

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



Fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties  
The Hague (Netherlands), 3-15 June 2007

Strategic matters

CAPACITY BUILDING

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.
2. Capacity building in CITES relates to supporting and improving national and regional efforts to implement the Convention. This document provides information on the capacity-building activities of the Secretariat, and presents a plan for the development of a CITES Virtual College as a cost-effective and collaborative centre for CITES-related training.

Capacity-building activities

3. The capacity-building activities of the Secretariat involve providing assistance on interpretation of the Convention; providing technical assistance to Parties on implementation of the Convention; providing or assisting with training; developing training tools; producing publications on CITES; promoting cooperation among Parties; providing advice on the use of new information and communication technologies, and answering requests for information on the Convention and its application. Capacity building in CITES focuses on three priority areas:
  - a) *Improving national capacity to manage and regulate the legal trade in CITES specimens.* This is accomplished by facilitating the acquiring of in-depth knowledge of the Convention; improving institutional arrangements and policy and the legislative basis for regulating trade; promoting correct issuance of permits and certificates, especially with regard to the use of electronic permits and certificates; strengthening input and participation of Scientific Authorities; promoting safe verification techniques and improving species identification skills; promoting general compliance with CITES provisions; and promoting inter-agency cooperation.
  - b) *Improving capacity to address the illegal trade in CITES specimens.* This is accomplished by engendering a greater understanding of the Convention and its provisions; encouraging legislation that clarifies obligations and government powers, establishes appropriate offences and adequate penalties and is enforceable; promoting compliance; raising awareness of illegal trade issues and the causes of illegal trade; improving ability to detect illegal trade; promoting inter-agency collaboration and cooperation; and promoting actions such as confiscation, investigation and prosecution.
  - c) *Providing accurate information on CITES to diverse audiences and correcting misconceptions about the Convention.* This is accomplished by giving lectures and presentations (often in academic institutions); producing public-oriented publications; and responding to questions about CITES.
4. The Secretariat is actively involved in providing training on CITES through national and regional training workshops for Management and Scientific Authorities, law enforcement agencies including Customs, and legislators. The Secretariat also conducts train-the-trainer workshops to improve teaching and facilitation skills and to encourage the use of CITES training materials.

## Capacity-building tools

5. Capacity-building tools provided by the Secretariat include:
  - Basic training presentations in PowerPoint presentation format, on CD-ROM (2003) and ID-ROM (2002, 2005, 2007), published with financial assistance of the Government of Japan. The Secretariat also maintains a library of specialized presentations on CITES subjects in PowerPoint format, Prepared for workshops, courses and lectures (approximately 100 presentations that can be adapted upon request). Some materials have been translated into national languages and adapted for national use
  - Interactive training course for Customs on CD-ROM (prepared in collaboration with Environment Canada and the Canada Revenue Agency (2003, 2005)
  - Interactive training course for law enforcement officers and information module for the judiciary, on CD-ROM (2007), produced and published with financial support from the European Commission
  - Introductory e-course on CITES, offered on-line in partnership with Earth Council (2007)
  - Interactive training course for Management Authorities on CD-ROM (2007)
  - Interactive training course for Scientific Authorities on CD-ROM (2007)
  - The electronic version of the eighth edition of *The Evolution of CITES*
  - The *CITES Handbook*
  - The *Checklist of CITES Species and Annotated CITES Appendices and reservations*, compiled by UNEP-WCMC
  - The Identification Manual. An update on progress in producing the Identification Manual is provided in CoP14 Doc. 44. The Secretariat also co-produces publications aimed at assisting Parties with species identification
  - The *CITES World* newsletter (available electronically and in printed form until 2005; now available as an electronic newsletter on the CITES website).
6. The Secretariat is aware that a number of non-governmental organizations offer CITES-related training to CITES Parties. The Secretariat encourages non-governmental organizations to support CITES capacity-building efforts, and is willing to work with organizations developing CITES training materials, to ensure the accuracy of these materials and to prevent out-of-date, incorrect or biased interpretation of the Convention.

## Training workshops, lectures and distance-learning

7. From the Trust Fund the Secretariat is able to support a small number of training workshops in a given year. The Secretariat has given highest priority to training conducted at a regional level, in order to promote regional collaboration and benefit the highest number of Parties. These workshops offer the means to examine and discuss problems and share examples of best practice, in a group setting amongst peers.
8. The Secretariat is pleased to participate in or contribute to training workshops implemented by Parties (directly or through non-governmental partners), as far as time and available funding permit.
9. The Secretariat is able to contribute to Master's degree programmes that include study of the Convention. These include providing expert lecturers for the Master's course on Management, Access and Conservation of Species in Trade offered by the University of Córdoba and to the International University of Andalusia (Spain), and the Master's course on International Wildlife Trade and Conservation offered by the University of Kent and the Durrell Institute of Conservation and

Ecology (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland). The Secretariat is grateful to these institutions for supporting the participation of Secretariat staff in these important programmes.

