

Reports of the Secretariat

STRATEGIC PLAN

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat and addresses the issue of the strategic plans of the Convention and of the Secretariat.
 2. The ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties approved unanimously the Strategic Plan for the Secretariat (see document Doc. 9.17 and Proceedings of the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, page 159).
 3. The Parties also agreed that a Strategic Plan for the Convention should be developed before the already approved one of the Secretariat is revised or a new one is prepared to replace it. Document Doc. 9.17 underlined that the Strategic Plan of the Convention would naturally be broader than that of the Secretariat and would provide the basis for any revision of the latter.
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4. During the discussions on the general outline of the Review of how to improve the effectiveness of the Convention, both in the 31st Standing Committee meeting (starting in March 1994) and in the ninth meeting of the Conference itself, it was agreed that the Review would not provide immediate answers that would necessitate changes in the plan of the Secretariat but, if and when approved by the Conference, it should lay the ground for both the process of preparation and the substantive outline of a Strategic Plan of the Convention.
 5. The results from the Review confirm to a great extent these expectations of the Standing Committee and the Secretariat (see Doc. 10.21). One of the recommendations in the report of the Review is that the Conference should instruct the Secretary General in consultation with the Standing Committee to prepare a Strategic Plan for CITES. Unfortunately the whole process of conducting the Review was postponed because of a lack of funds for a whole year, and the results of it, including the above-mentioned, came more than a year later than expected.
 6. Taking note of this, in their comments on the Review, Parties expressed support for the above recommendation and at least one suggested that, after the meeting in Harare, the Standing Committee should create a working group to prepare a Strategic Plan for CITES with the assistance of the Secretariat.
 7. Given the vital importance of this task, the Secretariat fully supports this suggestion. Furthermore, with the aim of assisting the Parties in specifying what needs to be done, it submits the following comments.
 8. On 3 March 1998 the Convention will mark its 25th Anniversary. The CITES community has every reason to be proud of its achievements during the last quarter of a century. At the same time, what could be a better point in time than this jubilee date, to launch the development of an updated, strengthened vision for the future, which would lay down the route towards ambitious long- and medium-term goals. The development of these goals has to draw on past experience, to be based on very good and stable traditions, on the recognized and confirmed cornerstones of the treaty, while also taking into account the great changes of the last decades, the vastly increased interdependence of all the partners on the socio-political scene, the new international structures such as WTO, GEF, etc. and last but not least the revolution in the sphere of communications.
9. In light of the above, the Secretariat proposes that the Standing Committee organize its regular meeting for 1998 during the first week of March with a special commemorative session on 3 March. At that session, the Committee would approve and launch the work programme for the preparation of the Strategic Plan of the Convention. This of course is subject to the approval by the Conference of the Parties of the relevant recommendations contained in the report on the Review and the comments of the Parties on it.
 10. Immediately after the meeting in Harare, a Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly, which will discuss the progress achieved in the field of environment during the five years after the Rio Conference, will take place. Many member States expect the Session to adopt important decisions relevant to the global multilateral environmental agreements, such as CITES. In addition to this, the regular session of the United Nations General Assembly, in late 1997, is also expected to discuss important issues on the general reform of the whole UN system.
 11. Accordingly, by March 1998 the Standing Committee may well have already a better idea about what the biggest forum of the member States envisages for the structures of the system in the field of environment. Thus the members of the Committee may wish at that time to take note of or even incorporate, as appropriate, some of the ideas suggested by the General Assembly into either the preparatory process or the draft plan resulting from it.
 12. Evidently many themes and specific points should be included in the plan by the Parties. However, even now, at this early stage, the Secretariat can not refrain from mentioning several that have to be dealt with by the drafters in addition to those mentioned in paragraphs 10 and 11 above. The plan must give due consideration to:
 13. – the relationship between CITES and multilateral agreements in the sphere of international trade;
 14. – how the Global Environment Facility mechanism could be effectively used for financing regional or national CITES-related projects; and
 15. – how the cycle of the meetings of the Conference of the Parties should be organized.
 16. Admittedly, this particular issue is raised within the saturated context of preparation of the present meeting, overburdened by the largest ever volume of documentation. Still, the Secretariat feels obliged to appeal for real and effective measures that would help to avoid overcrowding the agenda for the meetings of the Conference of the Parties, as well as to diminish radically the documentation load, which has reached unbearable levels, both financially and from the point of view of mere perusal and absorption capacity.
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17. As far as the plan of the Secretariat is concerned, already the Conference at its seventh meeting confirmed that its mission remains "stable unless there is a major change in emphasis for the Convention and

