

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

Thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties
Bangkok (Thailand), 2-14 October 2004

First session: 4 October 2004: 09h15-12h05

Chairman: M. Brasher (United Kingdom)

Secretariat: W. Wijnstekers
J. Barzdo
A. Burke
M. Jankowska

UNEP: M. Collins
S. Kurdjukov

Rapporteurs: H. Corrigan
T. Inskipp
M. Jenkins
R. Mackenzie

The Secretariat announced that an additional agenda item, 65, on revision of Resolution Conf. 12.7 on Conservation of and trade in sturgeons and paddlefish, would be considered by Committee II.

Strategic and administrative matters

8. Financing and budgeting of the Secretariat and of meetings of the Conference of the Parties

8.1 Financial reports for the years 2002 and 2003

The Secretariat introduced document CoP13 Doc. 8.1 (Rev. 1) drawing attention to the high percentage of the budget spent in the years 2002 and 2003. They noted that arrears in contributions by Parties had been reduced by about USD 200,000 to about USD 645,000. In response to a request from the Standing Committee, the Secretariat had increased efforts to reduce these arrears by visiting permanent missions in Geneva. After some clarification of figures in the annexes, the document was noted by the Committee.

8.2 Estimated expenditures for the years 2004 and 2005

The Secretariat introduced document CoP13 Doc. 8.2 (Rev. 1). The delegation of the United States of America noted that the additions to the budget for 2004 and 2005 approved by the Standing Committee and drawn down from the CITES Trust Fund would reduce the amount remaining to very close to the operating cash reserve. This meant that there would be little room for flexibility in future. This was echoed by the delegations of Australia and Mexico. The delegation of France, supported by the delegation of Saint Lucia, queried the apparent cut in budget for translation of documents. The Secretary-General explained that the budget for translation of documents for the scientific committees had not been needed in full in 2004 and that the estimated expenditure for 2005 reflected this. After some further clarifications and a correction to Annex 2 in the French version, the document was noted by the Committee.

8.3 Budget for 2006-2008

The Secretariat introduced document CoP13 Doc. 8.3 (Rev. 1). The Secretary-General emphasized that the 10.3 per cent increase proposed for the triennium 2006-2008 represented merely the budget required in order to continue the current level of activities and support for the Convention.

The delegations of Argentina and Mexico questioned the use of the UN Scale of Contributions as the basis for calculating contributions to the Trust Fund. The Secretary-General reminded participants that under Resolution Conf. 12.1, the Parties had agreed that any other basis for the assessment of contributions should not be used without the consent of all Parties present and voting at a meeting of the Conference of the Parties. The delegation of Mexico, supported by the delegations of Argentina, Australia, China, the Netherlands on behalf of the Member States of the European Community, Switzerland, the United Republic of Tanzania, and the United States, called for the establishment of a working group. The delegation of Ecuador opposed this, on the grounds that smaller delegations had difficulty being represented at working groups. They believed that all substantive discussion on financial matters should take place in the Committee.

The Chairman indicated that a working group would be established to consider the budget but would not meet at the same time as the Committees, and therefore interested delegations should be able to participate. He took note of expressions of interest in the working group. The delegation of Ecuador, supported by the delegation of Argentina, called for the working group to be open-ended and requested that simultaneous interpretation be provided. The Secretary-General responded that the budget was inadequate to cover interpretation in working groups.

8.4 External funding

The Secretariat introduced document CoP13 Doc. 8.4. The Secretary-General drew the attention of participants to the potential discrepancy between the decisions that would be adopted by the Conference of the Parties, the expectations that those decisions created, and the resources that would be made available to fulfil those expectations. He pointed out the urgent need for bridging funds for the Monitoring of Illegal Killing of Elephants programme, as well as the Elephant Trade Information System, pending the next contribution from the European Commission in 2005. He further implored donors to support the Sponsored Delegates Project so as to enable the participation of at least two delegates from developing countries and countries with economies in transition. The delegation of the Bahamas, supported by the delegations of Chile, Mauritius and Saint Lucia, echoed this, pointing out the difficulties faced by one-person delegations, and highlighting the fact that some Parties with two sponsored delegates were in fact represented by larger delegations. The Secretary-General noted that he had in the past proposed to the Standing Committee that Parties that had been represented by more than two delegates at previous meetings might be excluded from further sponsorship. However, this proposal had not been agreed. In response to a comment from the delegation of Mauritius, the Secretary-General responded that the request for sponsorship from Mauritius had been submitted after the deadline and that no further funds had been available.

The delegation of the United States thanked the Secretariat for its efforts in securing external funding, and suggested exploring ways to use such funding to support the core activities of the Convention. They also raised the possibility of the Secretariat seeking reimbursement of travel and salary costs it incurred through undertaking specific activities, such as workshops organized by Parties or institutions. The delegation of Uganda expressed concern at the possible implications of this for developing countries. The delegation of Côte d'Ivoire drew attention to the positive impact of Secretariat activities, particularly in the field of capacity-building. The Secretary-General noted that it could be difficult to plan and implement core activities if they were entirely dependent upon the timely receipt of external funding. He also emphasized the need to include staff costs related to workshop preparation, including documentation, in the budget.

The delegation of Argentina raised concerns about the apparent reduction in the number of donors providing external funding in 2003. The Secretary-General recognized that some donors had not provided external funding in 2003, but observed that the overall level of external funding received in 2003 was higher than in 2002. The delegations of China and Japan referred to significant contributions made by them in 2004. The observer from IWMC-World Conservation Trust noted that their financial contribution in 2002 might appear modest but was significant in relation to their total budget. The document was noted by the Committee.

The session closed at 12h05.