

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



Seventeenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties
Johannesburg (South Africa), 24 September – 5 October 2016

Species specific matters

REVIEW OF PRECIOUS CORALS IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE
[ORDER ANTIPATHARIA / FAMILY CORALLIIDAE]

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

Discussion

2. International trade in precious corals (black, red, and pink coral species including species within the order Antipatharia, and family Coralliidae) has occurred since ancient times. The species' natural hard skeleton is prized in its unworked form and also when made into carvings and jewelry. Harvest and trade have adversely affected harvested populations of precious black coral (Order Antipatharia) and red and pink corals (Family Coralliidae). The slow growth, fragmented population structure and limited dispersal ability make precious corals vulnerable to over-exploitation. International trade in raw and worked coral has expanded and market demand for precious corals has increased. Media reports from 2015 indicate prices have risen 500% in the last 3 years in the Chinese market¹. Some species of precious coral are protected on national levels in some countries but illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing for precious coral species still occurs, including reports of foreign nationals fishing in the Japanese Exclusive Economic Zone in 2014^{2,3} and 2015⁴ and ongoing illegal harvest of red coral off the coast of Portugal, which was reported in 2016⁵.
3. International trade in black corals has been regulated since 1981, when the order Antipatharia was listed in CITES Appendix II at CoP3. This Appendix-II listing should have done a great deal to ensure that harvest of black coral for international trade is legal and sustainable. At its twenty-fifth meeting (AC25, 2011) the Animals Committee selected all species of Antipatharia for review under the Significant Trade Review process and the review is still ongoing for Taiwan following AC28. Nonetheless, we believe it would be beneficial to review the Antipatharia species regionally and across their ranges to understand whether the CITES listing of black coral has been implemented effectively to achieve its intended results.

* *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.*

¹ Sidell, M. W., 2015. Mediterranean Red Coral Jewelry Prices Soar Due to Chinese Demand. Fairchild Fashion Media. November 7, 2015. <http://www.accessories-news/jewelry/red-coral-jewelry-prices-china-demand-10274710/>

² Editorial. The red coral poaching problem. November 24, 2014. <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2014/11/24/editorials/red-coral-poaching-problem/#.Vx5B50wrK00>

³ McCurry, Justin. 2014. Japan-China relations strained over illegal coral poaching. The Guardian. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/nov/06/japanese-ogasawara-islands-china-coral-poaching-typhoon>

⁴ Zhang, Y. and W. Xiaodong. 2015. Red coral poaching still 'rampant'. ChinaDaily.com. http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-05/26/content_20818288.htm

⁵ Boavida, J., Paulo, D., Aurelle, D., Arnaud-Haond, S., Marschal, C., Reed, J., Gonçalves J. M. S. and E. A. Serrão. 2016. A Well-Kept Treasure at Depth: Precious Red Coral Rediscovered in Atlantic Deep Coral Gardens (SW Portugal) after 300 Years. PLoS ONE, 11(2), e0150654. <http://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0150654>

4. In 2008, China included four species of red coral (*Corallium* spp.) in CITES Appendix III. In 2011, the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) instituted rules in the Mediterranean Sea limiting the regional harvest of one species of red coral (*Corallium rubrum*). The GFCM has facilitated the production of standard national management plans to help ensure a sustainable harvest of *C. rubrum* and allow for the regrowth of previously overharvested coral beds. Some range States may have instituted national management measures for some red and pink coral species. An assessment of the conservation status of red and pink corals and the effectiveness of management measures for these species would inform CITES Parties whether additional measures are needed to ensure that harvest for international trade is sustainable. Additionally, lessons learned from the evaluation of the effectiveness of the Appendix-II listing of black coral could inform current and future management and regulation of red and pink corals subject to international trade.
5. We ask that the Conference of the Parties consider the information presented in this document and adopt the draft decisions attached in Annex 1.

COMMENTS FROM THE SECRETARIAT

- A. The Secretariat generally recommends the adoption of the draft decisions contained in Annex 1 to the document. For editorial reasons, the Secretariat proposes to amend draft decision 17.xxb as follows:

