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

Interpretation and implementation of the Convention

Compliance and enforcement issues

NATIONAL LAWS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat pursuant to Decision 13.83. It should be noted that the Standing Committee will also look at the issue of National laws for implementation of the Convention during its 55th meeting (SC55, The Hague, 2 June 2007).

2. Paragraph f) of Decision 13.83 directs the Secretariat to report at the present meeting on:

i) the legislation adopted by the Parties to implement the Convention and any recommendations relating to Parties that have not adopted adequate legislation for implementation of the Convention; and

ii) any progress concerning technical assistance provided to the Parties in the development of their national legislation for implementation of CITES.

Background

3. The National Legislation Project began after the adoption of Resolution Conf. 8.4 at the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (Kyoto, 1992).

4. Throughout the history of the National Legislation Project, legislative efforts by Parties and territories have been assisted through guidance documents, sample legislation, written comments or advice, country missions and workshops. The primary aim of the National Legislation Project has been to promote and facilitate the enactment of adequate legislation. Legislative progress has also been ensured through monitoring and the adoption of appropriate measures by the Conference of the Parties and the Standing Committee.

5. In its background document for the 11th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP11, Gigiri, 2000), the Secretariat described the unique nature of the Convention and of the CITES National Legislation Project (see document CoP11 Doc. 11.21.1). Key elements of the National Legislation Project (e.g. analysis and assistance) have remained constant, though it has evolved in order to adapt to changing circumstances.

6. In its background document for the 12th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP12, Santiago, 2002), the Secretariat expressly recognized "the prerogative of each Party to decide how it incorporates CITES obligations into national legislation" (see document CoP12 Doc. 28). Details were provided on the way in which the Secretariat interprets the four legislative requirements contained in Resolution Conf. 8.4. The Secretariat also highlighted the importance of "wildlife policy development [as] an essential precursor to drafting adequate legislation" and provided some general guidance on the subject of legislation drafting.
7. In its background document for the 13th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP13, Bangkok, 2004), the Secretariat summarized the overall history of the National Legislation Project and pointed out that its aim was to “bring about the adoption of adequate legislation as quickly as possible while recognizing the constraints that exist in the legislative process” [see document CoP13 Doc. 22 (Rev. 2)].

Issues and challenges in meeting the minimum legislative requirements

8. While designing and drafting legislation to meet the minimum requirements for implementation of the Convention, Parties have encountered a number of practical issues and challenges. Some of these are described in the paragraphs below.

9. Designation of CITES authorities: A number of Parties have found it challenging to establish the effective coordination mechanisms needed among all sectoral agencies responsible for any terrestrial or aquatic species covered by the Convention (e.g. fisheries) and then to reach agreement on how this should be reflected in legislation. Some countries have overlooked the need to explicitly empower certain agencies to enforce CITES-related legislation, which has led to difficulties in obtaining enforcement support from those agencies. Recognizing the importance of well-resourced institutions, more countries are ensuring that legislation provides the means for financing CITES authorities (e.g. through fee schedules).

10. Regulation of CITES trade: It has been difficult for a number of Parties to incorporate into national legislation the exemptions and special procedures allowed by the Convention. Many Parties have chosen to adopt stricter domestic measures, leading to considerable variety in the content of CITES-implementing legislation.

11. Penalization of illegal trade and possession of CITES specimens: The requirement under the Convention to ‘penalize’ illegal trade or possession does not specify the nature of the penalty which must be imposed, and a number of Parties have provided only for administrative and not criminal penalties. Some of these Parties are now considering the adoption of criminal penalties as well. Although each Party has the prerogative to determine its own penalty provisions, such penalties should be both adequate and proportionate, taking into consideration other penalties found in the national legal system as well as the penalties provided for CITES violations in neighbouring countries. The CITES model law provides for criminal offences and penalties and the Secretariat has encouraged Parties to consider maximum terms of imprisonment and fines which are commensurate with felonies or major crimes. Parties have also been advised to consider establishing fine units which automatically adapt to changes in the national economy. This would ensure that they do not lose their deterrence value over time. Recommendations for the criminalization of CITES offences are contained in document CoP14 Doc. 26. To facilitate the successful prosecution of CITES offences, some countries have (and others are considering) legislation which shifts to the offender certain aspects of the burden of proof.