10. The inherently high cost of training workshops, and in particular regional workshops involving international travel of participants, severely limits the number of workshops and the total number of participants that benefit from such training. In response to the above and in an effort to reach the widest CITES audience and a greater number of participants, the Secretariat has directed its efforts towards the development and production of self-teaching interactive courses on CD-ROM and the Internet. The advantages of this approach are the standardization of presentation content, the use of innovative and proven distance-learning methods, the ability to include reference texts and other background materials, the low cost of distribution and access, and the re-usability of the courses by users. The Secretariat is grateful for the support of Environment Canada and the European Commission for the preparation and production of interactive courses and information modules for Customs officers, enforcement officers and the judiciary.

#### Internet-based training and the CITES Virtual College

11. Advances in Internet-based technologies and related distance-learning methods now offer the possibility of duplicating the types of human interactions that occur in capacity-building workshops, or in other learning environments. The Secretariat has explored the adaptability of interactive Internet-based learning to CITES training needs, and concludes that this approach offers the means and scope to provide general and specialized training at a level that can most effectively support national and regional training needs. The Secretariat refers to this approach as the CITES Virtual College.
12. The proposed CITES Virtual College is conceived as a partnership between the Secretariat, universities, centres of learning and Parties. It can offer multi-level, Internet-based courses (e-learning) to help build and develop national and regional capacity. The CITES Virtual College can capitalize on the experience of partners in using e-learning technology easily, effectively and cheaply.
13. The College can tap the knowledge and skills of Secretariat staff and experts worldwide who can guide participants through the course work and other activities. There is also scope for combining e-learning approaches with traditional face-to-face learning activities where the latter are most effective, such as for training in specimen identification.
14. The target audience of the CITES Virtual College is primarily staff of CITES authorities and other governmental bodies that are responsible for implementing the Convention. The College can complement national training efforts or, where national training is not available, can provide a fully comprehensive training regime for designated staff.
15. The Secretariat has developed a plan to develop initially 10 interactive Internet-based courses will be developed in the three working languages to enable Parties to explore the capabilities of this approach. Courses can be offered several times per year and all courses, covering general to specialized subjects, shall be structured to be interdependent components in a sequential programme of learning.
16. To support the virtual classes, an Internet portal shall incorporate discussion forums and other electronic "workspaces", and provide a virtual library of materials relevant to CITES study. There is also the desirability of developing the CITES Virtual College in collaboration with academic institutions and training organizations with a view towards meeting established standards of educational quality and obtaining academic accreditation for courses.
17. The CITES Virtual College will require substantial funds to begin and develop, and the Secretariat will seek the funds from external sources. The start-up phase should be seen in terms of investment in capacity building for all Parties for the longer term, as the objective is to provide capacity-building assistance and training in a much more efficient, inclusive and cost-effective way than at present. The Secretariat envisages individual participant costs to be below USD 50 per course. Donor funding will be sought to subsidize the costs of providing CITES instruction to participants in least-developed and developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

## Recommendations

18. The Secretariat encourages Parties to make use of the capacity building tools and materials prepared by the Secretariat in their own training and outreach programmes.
19. The Secretariat encourages Parties to support Master's degree programmes that contribute to a greater understanding of the Convention. A draft decision replacing Decisions 13.104 and 13.105 is presented below for the Conference to consider (see Annex).
20. The Secretariat encourages Parties to support the establishment, subject to the availability of funding, of a CITES Virtual College to provide Internet-based training on the Convention, and to participate in its implementation. A draft decision is presented in the Annex to this effect

DRAFT DECISIONS OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

CITES Virtual College

***Directed to the Secretariat***

- 14.XX The Secretariat shall seek external funding to establish and operate a CITES Virtual College to provide Internet-based training on the Convention that will be available to all Parties.
- 14.XX The Secretariat shall develop the CITES Virtual College in collaboration with academic institutions and training organizations and shall seek academic accreditation for courses offered through the College.

Master's degree courses

***Directed to Parties***

- 14.XX Parties are requested to provide financial assistance to academic institutions offering Master's degree courses on CITES and CITES-related subjects in order to support the continuation of these courses.