The Secretariat, subject to external funding, is requested to ~~contract~~ collaborate with FAO to ~~undertake~~ commission a study by species experts on CITES and non-CITES listed precious coral species (black, red, and pink coral species including species within the order Antipatharia, and family Coralliidae) including: (...)
- B. As stated in paragraph 3 of the present document, Antipatharia spp. was selected as part of the Review of Significant Trade following CoP15. The annex of document AC27 Doc. 12.4 contains the species report by UNEP-WCMC for some of the range states of Antipatharia spp. from that round of Review of Significant Trade, which the Parties may consider for additional information.
- C. The Secretariat notes that currently all species of black corals (*Antipatharia* spp.), blue corals (*Helioporidae* spp.), stony corals (*Scleractinia* spp.) and organ-pipe corals (*Tubiporidae* spp.) are included in Appendix II and that four species of red corals (*Corallium elatius*, *C. japonicum*, *C. konjoi*, *C. secundum*) were included in Appendix III by China. The Secretariat further notes that there have been two recent proposals to add *Corallium* spp. (CoP 14) and *Coralliidae* spp. (CoP15) to Appendix II, both of which were rejected by the Conference of the Parties. The draft decisions 17.xxa and 17.xxb contain instructions that relate to “precious coral species (black, red, and pink coral species including species within the order Antipatharia, and family Coralliidae”, i.e. which extend to non-CITES listed corals. While generally the Secretariat notes that only limited attention and resources can be allocated to non-CITES listed species, the inclusion of these species in the activities proposed appears not to add significant workload for the Secretariat. The activities proposed in draft decision 17.xxa and the administration of the externally funded activities proposed in draft decisions 17.xxb could be absorbed within the existing resources of the Secretariat.
- D. The Secretariat further notes that there appears to be an inconsistency in the bracketed explanation of “precious coral species” between the draft questionnaire in Annex 2 (“Black, red, and pink coral species within the order Antipatharia, and the family Coralliidae”) and the draft decisions in Annex 1 (precious coral species (black, red, and pink coral species including species within the order Antipatharia, and family Coralliidae”) [differences underlined].
- E. The document does not provide a budget or source of funding for the proposed work. The Secretariat estimates that the required budget would be as follows:

Decision	Activity	Cost implications (USD)	Source of funding
17.xxa	Secretariat to issue a notification to invite coral range states to complete a questionnaire and compile a report for AC29	Within existing resources	Core funding
17.xxb	Collaborate with FAO to commission a study on CITES and non-CITES listed precious coral species, taking into account products from 17.xxa, compilation of available data and identification of data gaps, comparison of management, preparation of report for AC30, including guidance to enhance conservation and sustainable use.	50.000 – 80.000	Not identified

DRAFT DECISIONS OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

This document has been prepared by the United States of America.

Directed to the Secretariat

- 17.xxa The Secretariat, subject to external funding, is requested to:
- i issue a notification that invites precious coral range States to complete a questionnaire/survey (Annex 2) to report data on their precious coral resources (black, red, and pink coral species including species within the order Antipatharia, and family Coralliidae), especially current and historical abundance, biological status, management, and any known harvest for domestic or international trade; and
 - ii compile range States' data into a report for submission to the 29th meeting of the Animals Committee (AC29) for its consideration.
- 17.xxb The Secretariat, subject to external funding, is requested to contract with FAO to undertake a study by species experts on CITES and non-CITES listed precious coral species (black, red, and pink coral species including species within the order Antipatharia, and family Coralliidae) including:
- i. consideration of any responses received to the Notification issued in response to 17.xxa;
 - ii. compilation of available data and information on the biology, population status, use and trade in each species, as well as identification of gaps in such data and information;
 - iii. comparison of the management and harvest regulation schemes for black and red and pink coral species; and
 - iv. preparation of a report for consideration at the 30th meeting of the Animals Committee (AC30), on the conservation status and trade of precious corals, including guidance, if appropriate, on the actions needed to enhance the conservation and sustainable use of precious corals.

Directed to the Animals Committee

- 17.xxc The Animals Committee is requested to:
- i. review the outcomes of the precious coral survey and the FAO study and prepare recommendations, as appropriate, on actions needed to enhance the conservation and sustainable harvest and use of all precious corals in international trade.
 - ii. report these recommendations to the Standing Committee at its 70th meeting (SC70).

Directed to the Standing Committee

- 17.xxd The Standing Committee is requested to consider the information and recommendations of the Animals Committee, made in accordance with Decision 17.xxc, and make its own recommendations, as appropriate, for communication to the Parties or for consideration at the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

Draft questionnaire on the conservation of and trade in precious coral species including

(Black, red, and pink coral species within the order Antipatharia, and the family Coralliidae)

The term 'specimen' as used in this questionnaire is as defined in Article I, paragraph b) i) and ii) of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora⁶

A. GENERAL INFORMATION AND POPULATION STATUS

Please provide as much information as possible, to the species or population level, in answer to the questions below – the information should cover at least the last five years⁷

Information is requested from precious coral range States.

Country	
Function of agency/agencies completing this questionnaire (CITES Management Authority, CITES Scientific Authority, Wildlife Authority, Police, Customs, Other)	
Contact details of agency/agencies completing this questionnaire	
Contact person(s) (name, email, job title, function)	

⁶ (b) "Specimen" means:

(i) any animal or plant, whether alive or dead;

(ii) in the case of an animal: for species included in Appendices I and II, any readily recognizable part or derivative thereof; and for species included in Appendix III, any readily recognizable part or derivative thereof specified in Appendix III in relation to the species

⁷ Please use additional sheets for any question, if needed.

