

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

Eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties
Gigiri (Kenya), 10-20 April 2000

Strategic and administrative matters

RECOGNITION OF THE IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION MADE BY OBSERVERS TO THE CITES PROCESS
AT MEETINGS OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

1. This document has been submitted by the United States of America.

Introduction to the topic

2. Article XI, paragraph 7, of the Convention provides that national non-governmental organizations which have been approved to attend a meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP) as observers shall have the right to participate in the meeting but not to vote. A number of organizations that attended the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP10) as observers expressed their concerns to the United States about the limited level of participation afforded observers at that meeting, particularly in Committee I. The United States is sympathetic to these concerns and believes that the participation of observers in the discussions of issues at meetings of the CoP is essential.
3. For many of the issues submitted for discussion at meetings of the CoP, the greatest level of expertise is within the community of non-governmental organizations that attend as observers. Through their right to actively participate in the sessions of the Plenary, Committee I, Committee II, and Working Groups at past meetings of the CoP, observers have contributed information vital to the discussions of issues before the CoP, and therefore to the advancement of conservation.

Draft Rules of Procedure adopted by the Standing Committee

4. At its 42nd meeting, held in Lisbon, Portugal, September 28 - October 1, 1999, the CITES Standing Committee agreed on a draft revision of the provisional CITES Rules of Procedure. The Secretariat will submit the draft revision to CoP11, on behalf of the Standing Committee, for consideration of the Parties.
5. Several specific rules in the draft revision address participation of observers in meetings of the CoP:
 - a) Rule 2 includes the statement that observers "shall be permitted to be so represented in the Plenary sessions and sessions of Committees I and II and the Budget Committee unless one-third of the Representatives present and voting object;"
 - b) Rule 11 includes the statement that "observers shall be seated in one or more designated areas within the meeting room;"
 - c) Rule 17 includes the statement that "a delegate or observer shall speak only if called upon by the Presiding Officer, who may call a speaker to order if his/her remarks are not relevant to the subject under discussion;" and
 - d) Rule 28 includes the statement that "informative documents on the conservation and utilization of natural resources may be submitted for the attention of the participants to the meeting by: (a) any Representative of a Party or any observer representing a State not party to the Convention or an intergovernmental organization; and (b) any observer representing any other organization."

Rule 28 also includes the statement that “where such documents are to be distributed by the Secretariat, they shall be provided in sufficient numbers for distribution.”

6. Each of these specific rules in the draft revision of the Rules of Procedure facilitate the attendance and participation of observers in meetings of the CoP, in accordance with CITES Article XI, paragraph 7.

Recommendations

7. The United States prepared this discussion document in order to recognize the important contribution that observers make to the CITES processes at meetings of the Conference and to urge the Parties to ensure the preservation of the right granted to observers by Article XI of the Convention to actively participate in all CoP sessions. For CoP11 and future meetings of the CoP, the United States recommends that:
 - a) the CITES Secretariat and the host government of the meeting of the CoP make every effort to ensure that each approved observer be provided with at least one seat on the floor in the meeting rooms of the plenary sessions, Committee I, Committee II, and Budget Committee, unless one-third of the Party representatives present and voting object;
 - b) in selecting venues for future meetings of the CoP, the Parties make every effort to ensure that the venues selected have space for observers on the floors of the halls for the Plenary, Committee I, Committee II, and the Budget Committee;
 - c) the Presiding Officers of the plenary sessions, Committee I, Committee II, and the Budget Committee make every effort to allow observers time in the meeting sessions to speak on issues (make interventions);
 - d) recognizing that conservation of time, in order to complete a CoP agenda in the two-week period, is a valid concern, Presiding Officers give observers a speaking time limit if necessary and encourage observers not to be redundant in speaking on a particular issue;
 - e) when possible, Presiding Officers invite knowledgeable observers to participate in Working Groups of Committee I and Committee II; and
 - f) the Secretariat make every effort to ensure that informative documents on the conservation and utilization of natural resources, prepared by observers for distribution at the meeting of the CoP and approved by the Secretariat, are distributed to the participants in the meeting.