with the 3-year secondment of a botanist by the Netherlands. As his priorities, activities and duties have emerged, the PC has been gratified to observe various guidelines and plans of the PWG and the PC develop, while in addition adjusting to the presence and dynamics from someone fortunately able to concentrate full-time on basic implementation of CITES for plants. It is readily apparent that the position needs to be made permanent.

3. PC3 (Caracas, 1990)

Two sequential CITES plant meetings focusing on Latin America were held 2-5 July 1990 in Caracas, hosted by Venezuela (cf. Reyna de Aguilar, 1991). A training seminar for Management Authorities [MAs] (with others as invited observers) was conducted 2-3 July by the Secretariat's Plants Officer. On 4-5 July, the PC held its third meeting (PC3), emphasizing development of the PC for the Region of Central America, South America and the Caribbean (CSAC), and discussing implementation and trade issues related to that CITES Region (CITES PC 1992a). Although PC2 had planned for PC3 to be general, the PC Chairman decided there had not been enough progress since COP7 to warrant a general PC3, but the Parties in and trading with the CSAC Region could be prepared for a PC3 with that circumscribed focus.

Attending (usually for the 4 days) were: 15 countries, spanning the range from Mexico to Paraguay (the main importers only were the Netherlands and USA); 8 each of MAs and Scientific Authorities (SAs); and 6 each representing organizations or institutions, or individual professionals with expertise in botany, horticulture and/or conservation. However, only the PC North American (Chairman) and CSAC members of the six CITES Regions were there (so it was surmised to be only a regional gathering at PC4). The quality and mix of those who attended PC3 were strong and particularly good for Central America and South America, to bring awareness and encourage use of CITES by those in the 'plant world'.

Some PC3 accomplishments are: (1) providing a thorough knowledge of CITES to some key 'plant' individuals (and thus organizations and institutions); (2) creation of an initial network of SAs, NGOs and MAs for CITES and plants in the region, and the provision of various developmental materials; (3) approval of the CSAC member's assistant for Central America, Brazil, and the southern cone of South America; (4) a demonstration on co-ordination and conduct of actual CITES business for integration and synthesis within and beyond the Region (most attenders seldom had the opportunity to deal with such particular problems often extending well beyond their countries); (5) agreement that any CSAC Appendix-I orchid that did not qualify should be transferred to Appendix II; (6) providing an understanding of Bromeliaceae (bromeliads) and their artificial propagation, and how (with respect to trade) the wild populations differ from those of orchids and cacti; and (7) providing an awareness of the complexity in deciding whether a cactus specimen may be from the wild or artificially propagated, which emphasized the need to know well those establishments regularly engaged as exporters and/or importers of various kinds of plants.

Every PC3 participant was interested in enhancing CITES' implementation and role for conserving CSAC plant species, but all are constrained by extensive demands from their usual work. At COP7 the CSAC Region had agreed with the recommendation of PC1 (in November 1988) to facilitate their PC member's work with an informal PC substructure of assistants (whose selection was left for the PC without needing concurrence). PC3 recognized three of five subco-ordinators (for the southern cone, Brazil and Central America), but those for the Andes and Caribbean still remain open and the Brazilian botanist has relocated (for several years), while the two remaining assistants scarcely have been brought into CSAC PC activities. Moreover, at SC23 (in April 1991) there was concern about the inferred creation of subregions (see SC23/8.2), and then at PC4 reconsideration of the need for subco-ordinators was unresolved, yet the Regions were encouraged to establish networks (CITES PC 1992b). More Regional and overall efforts are essential for the CSAC PC Region to develop regular, thorough functioning.

4. PC4 (Zomba, Malawi, 1991), through 1991

Hosted through the alternate PC member for Africa (who the African Region at COP7 also specified for their PC subco-ordinator in the south), the PC fourth meeting (PC4) was 15-17 April 1991 in Zomba, Malawi. It followed the XII Congress of AETFAT (Association for the Taxonomic Study of the Flora of Tropical Africa) except for concurrent AETFAT field trips. On 15 April, first the Secretariat's Plants Officer conducted a training seminar for MAs, which was followed by a closed PC session (for the members and Party observers). In this business session, general PC budget matters were found to be too intricate to resolve into operational guidelines. On 16-17 April, the open PC sessions had a good mix of attenders, especially from Africa and Europe. PC4 was chaired by the PC Vice-Chairman; the PC North American Region was represented by an alternate (the PC Chairman had too much pressing work to attend, although he provided full written commentary for the agenda topics); the PC member for Asia also could not be present.

