

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 REPORTS

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.
2. At its 13th meeting (CoP13, Bangkok, 2004), the Conference of the Parties adopted two revised resolutions and several decisions regarding national reports. Related actions taken since CoP13 by the Parties, the Standing Committee and the Secretariat are summarized below.

Guidance on and access to reports

3. As directed in Decision 13.91, the Secretariat incorporated specific guidance on plants, raw ivory, corals and timber into the *Guidelines on the preparation and submission of CITES annual reports*. A set of revised *Guidelines* was thereafter adopted by the Standing Committee through postal procedure and distributed in Notification to the Parties No. 2006/030 of 2 May 2006.
4. The biennial report format adopted at CoP13 was distributed in Notification to the Parties No. 2005/035 of 6 July 2005. The revised *Guidelines* and the biennial report format are accessible on the CITES website in both the 'Notifications' and the 'National reports' sections.
5. It would be helpful to obtain feedback from Parties on their experience with using the biennial report format and their suggestions for improving the format. In this connection, Parties are invited to make use of Section E of the format when they complete and submit their 2005-2006 reports to the Secretariat. They might particularly indicate whether the format is easy to complete, whether the questions are relevant and useful in helping them to identify key achievements and challenges and whether specific questions might be deleted, amended or added. Such feedback will be used not only to improve the CITES biennial report format but also to provide input to broader efforts on harmonized reporting (see paragraphs 20-22 below).
6. Since 18 March 2004, online access has been provided to the CITES trade database, comprising trade data provided by Parties in their annual reports (see www.cites.org under 'Databases' or www.unep-wcmc.org/citestrade/trade.cfm). Usage of the database during 2004-2007 is illustrated by a graphic contained in Annex 1, and the Secretariat notes that there were 1,000 to 2,000 downloads per month for most of 2006. It is hoped that those Parties which have not yet utilized the database will do so in the near future. A complementary tool, known as the Trade Information Query Tool, was developed by UNEP-WCMC with funds from the European Commission and has been available on the CITES website since 2004. The Query Tool allows Parties to obtain information on CITES quotas, other CITES restrictions (for animal species) and European Commission Suspensions and Opinions which are related to specific countries or species. The Secretariat has made accessible through the CITES website the full texts of Parties' biennial reports which were prepared in the format adopted at CoP13. An online reporting system for CITES biennial reports, as well as the reports of other biodiversity-related agreements, is being developed by UNEP-WCMC using funds

available under the joint project on 'Knowledge Management for Biodiversity' (see paragraph 15 below).

Submission

7. The Secretariat is pleased to report that the level of biennial report submissions has risen substantially in comparison with previous years. The increased attention paid to biennial reports in CITES meetings, as well as the adoption of a standard format, seem to have contributed to this positive development. As of 31 January 2007, 85 Parties had submitted reports and it is hoped that the remaining Parties will submit their reports shortly.
8. Overall submission rates for annual reports remain high, but the timeliness of submission seems to be an ongoing challenge for some Parties. The deadline for submission of the 2005 annual report was 31 October 2006, but 70 Parties had still not submitted their report by 31 January 2007. Of this number, the Secretariat's records show that 9 Parties have failed to submit reports for three consecutive years. This information will be reported at the 55th meeting of the Standing Committee (The Hague, 2 June 2007).
9. In accordance with Resolution Conf. 11.17 (Rev. CoP13), the Standing Committee has regularly reviewed Parties' compliance with their reporting obligations. Specifically, it determined at each of its meetings the Parties that had failed, without adequate justification, to submit annual reports for three consecutive years. It instructed the Secretariat to issue a recommendation to suspend trade with those Parties, if the missing reports were not submitted by a certain date. The Secretariat then sent an additional reminder to those Parties and when necessary also contacted them by telephone. In all cases the affected Parties submitted the missing reports, making it unnecessary to issue any new recommendations to suspend trade. Two Parties remain subject to an existing recommendation to suspend trade for the failure to submit annual reports, and the Secretariat is undertaking additional efforts to help them achieve compliance.

Analysis and feedback

10. Parties are able to undertake a self-analysis of national or international annual reports by using the CITES trade database. Alternatively, they are able to send direct requests for specific types of analyses to UNEP-WCMC. Such services are not yet available for biennial reports but are planned for the future.
11. As stipulated in its long-term contract with the Secretariat, UNEP-WCMC is preparing global analyses of the CITES trade data which relate to selected species of parrots, primates and crocodiles as well as *Strombus gigas*. These analyses will be made available on the CITES website during the first half of 2007. Under an additional small contract, UNEP-WCMC is preparing an information document for CoP14 which will summarize and analyse the responses to a limited number of questions in the 2003-2004 biennial reports, based on those reports that were submitted by Parties by 15 December 2006.