therefore for the CITES Secretariat" (Doc. 7.7.1), and that the medium-term goals are undergoing also a slow evolution.

18. At no point in time recently, has there been a generally supported or even broadly discussed suggestion to change the mission of the Secretariat which is to assist "to ensure achievement of the long-term goal that no species of wild fauna and flora becomes threatened with extinction or subject to unsustainable exploitation because of international trade".
19. Equally valid remains the main thrust of the plan, i.e. the world-wide coverage and strict implementation of the Convention through procedures that are as simplified as possible, as well as the majority of the medium-term goals.
20. Taking into account this as well as paragraph 3 above, the Secretariat does not propose changes in its Strategic Plan now. The review should occur once the Strategic Plan for the Convention is finalized.
21. At the same time, the Secretariat has taken very seriously the points raised by member States as to where its planning policy needs to be revised.
22. What lately has been the subject of remarks by some Parties was the inadequate information given to them about the organizational structure of the Secretariat and the delineation of the responsibilities of the staff members as well as the necessity to establish a work plan and financial plan tied to the strategic goals (see paragraphs 29 and 30 of Doc. 10.21).
23. This inadequacy has been dealt with by the Secretariat during the last six months. The final result of its efforts, amended to incorporate the comments of the Standing Committee, is presented to the Parties in document Doc. 10.10, as the most important revision of and an integral part of the whole planning and management process of the Secretariat. Important additional comments on the budget implications are contained also in document Doc. 10.13.
24. The chronological implementation of the plan and generally of all the tasks facing the Secretariat is reported on in its regular annual reports, prepared in accordance with Article XII, paragraph 2(g). The 21st annual report is presented in document Doc. 10.8 (Rev.). That is why here the Secretariat only enumerates some of its most important accomplishments in the implementation of some medium-term tasks contained within its Strategic Plan:

25. – All the seven main problems or groups of problems identified in part A of the plan, as approved by the Conference of the Parties, are being tackled by the Secretariat as priority issues. Solutions for many of them were identified and some started to be implemented.
26. – Especially tangible results have been achieved in:
 27. – carrying out projects for priority species and taxa (part B 1.1);
 28. – extending the membership of CITES (B.2.1). 14 States have become Parties since the ninth meeting of the Conference;
 29. – assisting Parties in the development of national legislation related to CITES (B.3.2); capacity building and training (B.3.6); enforcement (B.3.3);
 30. – expanding public awareness (B.4.1 and 2);
 31. – modernizing the communications and office equipment of the Secretariat (B.7.2);
 32. – preparation of a project about the development of an information management strategy; and
 33. – obtaining for the Secretariat by a unanimous decision of the Committee, observer status in the Trade and Environment Committee of the World Trade Organization.

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34. Still, the Secretariat is confronted by many tasks, as described in the Plan or given additionally by the Parties. Their implementation has either commenced or has unfortunately been postponed because of a lack of financial or/and human resources. Careful on-going reprioritization together with aggressive fund-raising help to minimize the negative effects of the inadequate budget and staffing in order to enable continuation of the work aimed at the implementation of the Plan.
35. The Secretariat firmly believes that the preparation of the Strategic Plan of the Convention, now proposed by the Parties themselves, which undoubtedly will determine and define also the long- and medium-term goals and tasks of the Secretariat for the future, will secure the necessary balance between the economic realities of the present day world and the justified noble ambitions of our mature and dedicated CITES community, which would not accept anything less than the total realization of the ideas that are the foundation of our treaty.