The main focus of PC4 was preparations for COP8, though many additional topics were addressed, such as completing the CITES Guide to Plants in Trade and a WTMU 6-month study on significant trade in some Appendix-II taxa (see CITES PC 1992b). The PC4 group reviewed precursory drafts of documents Doc. 8.27-8.29, which the Plants Officer had prepared, partly following through on matters identified in the PC2 minutes. While generally approving their substance, PC4 recommended revisions. Excluding artificially propagated seedlings of Appendix-I orchid species

which still in aseptic flasks remained desirable, but with an admissible means elusive. The revised drafts for documents Doc. 8.27-8.29 were provided in July by the Plants Officer for review within the PC, but he received few comments. Also at PC4, the Ten Year Review continued for some taxa, and drafts for most of the COP8 tropical timber proposals and *Ariocarpus* were evaluated; further communications with range States were favoured. Bromeliads (mainly tillandsias) were discussed again, as well as the Venus fly-trap *Dionaea*. Other unlisted taxa were reviewed but materials considered inadequate for proposals at COP8. After PC4, the Plants Officer also held training seminars for key Parties in Asia (21-24 May in Indonesia) and Europe (5-7 November in the Netherlands); these were not linked to PC activities.

5. Budget

As detailed in the PC Chairman's report (SC 23.16) to the meeting of the Standing Committee (SC23) in April 1991, PC officers were not informed of the actual PC allocation of CITES funds for 1990, making a balanced plan difficult. In 1990 the PC did not spend its authorized amount but the Secretariat was over budget for Committees by one third (\pm USD 20,000). Quite early in the year PC funds were scarcely or not available until Parties contributed their shares, followed by a period when expenses could be covered, but after mid-year PC funds again became uncertain as the non-PC CITES expenses rose. Thus, the actually available unspent PC amount is not determinable. To achieve well-rounded CSAC participation in PC3, about USD 4750 of non-CITES funds were raised. The PC Chairman provided detailed inquiries with some planning on the budget for 1991 and 1992 for review at PC4, but discussion there was not finalized. In 1991, again the PC did not receive notification of its initial allocation nor spend all authorized funds.

To minimize such budgetary problems, the following recommendations are made for resolution by the Parties:

- 5.1 There is a need to establish procedures for communication in a timely manner revisions made by the Standing Committee (SC) to the budget approved by the COP.
- 5.2 Because the CITES Secretariat assists the CITES Committees by obligating expenditures and making payments, there is a need for a mechanism (accounting procedures) for reporting to each Committee actual costs, perhaps on a quarterly basis.
- 5.3 Because of late annual payments by Parties, funds are not available for Committee activities until well into a calendar year. Therefore, there seems to be a need for the Secretariat to change to managing the Committee budgets on (for example) a July to July basis, with routine provision to carry over the funds for the Committee activities into the first half of the next year.
- 5.4 There is a need to clarify what types of Committee expenditures are approved in advance by the SC, and (with examples) the types of expenditures for which the PC would need specific SC approval.
- 5.5 Finally, it would be helpful to develop a standard format for Committees to use in reporting (accounting) for the Committee's expenditures.

6. PC Conduct and Characteristics

The PC needs to develop some principles on the expected minimum involvement of its six regionally selected members. For example, how much time per week or month should be directly given to the PC (in contrast to regular CITES work that also may benefit the PC)? What non-attendance record at meetings is acceptable, and under what circumstances? What preparations with the Region's Parties (including any key PC assistants) are expected of each Regional member (representative) prior to attending a PC meeting? After how many months should a Region be advised that its current member may need replacement with someone who is more active?

The method of the COP5-COP8 Chairman (1985-1992) has been to encourage the PC to develop as a broadly based, democratic group of diverse technical experts, and to discourage conversion of the PC into a political body. Not all agree with this general goal. Resolution Conf. 6.1 Annex 3 differentiates PC members, entitled (Party) observers, and invited observers. Yet the experience and history (since 1983) of the PWG and PC support this basic open approach, which was explicitly approved at PC1 (November 1988), where PC affiliation was recognized as ongoing participation, by contributory effort.

7. Pertinent References

- CITES PC, 1989. Minutes and Working Papers of the First Meeting of the Plants Committee of CITES, 2-5 November 1988, London (Kew), UK. CITES, Rijksuniv., Leiden. 126 pp.
- CITES PC, 1991. Summary Report of the [CITES] Plants Committee [2nd] meeting, [Lausanne, 12-19 October 1989]; Com. 7.21; PC2/4 pp.-13. Pp. 335, 344-368 in CITES Proceedings of the 7th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties, Lausanne, Switzerland, 9-20 October 1989. CITES Secretariat, Lausanne.
- CITES PC, 1992a. [Draft] Account on 3rd Meeting of CITES Plants Committee: Latin American/Caribbean Focus, Caracas, Venezuela, 4-5 July 1990. CITES, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, D.C. (in preparation).
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- CITES PWG, 1989. [Report on the meetings of the CITES Plants Working Group, 1984-1987]; Appendices 1-3 (pp. 29-60) in CITES PC (1989), Minutes and Working Papers of [CITES PC1]. CITES, Rijksuniv., Leiden.
- CITES Secr., 1991. Note from the [CITES] Secretariat (p. 335) at CITES PC (1991), Summary Report of [CITES PC2]; Com. 7.21 in CITES Proceedings of the 7th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties, Lausanne. CITES Secretariat, Lausanne.
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Dr Bruce MacBryde
Chairman of the Plants Committee