

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

Trade control and marking issues

EFFECTIVENESS OF THE CITES UNIVERSAL CROCODILIAN TAGGING SYSTEM

1. This document has been submitted by the United States of America.

Introduction and historical background

2. Resolution Conf. 11.12 (Universal tagging system for the identification of crocodilian skins) recommends a universal tagging system for the identification of crocodilian skins in international trade. The tagging of all crocodilian skins has become an important tool for Parties to monitor and regulate crocodilian trade. In fact, the success of the tagging requirement for crocodilians has led to interest in other types of universal marking. As one of the largest importers, exporters, and producers of crocodilian skins and products, the United States has a strong interest in ensuring that any system used to monitor and regulate the trade in crocodilian parts and derivatives is effective and beneficial to the conservation of the affected species.
3. At its ninth meeting (CoP9, Forth Lauderdale, 1994), the Conference of the Parties adopted Resolution Conf. 9.22 (Universal Tagging System for the identification of crocodilian skins). This Resolution was revised at CoP11 (Gigiri, 2000) and renumbered Resolution Conf. 11.12. The Resolution established a universal tagging system for the tracking of international trade in crocodilian skins and parts that includes:
 - a) the universal tagging of raw and processed crocodilian skins with non-reusable tags for all crocodilian skins entering international trade, unless they have been further processed and cut into smaller pieces;
 - b) the tagging of transparent containers for crocodilian parts;
 - c) the use of non-reusable tags that include, as a minimum, the International Organization for Standardization two-letter code for the country of origin, a unique serial identification number, a standard species code, and the year of production or harvest;
 - d) the registration of such non-reusable tags with the CITES Secretariat;
 - e) the recording of the same information that appears on the tags on the export permit, re-export certificate, or other Convention document; and
 - f) the implementation by re-exporting countries of an administrative system that allows for effective matching of imports and re-exports, and ensures that the original tags are intact upon re-export and, if tags are broken, that the re-tagging of skins is performed as described in the Resolution.

4. Twelve years have passed since the adoption of this Resolution. The United States has observed that during this period trade in American alligator skins has increased and there have been additional countries and operations that have received approval to engage in commercial trade in crocodilians. With such changes, it may be beneficial to evaluate the effectiveness of the tagging system recommended in Resolution Conf. 11.12 and whether any improvements or changes would be advisable.
5. Enforcement and oversight of a tagging programme can require significant time and resources. Parties may be handling ongoing issues, such as procedures for broken tags and effective distribution of tags, in a variety of ways. A review of how Parties are implementing the universal tagging system and the benefits that are being derived for *in situ* conservation of crocodilians could assist in making improvements, if necessary, to the universal tagging system. In addition, such a review could identify alternative identification tools or regimes that may complement or augment the current system.

Recommendation

6. The United States recommends that Parties adopt the draft decisions in the Annex.

COMMENTS FROM THE SECRETARIAT

- A. The Secretariat supports the idea of reviewing the crocodile tagging system to identify how it might be simplified and rendered more cost effective.
- B. It is proposed in the draft decisions that the Standing Committee's Clearing House should oversee the review, but this may need to be reconsidered in light of limited terms of reference and resources for the Clearing House. The Secretariat recommends therefore that the Conference of the Parties direct the Standing Committee to establish a working group for this purpose. Such a working group could invite the IUCN/SSC Crocodile Specialist Group to provide input to its discussions.
- C. The hiring of a consultant might have cost implications of USD 10,000. Any administrative or other support to the Standing Committee, that might be required from the Secretariat, has already been incorporated into the costed programme of work.

DRAFT DECISIONS OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

Effectiveness of the CITES universal crocodylian tagging system

Directed to the Standing Committee

14.XX The Standing Committee shall:

- a) instruct its Clearing House, if adequate resources are received, to:
 - i) develop a budget and parameters to conduct a review of the implementation and effectiveness of the universal tagging system recommended in Resolution Conf. 11.12;
 - ii) in consultation with the Chairman of the Standing Committee, recommend an appropriate consultant to carry out such a review, so that the completed study can be provided to the Standing Committee at its 58th meeting; and
 - iii) work with the consultant, as it determines appropriate, to refine the scope and execution of the study as it progresses; and
- b) submit recommendations at the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties for any adjustments it finds necessary to the universal tagging system based on the findings and recommendations of the review.

Directed to the Secretariat

14.XX The Secretariat shall seek funding to support the conduct of the study recommended in Decision 14.XX from Parties, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, industry and other appropriate entities.