12. Seizure and confiscation of CITES specimens: In addition to authorizing the seizure and confiscation of specimens that are illegally traded or possessed, a number of Parties authorize the forfeiture of any containers, equipment, vehicles, vessels or other items used in the commission of an offence. They also require of the offender to bear the costs of confiscation and custody of any specimens. At least one country has legislation authorizing it to use the proceeds from auctions of confiscated specimens to fund conservation activities in the countries where they originated. Still, the disposal of confiscated specimens remains a challenge for many Parties (see document CoP14 Doc. 27).

General versus species-specific legislation

13. The CITES model law is structured as general CITES-implementing legislation. A number of countries, however, have adopted species-specific provisions, regulations or laws. Several Resolutions and Decisions adopted by the Conference of the Parties seem to encourage such legislation. The Secretariat suggests that the development or strengthening of species-specific (or specimen-specific) legislation should be addressed through or supported by the National Legislation Project. An example of how this might work is contained in the Secretariat’s comments to document CoP14 Doc. 41 on Transport of live specimens. A similar approach could be taken towards legislative provisions on
captive breeding and artificial propagation as well as personal and household effects or other exemptions and special procedures under the Convention.

Enacting more effective legislation

14. A growing number of Parties are taking into account principles of ‘good regulation’ or ‘better regulation’ as they design or redesign their legislation. Governments have found that some legislation is overly prescriptive or costly to implement. Users subject to CITES-related regulation, especially small and medium-sized enterprises, have often complained about excessive, complex and sluggish regulatory schemes. The overall aim of good regulation principles is to help governments streamline legislation, improve its quality and ensure its effective and efficient implementation. A checklist of specific principles might include: (1) balancing of interests and the avoidance of hurried or reactive legislation; (2) coherence among policy objectives; (3) attention to risks, costs and benefits; (4) avoidance of unintended consequences; (5) legislative drafting which uses plain language and is easily understood (logical, clear and simple); (6) broad public support; (7) transparency; (8) consistency; (9) practicality; (10) enforceability; (11) identification of accountability; and (12) relevance to current conditions. A compilation of experience with or the development of explanatory materials on good regulation principles could prove useful to Parties. Guidance being refined for the review of national wildlife trade policies should also assist Parties in ensuring that the content of their legislation is relevant and coherent and that its implementation is effective (see document CoP14 Doc. 15).

Implementation of, compliance with and enforcement of national legislation

15. While developing and enacting legislation, Parties usually keep in mind, and provide for, the implementation of, compliance with and enforcement of its provisions. These three concepts are interdependent and have often been used interchangeably. This may have led to some confusion about the various factors needed to make legislation operate effectively. Working definitions for the three concepts are therefore provided below.

16. ‘Implementation’ is a rather generic term covering all of the actions taken by regulatory agencies or regulated persons to put national legislation into effect. This is the stage during which legislative text is translated into action. ‘Compliance’ means to act in accordance with and in fulfilment of legislative requirements. Without compliance, legislative requirements will not achieve their desired results. Therefore, this is the stage during which actions are checked to see whether they actually conform to the law. National compliance measures often include self-monitoring or external-monitoring tools such as internal reviews or audits, registration or licensing, record keeping, and reporting. ‘Enforcement’ (or, more appropriately, law enforcement) is a term that originated in the Anglo-Saxon legal culture and which is not easily translated into other languages. It generally involves a chain of activities including the surveillance, detection, investigation, apprehension, prosecution and conviction of lawbreakers and the seizure and confiscation of their specimens. The aim of enforcement is to ‘force’ or compel compliance and/or to punish non-compliance with the law. Strengthening the enforcement chain is one of several ways to improve compliance. Government officials responsible for compliance or enforcement also play a role in promoting and facilitating compliance or deterring and preventing non-compliance in the first instance. This might be done through means such as awareness-raising, training or education, increased visibility of government officers or activities, financial or technical support, and social or economic incentives.