Reduction of the reporting burden

12. In Decision 13.90, adopted at CoP13, the Secretariat was directed to

identify ways to reduce the reporting burden on Parties, in the context of its ongoing efforts to consolidate the Resolutions and Decisions of the Conference of the Parties, its collaboration with UNEP-WCMC and interested Parties on the development of simple software systems and Internet-based modules and its involvement in cooperative implementation of the Environmental Management Group recommendations on the harmonization of information management and reporting, and report at the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties on the results of this work.

13. In Decision 13.92, also adopted at CoP13, the Secretariat was directed to "continue to collaborate with the secretariats of other biodiversity-related conventions in order to ensure the harmonization of information management and reporting".

Simple software systems and Internet-based modules

14. The possibility of the Secretariat contracting UNEP-WCMC to develop simple software systems that would facilitate permit issuance and reporting has been constrained by funds. Nevertheless, funds provided by the European Commission allowed UNEP-WCMC to develop a database concerning trade in sturgeon specimens, in accordance with Decisions 13.44 to 13.47 (see document CoP14 Doc. 60.1). In addition, external funding provided to the Secretariat by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland allowed certain activities to be undertaken on electronic permitting, in accordance with Decisions 13.69 and 13.70. Related work has been undertaken by the Standing Committee Working Group on Electronic permitting (see document CoP14 Doc. 40).
15. Better information management systems can facilitate the generation of reports. Within the context of biodiversity-related information, UNEP's Division of Environmental Law and Conventions has provided funding and oversight for the initiation of a joint project on 'Knowledge Management for Biodiversity' which will be implemented by UNEP-WCMC and which will involve CITES, the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. 'Knowledge management' is a term coined to describe a new, more strategic approach to information resources. The project was originally conceived and developed by the CITES Secretariat for submission to UNEP/DELG for funding consideration. A workshop was held during June 2006 in Cambridge to discuss the project, and the resulting report was provided at the 54th meeting of the Standing Committee held in Geneva during October 2006 (document SC54 Inf. 2). The report shows that a harmonized information base should be established by May 2007, which focuses on the following four categories of information: lists of Parties; national focal points; strategic plans; and Decisions and Resolutions. Such efforts may ultimately contribute to the development of a sort of 'core' report for biodiversity-related conventions.
16. In the future, it is expected that the project would link with similar efforts throughout the United Nations system and beyond (e.g. knowledge management projects among the chemical and waste conventions and the Rio conventions, the UNEP-facilitated project on Issues-Based Modules for the Coherent Implementation of Biodiversity Conventions and the work of the United Nations Environmental Management Group). Under the Issues-Based modules project, decisions taken by different convention bodies on the same issue were 'mapped'. CITES decisions featured primarily in the mapping of decisions related to the issue of sustainable use and detailed information is available at www.svs-unepibmdb.net. Feedback from countries on the outcomes of the project has generally been positive, and governments have observed that the project should assist them in improving both the coherence and the streamlining of future decisions. Experience gained under the project could also lead to the development of more efficient and effective thematic reporting under biodiversity-related conventions.

Consolidation and revision of Resolutions

17. As a result of the decisions adopted at CoP13, three reporting requirements under species-specific Resolutions were incorporated into the annual and biennial reports (i.e. those related to vicuña, tortoises and freshwater turtles and saiga antelope). Another reporting requirement, related to rhinoceroses, was transformed into an information-gathering process facilitated by IUCN. This process has resulted in a recommendation at this meeting to retain special reporting, through IUCN, to each meeting of the Conference of the Parties (see document CoP14 Doc. 54). The list of reporting requirements under the Convention, compiled by the Standing Committee's Working Group on Reporting Requirements and provided in Annex 4 to document CoP13 Doc. 18, showed that there were over 20 such reporting requirements. This meeting offers Parties, pursuant to Resolution Conf. 4.6 (Rev. CoP13), another opportunity to consider whether information which they agree should be gathered 'could be sought via the annual or biennial report or, if a special report is needed', and to 'generally ensure that the reporting burden is kept to a minimum'. In this connection, Switzerland has suggested in document CoP14 Doc. 30 that the Secretariat investigate the need and identify options for limiting or simplifying reporting on trade in artificially propagated plants. For its part, the Secretariat has suggested that additional special reports on Asian big cats should be avoided because they are of questionable utility (see document CoP14 Doc. 52). It has also suggested that special reporting requirements for tortoises and freshwater turtles might be

warranted, perhaps only for certain Parties or for a certain period, if Parties find them useful (see document CoP14 Doc. 57). The Secretariat has commented that special reporting requirements related to sharks, which are recommended by the Animals Committee in document CoP14 Doc. 59.1, might be simplified or reduced. It has suggested that relevant details from wildlife trade policy reviews which are undertaken by Parties, or their experience with any of the policy measures currently described in paragraph a) of Decision 13.74, be included in their biennial reports (see document CoP14 Doc. 15). It has suggested as well that Parties include in their biennial reports any incentive measures for implementation of the Convention that they have adopted and used (see document CoP14 Doc. 32).