A.1	<p>Is your country a range State for precious corals?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If 'Yes', please indicate which species occur in your country. If 'No', please proceed to Section B. If there is uncertainty regarding which species occur in your country, indicate 'unknown'.</p>			
	Species	Species	Species	Species
A.2	<p>Does recent information, not already available, exist about the conservation status of each precious coral species in your country?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If 'Yes', please provide a link, reference or additional information about the species' status.</p>			
A.3	<p>Based on the best available information, did the precious coral population(s) in your country over the last 5 years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ increase <input type="checkbox"/> ○ remain stable <input type="checkbox"/> ○ decline <input type="checkbox"/> ○ data deficient <input type="checkbox"/> <p>Please indicate on what source of information your answer is based (e.g. indicate the reference and the date of reference)</p>			

A.4	If available, please provide data or information on the impact of (international and domestic) legal trade, and, if possible illegal trade, on the precious coral population(s) in your country.
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C. MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

<p>C.1</p>	<p>Is harvest of precious coral managed in your country? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If your answer to the question above is 'Yes' please go to question C.1.1</p>
<p>C.1.1</p>	<p>Please provide detailed information on how harvest is managed. Do you have management plans or management measures to address harvest?</p>
<p>C.2</p>	<p>Do you monitor the amount of raw coral used in the production of jewellery and decorative items? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If your answer to the question above is 'Yes' please go to question C.2.1</p>
<p>C.2.1</p>	<p>Please provide detailed information on how the amount of raw coral used in the production of jewellery and decorative items is monitored.</p>
<p>C.3</p>	<p>Is domestic trade in precious coral, and specimens of precious coral, regulated in your country? No known domestic trade <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If your answer to the question above is 'Yes' please go to question C.3.1</p>
<p>C.3.1</p>	<p>Please provide detailed information on how domestic trade is regulated.</p>

Have any precious coral, or precious coral specimens been legally **exported** or **re-exported** from your country since 1 January 2010 that are not reflected in the CITES annual reports submitted?¹⁰

Yes

No

Please indicate information about each export or re-export separately¹¹

D.2

Species	Specimen (i.e. Jewellery, decorative, live, coral sand or Other)	Quantity*	Unit of measure**	Date	Origin	Destination	Source	Purpose

- - For jewelry and decorative items, quantity should be the number of items AND the weight of raw coral used to produce these items
- ** - For jewelry and decorative items, unit of measure should identify the number of items AND a unit of weight as either wet weight or dry weight

¹⁰ Data already provided in CITES annual reports do not need to be included.

¹¹ Refer to CITES codes for Source and Purpose in Resolution Conf. 12.3 (Rev. CoP16) <http://www.cites.org/eng/res/12/12-03R16.php>.

E. ENFORCEMENT

For the following please provide as much information as possible, covering at least the last five years

E.1	<p>Is the illegal harvest or illegal trade of precious corals, or precious coral specimens, an issue in your country?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If your answer to the question above is 'Yes' please go to question E.1.1</p>
E.1.1	<p>Please describe the problem and what solutions are needed to address the problem.</p>

F. CURRENT OR PAST RESEARCH ON PRECIOUS CORAL POPULATIONS

For the following please provide as much information as possible, covering at least the last five years

F.1	Is there, or have there been, research projects which relate to the conservation needs of precious coral in your country?					
	Project	Year	Study objective	Primary findings	Conservation benefits identified	Implementation
Additional information						

G. STOCKPILES

G.1	Do stockpiles of precious coral specimens exist in your country (government or privately held)? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If yes go to question G.1.1						
G.1.1	If your answer to G.1 is 'Yes', please include as much information as possible in the columns below ¹² .						
	Species	Specimen (i.e. Jewellery, decorative, live, coral sand or Other)	Volume	Source	Age (i.e. when the stock was constituted)	Privately held	Government held (federal, regional, local)
G.2	Please provide detailed information on how the amount of raw coral harvested and used in the production of jewelry and decorative items is managed and accounted for in your country.						

¹² Please tick the relevant column to indicate if the stockpiles are government or privately held.

H. MARICULTURE ACTIVITIES

For the following please provide as much information as possible, covering at least the last five years

H.1	<p>Are precious corals maricultured in your country? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes go to question H.1.1</p>																														
H.1.1	<p>If your answer to H.1 is 'Yes', please complete the columns below</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; margin: 10px 0;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 33%; text-align: center;">Species</th> <th style="width: 33%; text-align: center;">Number of facilities</th> <th style="width: 33%; text-align: center;">Production per year</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td></tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Additional information</p>	Species	Number of facilities	Production per year																											
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