17. Keen attention should be paid to ensuring proper balance between the encouragement of law-abiding behaviour and the penalization of law-breaking behaviour. Enforcement powers and mechanisms are important primarily to show that violations of the law will have real and costly consequences. Neither implementation nor compliance nor enforcement is sufficient alone, however, and none of these concepts should be addressed in a wholly separate manner. They are normally dealt with in a sequential manner, beginning with implementation then shifting to compliance and finally moving to enforcement (if necessary). Effective legislation has good implementation, compliance and enforcement and this can be achieved through periodic assessment and adjustment of applicable legislative provisions and related practice.
18. At CoP13, Parties adopted Decisions 13.79-83 generally directing affected Parties to submit relevant legislative texts and periodic indications of their legislative progress, the Standing Committee to monitor and ensure continued legislative progress, and the Secretariat to undertake legislative analyses, provide technical assistance and prepare related reports.

19. As required under Decision 13.83, the Secretariat reported at the 53rd and 54th (SC53, Geneva, June-July 2005, and SC54, Geneva, October 2006) meetings of the Standing Committee on Parties’ progress in enacting adequate legislation. These reports, which include updated versions of the legislative status chart, are contained in documents SC53 Doc. 31 and SC54 Doc. 36. A more recent chart showing the status of legislative progress by Parties and dependent territories as of 15 March 2007 is attached as Annex 2 to this document, and an updated version of the chart will be provided during CoP14. Standing Committee discussions and decisions relevant to national legislation are contained in the summary records of SC53 and SC54, which are accessible through the CITES website. The Secretariat’s report for SC55 on National laws for implementation of the Convention is also accessible through the website (see document SC55 Doc. 14).

20. The graph below shows the number of Parties whose legislation has been placed in Category 1 since the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (Fort Lauderdale, 1994).

21. As shown in the graph, legislative progress to date has been constant but slow, with a minimum of seven Parties and a maximum of 19 Parties enacting adequate legislation between CoPs. Overall progress has been made more challenging by the addition of 45 new Parties over time as well as the inclusion of 29 dependent territories. Progress since CoP13 nonetheless indicates that a certain momentum may be building up, and this is encouraged through the proposed decision contained in Annex 1 which directs affected Parties and dependent territories to enact adequate legislation by the 58th meeting of the Standing Committee (SC58).
22. The two pie charts below (one for Parties and the other for dependent territories), and the related table, show the overall spread of legislation across the various categories as well as the small number of countries which have not yet submitted legislative texts for analysis.

![Pie charts showing legislative categories for Parties and Territories]

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23. Overall, there is a good level of engagement in the legislative process but continued national attention and international cooperation are needed to ensure that all Parties and dependent territories have enacted Category-1 legislation by SC58. Effective implementation of, compliance with and enforcement of the Convention depend on such legislation.

**Legislative review and revision by Parties whose legislation is in Category 1**

24. It has long been recognized that the development and implementation of legislation are parts of a dynamic and cyclic process. Some Parties regularly incorporate into their legislation any new Resolutions and amendments to the Appendices that are adopted by the Conference of the Parties. Australia, Canada, China and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, the Czech Republic, Indonesia, New Zealand, Paraguay (whose legislation is in Category 2), Switzerland, the United States of America, Viet Nam and the European Union described their experience with the development and implementation of legislation in the 15th issue of CITES World (July 2005). The application of legislation generally reveals gaps and weaknesses which need to be addressed through legislative amendments. Thus, Parties whose legislation has been placed in Category 1 should periodically review and improve their legislation.

25. Since CoP13 the Secretariat has been advised of, and at times involved in, legislative review and revision efforts undertaken by a number of Parties. For example, Hong Kong SAR has revised its legislation, inter alia to strengthen its enforcement powers. It has also restructured its licensing system, removed excessive controls and reduced the number and scope of stricter domestic measures in order to align its legislation more closely with the Convention. Jamaica and New Zealand have revised their legislation to incorporate amendments to the Appendices. Singapore has revised its legislation, inter alia, to strengthen its enforcement powers (including those related to the control of CITES specimens in transit) and to increase the penalties for CITES-related offences. Viet Nam has revised its legislation, inter alia, to make it more compatible with new forestry and fishery legislation and to encourage sustainable utilization of CITES species through captive breeding and artificial propagation operations. Its ongoing wildlife trade policy review is expected to result in recommendations for additional legislative revisions. The European Union has revised its legislation,
inter alia to incorporate amendments to the Appendices and Resolutions adopted by the Conference of the Parties. It is now involved in a thorough study of the effectiveness of its legislation, which may result in recommendations for additional legislative revisions. Legislative reviews and revisions may have been considered or undertaken by other Parties as well.