18. After CoP13, the IUCN/SSC Crocodile Specialist Group (CSG) conducted a review of crocodile ranching programmes and reported the results at the 22nd meeting of the Animals Committee (AC22, Lima, July 2006). In early 2006, the Secretariat reminded affected Parties about the special reports required under Resolution Conf. 11.16 on Ranching and trade in specimens transferred from Appendix I to Appendix II. Reports received in response to the Secretariat's reminder were placed on the CITES website. The results of the IUCN/SSC/CSG review, which showed that such reporting was unnecessarily burdensome and that Parties did not report regularly, and the Secretariat's efforts to obtain additional reports were presented at the 54th meeting of the Standing Committee (SC54, Geneva, October 2006). In its report (document SC54 Doc. 32), the Secretariat noted that it was agreed at AC22 that the annual reports required in relation to ranching operations should be reduced and simplified. This proposal is contained in document CoP14 Doc. 21.
19. It would be useful for the Parties to authorize the Standing Committee, with the assistance of the Secretariat and UNEP-WCMC, to undertake an overall review of special reporting requirements under the Convention after CoP14 and to assess whether they have been or might be effectively incorporated into the annual and biennial reports. In particular, the biennial report format is not currently designed to include species-specific information (e.g. on tortoises and freshwater turtles or ranching operations) and may need to be revised to achieve this purpose (see document CoP14 Doc. 57). Such a revision seems worthwhile as the biennial report could prove to be quite valuable in collecting special information of various kinds on a regular basis. Another helpful approach to special reporting requirements involves the dedicated collection of information by expert groups, where necessary. Some species-specific reports have been compiled and analysed by external organizations and experts, for instance on rhinoceroses (IUCN and TRAFFIC), elephant ivory (TRAFFIC) and the saiga antelope (CMS/IUCN). This approach seems to have worked well, and it could be useful for one or more of these organizations to participate in any review of special reporting requirements. The results of such a review could assist preparations for and decision-making at CoP15. They should also enable the CITES Secretariat to provide a more substantial contribution to ongoing efforts to harmonize reporting across the various biodiversity-related conventions.

Harmonized reporting

20. The harmonization of reporting has been identified within studies undertaken by members of the United Nations, the United Nations Secretariat and the United Nations Joint Inspection Unit as a potential tool for improving environmental governance. There are still significant challenges to making progress on this global objective, not least because of the different reporting cycles and the specialized nature of certain information, but useful analogous experience has been identified in the forestry and human-rights sectors. The development of a common 'core' report supplemented by special reports as well as thematic reporting and on-line reporting systems seem particularly promising as means to achieve less burdensome reporting. Work on the harmonized information base described in paragraph 15 above should facilitate harmonized reporting as well.
21. Under the joint project on Knowledge Management for Biodiversity mentioned in paragraph 15 above, UNEP-WCMC prepared a review of the national reporting systems of the five global biodiversity-related conventions. The Secretariat provided comments on this review and participated in a related workshop on harmonization of reporting, which was held in the context of the Knowledge Management meeting convened in Cambridge during June 2006. The workshop report was provided as document SC54 Inf. 1 at SC54. Funds for ongoing work, including implementation

