

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



Fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties  
Doha (Qatar), 13-25 March 2010

Interpretation and Implementation of the Convention

Trade control and marking

IDENTIFICATION OF CITES-LISTED CORALS IN TRADE

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

Background

2. Decision 11.99, adopted by the Parties at the 11<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES (CoP11 – April 2000), directed the Animals Committee to provide advice to the Secretariat on the genera of hard corals for which it is practical to recognize specimens in trade to the species level, and on those genera for which identification to genus level only is acceptable for the purpose of implementing the Resolution on *Permits and certificates* (now Resolution Conf. 12.3 (Rev. CoP14)). In response to this Decision, the Animals Committee at its 18<sup>th</sup> meeting (April 2002) adopted a list of coral genera that can be identified to species level and of those that may be identified to genus level only.
3. At CoP12 (November 2002) the Chairman of the Animals Committee recommended that this list be distributed by the Secretariat as a Notification to the Parties. This recommendation was adopted and, consequently, on April 4, 2003, the Secretariat issued Notification to the Parties No. 2003/020, which provided in Annex 1 the list adopted by the Animals Committee of *Coral taxa identifiable to species level* (71 taxa) and in Annex 2 the list adopted by the Animals Committee of *Coral taxa where identification to genus level is acceptable, but which should be identified to species level where feasible* (49 taxa). It should be noted that these lists only apply to taxa of hard corals.
4. Since the issuance of Notification No. 2003/020, it has been the practice of the United States, when issuing CITES permits or certificates for specimens of hard corals or when reviewing foreign CITES permits or certificates for specimens of hard corals, to issue or accept such documents only when: 1) the permitted taxa are included on the list in Annex 1 of the Notification and are identified on the document at the species level; or 2) the permitted taxa are included on the list in Annex 2 of the Notification and are identified on the document at either the species level or the genus level.
5. However, over the past 6 years there have been a number of instances reported by inspectors at U.S. ports of CITES permits accompanying imports of hard coral specimens where the genus names appearing on the permits do not appear on either of the lists in Notification No. 2003/020. We have also observed that there are a number of hard coral genus names currently in the CITES Species Database that are not on either list in the Notification. It simply appears that, 6 years after the issuance of the Notification, CITES coral taxonomy has changed and the lists in the Notification are now outdated.
6. In addition to the problems referred to above related to the outdated lists of hard corals in Notification No. 2003/020, the report of the zoological nomenclature specialist of the Animals Committee at CoP14

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\* *The geographical designations employed in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the CITES Secretariat or the United Nations Environment Programme concerning the legal status of any country, territory, or area, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The responsibility for the contents of the document rests exclusively with its author.*

(June 2007) outlined that there is a need for a standard reference for CITES-listed coral species. This need was noted by the Animals Committee at its 24<sup>th</sup> meeting (April 2009).

### Recommendations

7. To address the issues discussed above related to identification of CITES-listed corals in trade, the United States recommends that the Parties adopt a Decision directing the Animals Committee to: 1) identify existing coral reference materials that could be adopted as standard nomenclatural references for CITES-listed corals; and 2) update the lists contained in the annexes to Notification to the Parties No. 2003/020 to reflect changes in coral taxonomy since the Notification was issued, and this information to be transmitted to the Parties in a new Notification.
8. Since the list of *Coral taxa identifiable to species level* in Annex 1 would likely require updating on a regular basis due to the frequent addition of new valid coral names to the CITES Species Database, whereas the list of *Coral taxa where identification to genus level is acceptable, but which should be identified to species level where feasible* in Annex 2 would likely require much less frequent updating, the United States believes that it might be preferable for the Animals Committee to simply delete Annex 1 in its entirety, update the list in Annex 2, and include this list as the only annex to the new Notification. In addition, we believe that this annex should include a statement that coral taxa not included in the list are considered identifiable to species level. We have provided text in the draft Decision for the Animals Committee to consider this approach.
9. We have provided a draft of this Decision in the Annex to this document.

### COMMENTS FROM THE SECRETARIAT

- A. The Secretariat supports the recommendation to continue the work in the Animals Committee to identify suitable standard nomenclatural references for CITES-listed corals.
- B. The Secretariat also supports the recommendation to update the guidance provided to Parties specifying for which coral taxa the identification to genus level is acceptable. The Secretariat agrees with the proponent that it would be preferable to delete the list of coral taxa identifiable to species level (Annex 1 of Notification to the Parties No. 2003/020 of 4 April 2003), while maintaining the list of coral taxa for which identification to genus level is acceptable, but which should be identified to species level where feasible (Annex 2 of the Notification).
- C. The Secretariat believes the decision to delete the Annex-1 list can be made at the present meeting, and the list of coral taxa for which identification to genus level is acceptable could be made more accessible by publishing it on the CITES website.
- D. The Secretariat therefore recommends that the draft decisions in document CoP15 Doc. 36 be amended as follows:

#### ***Directed to the Animals Committee***

15.X The Animals Committee shall:

- a) identify existing coral reference materials that could be adopted as standard nomenclatural references for CITES-listed corals; and
- b) update its list of coral taxa for which identification to genus level is acceptable, but which should be identified to species level where feasible, and provide the updated list to the Secretariat for dissemination.

#### ***Directed to the Secretariat***

15.X The Secretariat shall, upon receiving the updated list from the Animals Committee, transmit this information to the Parties through a Notification to the Parties, and by publishing the list on the CITES website.

DRAFT DECISION REGARDING IDENTIFICATION OF CITES-LISTED CORALS IN TRADE

***Directed to the Animals Committee***

The Animals Committee shall:

- a) identify, as a priority, existing coral reference materials that could be adopted as standard nomenclatural references for CITES-listed corals; and
- b) update the lists of corals contained in the annexes to Notification to the Parties No. 2003/020, *Trade in hard corals: List of coral taxa that can be recognized at species and at genus levels*, to reflect changes in coral taxonomy since the Notification was issued in 2003. As part of this process, the Animals Committee shall:
  - i) consider the problems associated with trying to maintain a comprehensive, up-to-date list of *Coral taxa identifiable to species level* and decide whether to eliminate the list contained in Annex 1 of the Notification and simply update the list of *Coral taxa where identification to genus level is acceptable, but which should be identified to species level where feasible*, currently contained in Annex 2 of the Notification. Any hard coral taxon not found on this updated list would then be considered to be identifiable to the species level; and
  - ii) provide the updated list of Coral taxa identifiable to species level, if it is retained, as well as the updated list of Coral taxa where identification to genus level is acceptable, but which should be identified to species level where feasible to the Secretariat for dissemination through a new Notification to the Parties.

***Directed to the Secretariat***

The Secretariat shall, upon receiving the updated list or lists from the Animals Committee, transmit this information to the Parties through a new Notification, which shall replace Notification No. 2003/020.