Recommendations related to Parties that have not adopted adequate legislation

26. Djibouti, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mauritania, Rwanda and Somalia remain subject to a recommendation to suspend commercial trade in specimens of CITES-listed species for their failure to provide any written indication of their legislative progress. As indicated in paragraph 30 below, the Secretariat is proposing that they be identified at SC55 as requiring attention as a priority under the National Legislation Project.

27. On the basis of the Secretariat’s national legislation reports for SC53 and SC54, the Standing Committee recommended appropriate measures for those countries which did not provide written indications of their legislative progress by a certain date. Such written indications were later received from all affected countries except The Gambia, India and Sao Tome and Principe. Recommendations to suspend commercial trade in specimens of CITES-listed species were thereafter issued in relation to the Gambia and India and then immediately withdrawn when written indications of legislative progress were received by the Secretariat. A caution was issued to Sao Tome and Principe urging it to urgently provide a copy of its CITES-related legislation and, if applicable, a CITES Legislation Plan containing the steps and timetable needed to enact adequate legislation. The Secretariat will include in its oral report to SC55 any response that might be received from Sao Tome and Principe.

28. Decision 13.80, adopted at CoP13, states that: “In accordance with action plans agreed with the Secretariat, Nigeria and Paraguay should enact adequate legislation for implementation of the Convention by [SC53].” On the basis of the Secretariat’s report on enforcement matters to SC53, the Standing Committee agreed that Nigeria had made insufficient progress in relation to its action plan to improve implementation of CITES and decided to issue a recommendation to Parties to refuse any import from and export or re-export to Nigeria of specimens of CITES-listed species [see Notification to the Parties No. 2005/038 (19 July 2005)]. Nigeria participated in the regional CITES legislation workshop held in Nairobi during November 2005 and organized a national legislative review workshop in February 2007, involving a range of stakeholders. Results from the national workshop have not yet been shared with the Secretariat, but it seems that a legal consultant will be developing draft legislation on the basis of the workshop’s findings and conclusions.

29. Following SC54 Paraguay provided revised draft legislation, which is pending adoption by the parliament. A moratorium on trade in CITES species, adopted by Paraguay in 2003, remains in effect (see Notification to the Parties No. 2003/058 of 29 September 2003).

30. To date, 10 countries (Belize, China, the Comoros, Kazakhstan, Madagascar, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Paraguay and Peru) have been identified by the Standing Committee as requiring attention as a priority under the National Legislation Project. Two of these countries (China and Madagascar) subsequently enacted adequate legislation and have been removed from the list of priority countries. The Secretariat proposes that 12 other countries [Algeria, Djibouti, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Liberia, Mauritania, Mozambique, Rwanda, South Africa, Somalia, Suriname and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)] be identified as requiring priority attention under the National Legislation Project.

Suggested approach for the future

31. To simplify implementation of the National Legislation Project and to increase the pace of legislative enactment, the Secretariat believes that it would be helpful to consolidate all previous deadlines for the enactment of adequate legislation into a single deadline, that is, SC58. All Parties and dependent territories with inadequate legislation are now fully aware of the steps for enacting adequate legislation, the guidance materials and other assistance which are available and the need to enact such legislation as soon as possible, in any event no later than SC58. Emphasis should therefore be placed on urging affected Parties and dependent territories to provide enacted legislation by SC58 and on empowering the Committee to adopt appropriate measures if countries fail to achieve enactment or to provide adequate justification for that failure.
32. As mentioned above, activities under the National Legislation Project have focused to date on the development and enactment of adequate legislation, and that focus is designed to shift when the legislation of all Parties and dependent territories has been placed in Category 1. The true adequacy of national legislation will thereafter be tested through court cases and periodic reviews of legislative effectiveness. In the future, legislative analysis and guidance for new Parties as well as continuing legal advice and assistance to Parties and other Convention activities (e.g. those contained in the revised Strategic Vision and costed programme of work) could be provided by the Secretariat in the context of a refocused National Legislation Project.

