

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

Twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties
Santiago (Chile), 3-15 November 2002

Plenary meeting

First session: 3 November 2002: 15H30-16h45

Secretariat: W. Wijnstekers

UNEP: K. Töpfer
P. Chabeda

Rapporteurs: M. Jenkins
R. Mackenzie
P. Wheeler

Opening ceremony by the Government of Chile and welcoming addresses

Following an opening ceremony the following speakers were introduced:

The Secretary-General expressed his gratitude to the Government of Chile for hosting the meeting. He underlined the effectiveness of the Convention and observed that the number of Parties would increase from 158 to 160 during the course of the meeting. He expressed serious concerns about the growing gap between the expectations of the Parties and the resources available to meet those expectations and urged Parties to ensure that provision be made for adequate funding for implementation of any decisions they took. He stressed the importance of the *Strategic Vision through 2005* and maintained that the Convention should be playing an enhanced role in the management of commercial fisheries and the timber trade. He observed that the large number of existing Resolutions and Decisions might have made implementation and enforcement of the Convention excessively complicated and urged Parties to try to find ways to simplify these. He deplored the low priority given to the Convention in many countries and remarked that increasing public awareness of its importance in sustainable development and poverty alleviation was the only way to overcome it.

The Executive Director of UNEP, Dr K. Töpfer, noted that since the previous meeting of the Conference of the Parties the Secretariat had strengthened its work in enforcement and capacity-building, and had contributed to efforts to identify interlinkages and enhance synergies with other multilateral environmental agreements. He remarked that CITES stood at the frontline of sustainable development, and stated that this meeting represented an opportunity to take forward the agenda of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD). He emphasized the importance of the outcomes of WSSD to CITES and the role of the Convention in contributing to meeting the targets established at WSSD, particularly the goal of achieving a significant reduction in the current rate of loss of biodiversity by 2010. He emphasized that the Conference of the Parties should pay due attention to all aspects of its agenda, not only the charismatic species. He expressed the hope that this meeting would be characterized by dialogue and respect as evident in previous meetings.

The Chairman of the Standing Committee, Mr K. Stansell, emphasized the regional and global importance of many of the issues to be considered at the meeting. He stated that the strength of CITES lay in its ability to

adapt to new challenges and drew the attention of those present to the Preamble of the Convention, noting that it should be the common bond that drew the Parties together.

Mr Jaime Campos, Minister of Agriculture of Chile, on behalf of the Government of Chile, welcomed the participants to the meeting, which Chile was proud to host as a contribution to the country's work on conservation. He stressed that Chile felt a commitment to CITES, as a crucial component in the conservation of biological diversity. He noted that economic growth for future generations was essentially bound up with protection of the environment and wise management of natural resources. He said that the contributions of civil society representatives would enrich the debate of the meeting. He warned that despite effective action by CITES in the past, the challenge posed by illegal trade remained. Without adequate resources, the ability of CITES to overcome this would be severely impaired. Consequently, he urged the international community, in particular the developed countries, to take on its quota of responsibility. While environmental conservation was an essential part of sustainable development, he noted that of equal importance was the elimination of poverty. He then declared open the 12th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.