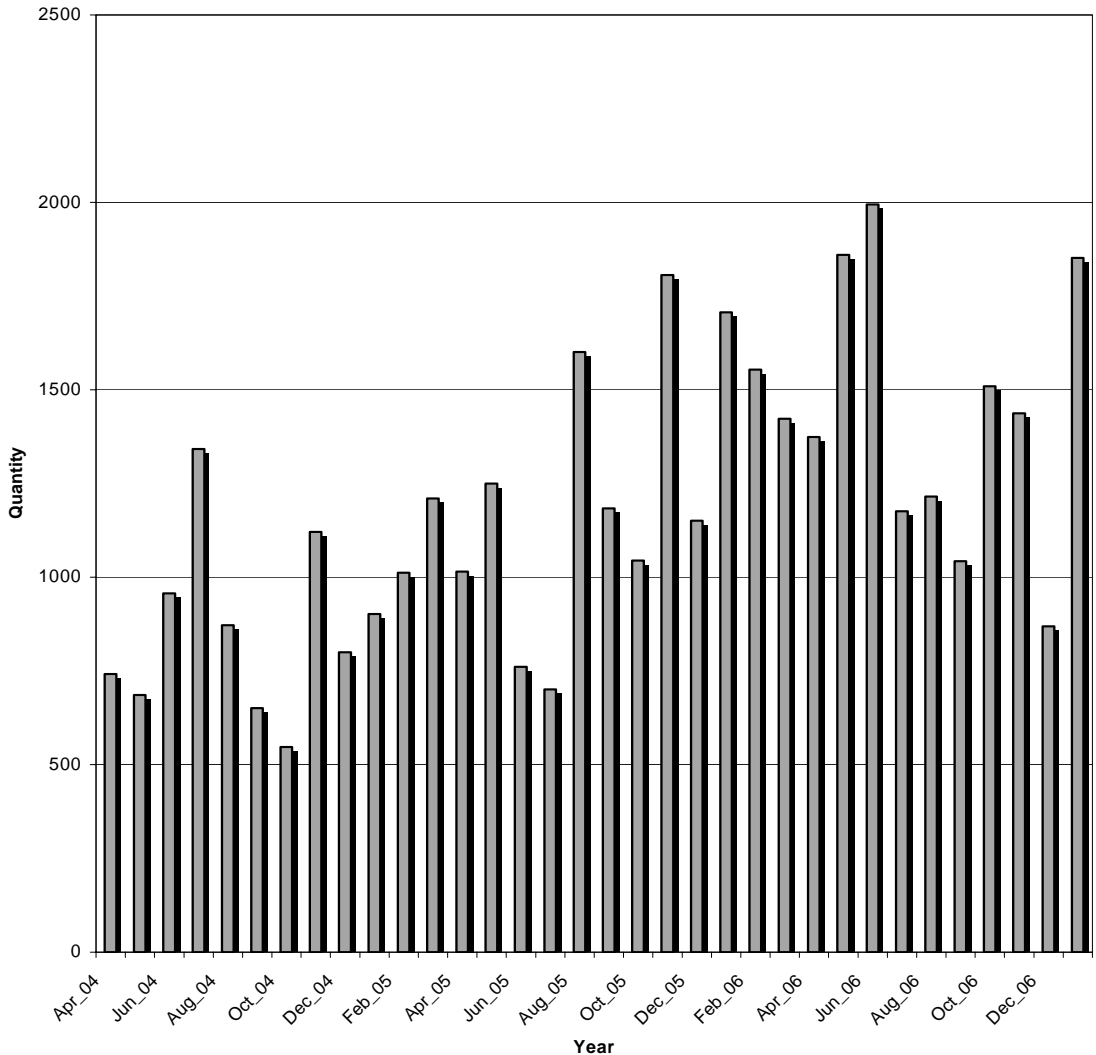
of the workshop's recommendations, will be provided under a broader UNEP project on strengthening the capacity of developing countries to implement multilateral environmental agreements.

22. As the activities envisaged under Decisions 13.90 and 13.92 have not been fully implemented and related work is continuing, Parties may wish to adopt a decision which extends the Secretariat's mandate for undertaking those activities and adjusts it to reflect new developments.

Recommendations

23. The Secretariat recommends that the Conference of Parties adopt the draft decisions contained in Annex 2 to this document.
24. If the Conference of the Parties follows the Secretariat's recommendations, there will be financial implications in the amount of USD10,000 for Secretariat personnel to participate in two meetings on harmonized reporting which may be organized outside Geneva. Costs associated with Secretariat support to the Standing Committee and related reporting for CoP15, as well as any UNEP-WCMC assistance provided under its general contract with the Secretariat, are included in the costed programme of work.

Downloads from the CITES Trade Database during 2004-2007



DRAFT DECISIONS OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

Directed to the Standing Committee

14.XX The Standing Committee, with the assistance of the Secretariat, UNEP-WCMC and IUCN, shall undertake a review of the recommendations to Parties to provide special reports under the Convention, assess whether they have been or might be effectively incorporated into the annual and biennial reports and consider how the biennial report format might be revised to facilitate such incorporation. It shall report at the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties on its conclusions and recommendations.

Directed to the Secretariat

14.XX The Secretariat shall:

- a) continue to collaborate with the secretariats of other biodiversity-related conventions, UNEP and other bodies in order to facilitate the harmonization of knowledge management and reporting;
- b) identify additional ways to reduce the reporting burden on Parties, *inter alia*, in the context of its ongoing review of the Resolutions and Decisions of the Conference of the Parties, its support to the Standing Committee on electronic permitting and its work with IUCN or other organizations to compile and analyse CITES-related reports; and
- c) report at the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties on the results of this work.