Provision of technical assistance

33. The Secretariat’s reports for SC53, SC54 and SC55 on national legislation and the present document contain information on its provision of technical assistance. Such assistance generally involves reviewing and analysing draft or enacted legislation, developing guidance tools for use by Parties, providing written legislative advice and working directly with CITES authorities and national legal experts in the context of a mission or workshop. Owing to its limited resources, the Secretariat is not always able to respond immediately or fully to requests for assistance. It was therefore pleased to learn recently that Japan has agreed to fund a series of legislative missions and a subregional legislative workshop. The direct provision of on-site support to Parties is often the most effective because it allows the Secretariat to work more intensively with CITES authorities and national legal experts and to provide assistance in a way that takes better account of the relevant national legal system as well as the needs, cultures and specific situations of a particular country.

34. Legislative analyses and assistance are often provided by various bilateral or multilateral donors and non-governmental organizations. It would be helpful if such donors and organizations advised the Secretariat of their ongoing or planned legislative activities, so that these activities may be better taken into account and perhaps supported under the National Legislation Project.

35. A revised version of the CITES model law, taking into account the experience of Parties, has been drafted and should be finalized later this year. The Secretariat, with the assistance of a consulting firm, has developed a potentially interactive legislative database which must now be populated with information from the National Legislation Project. Other means for providing legislative information (e.g. full legislative texts) on the CITES website are also being explored.

36. The costs involved in the Secretariat’s support to the National Legislation Project, as well as a certain number of related missions, are included in the costed work programme.

Recommendations

37. The Secretariat recommends that the Conference of the Parties adopt the draft decisions contained in Annex 1.
DRAFT DECISIONS OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

Directed to the Parties

14.XX Before the 58th meeting of the Standing Committee, any Party or dependent territory with inadequate legislation (i.e. in Category 2 or 3) should:

a) submit to the Secretariat, in one of the working languages of the Convention, newly enacted legislation for implementation of the Convention; or

b) provide adequate justification for its failure to do.

Directed to the Standing Committee

14.XX With respect to Parties and dependent territories that do not comply with Decision 14.XX or decisions of the Standing Committee in relation to national laws for implementation of the Convention, the Standing Committee shall consider appropriate compliance measures, which may include recommendations to suspend commercial trade in specimens of CITES-listed species to and from such Parties.

Directed to the Secretariat

14.XX The Secretariat shall:

a) compile and review the information submitted by Parties on legislation adopted before the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP15) to fulfil the requirements laid down in the text of the Convention and Resolution Conf. 8.4;

b) prepare or revise the analyses of national legislation and the categories, and advise the Parties concerned of the initial or revised analyses, specifying any requirements that are not yet met;

c) provide technical assistance to Parties requesting advice in the formulation of legislative proposals for CITES implementation by providing, to the extent resources are available:

i) legal guidance in the preparation of necessary legislative measures; or

ii) training of CITES authorities and other relevant bodies responsible for the formulation of wildlife trade policies or legislation; or

iii) any specific support relevant to the fulfilment of the legislative requirements for the implementation of CITES;

d) on the basis of information, inter alia, provided in Parties’ biennial reports, compile good examples and prepare specialized guidance material for the development of more effective legislation, especially in relation to verification of the legal origin or acquisition of specimens in trade, incorporation of exemptions and special procedures, adoption of appropriate and proportionate penalties and enactment of legislation for specific species or specimens;

e) report at the 57th and 58th meetings of the Standing Committee on Parties’ progress in enacting adequate legislation and, if necessary, recommend the adoption of appropriate compliance measures, including suspension of trade;

f) identify for the Standing Committee any countries that require attention as a priority under the National Legislation Project; and
g) report at CoP15 on:

   i) the legislation adopted by the Parties to implement the Convention and any recommendations relating to Parties that have not adopted adequate legislation for implementation of the Convention; and

   ii) any progress concerning technical assistance provided to the Parties in the development of their national legislation for implementation of CITES.
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**Keys**

*ISO* Two-letter ISO code of the country  
*Category*  
- `p` = pending submission of legislation to the Secretariat  
- `r` = review of enacted legislation ongoing to determine or revise category  
*Plan* CITES Legislation Plan submitted to the Secretariat  
*Draft* Draft legislation submitted to the Secretariat for comments  
*Enacted* Enacted legislation submitted to the Secretariat for review  
*Deadline* Deadline by which adequate legislation should be enacted, as decided by the Conference of the Parties and the Standing Committee  
*Dep.* Two-letter ISO code of the State of which the territory is a dependency

Boxes have been left blank for Parties and dependent territories whose legislation is placed in Category 1 or which do not yet have a deadline.