

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

Eighteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties
Geneva (Switzerland), 17-28 August 2019

Summary record of the first plenary session

17 August 2019: 09h07 - 11h38

Secretariat: I. Higuero
UNEP: I. Andersen

Rapporteurs: B. Austin
A. Caromel
M. Jenkins
R. Mackenzie

Opening of the meeting

His Excellency Mr. Alain Berset, Federal Councillor, Head of the Federal Department of Home Affairs, welcomed participants to Geneva and recognised the Government of Sri Lanka for their efforts in preparing for the 18th Conference of the Parties to CITES. He expressed his condolences to those affected by the attacks in Sri Lanka, thanking those who had taken on the organization of the present meeting at short notice. He highlighted important issues facing biodiversity including climate change, poaching and illegal trade, which required global responses and international cooperation to resolve. Sustainable management was highlighted as key in resolving many of these issues.

The Executive Director of UNEP, Ms. Inger Andersen, also expressed condolences to Sri Lanka for the terrorist attack in April 2019 and marked the passing of Ms. Bomo Edna Molewa, former Minister of Environmental Affairs, South Africa and Chair of the 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP17). She noted that at the heart of CITES was the need to find a balance between sustainable use of wildlife and the protection of threatened species. She emphasized that sustainable use could be successful in improving livelihoods and stressed the importance of keeping people at the heart of decision-making. In all such endeavours, multilateral approaches were key to success. She noted that 2020 would be a pivotal year for the environment and that CITES, with its proven record in science-based decision-making, was well placed to make an important contribution to this process.

The Chair of the Standing Committee, Ms. Carolina Caceres thanked Switzerland for hosting the rescheduled meeting of the Conference of the Parties and expressed her sympathy for those who had lost friends and family in Sri Lanka. She drew attention to the recent findings of the Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), highlighting the critical threats faced by a high proportion of the world's biodiversity and noting that unsustainable use was a key driver in biodiversity loss. CITES played a pivotal role in addressing this by ensuring that trade was both non-detrimental and legal. On behalf of the Standing Committee, she welcomed the Secretary-General to her new role and thanked the Parties and observers for their dedication to wildlife conservation.

The Secretary-General of CITES, Ms. Ivonne Higuero, thanked Switzerland, the European Union, Germany, Norway and Croatia for their financial contributions and support that had made it possible to reschedule the meeting of the Conference of the Parties at short notice. She thanked all Parties and observers for their support and understanding throughout. She then asked the meeting to stand and observe a minute of silence in remembrance of all those who had lost their lives in the terrorist attacks in Sri Lanka. She highlighted the

importance of the role of CITES within the post-2020 Biodiversity Framework and stressed the importance of reaching agreement on the CITES Strategic Vision post-2020 at the present meeting. She noted the agenda for CoP18 was 20% larger than that at CoP17 and implored the Parties to think carefully about ways to control this rapid growth, which was in danger of becoming unsustainable. She noted that ensuring CITES worked effectively was the responsibility of the Parties, who also needed to be supported in their efforts to conserve and manage their wildlife resources in a sustainable manner. The Convention was the most appropriate platform in helping to find common goals and solutions that supported all Parties.

Sri Lanka expressed its regret at being unable to welcome Parties and observers to Sri Lanka and thanked the Secretariat for its hard work in reorganizing the meeting at short notice, and all those who had provided financial support. They welcomed the Secretary-General to her new role and wished the meeting success.

Administrative and financial matters

1. Election of Chair, Alternate Chair and Vice-Chairs of the meeting and of Chairs of Committees I and II

The Chair of the Standing Committee, as interim Chair of the meeting, announced that the Committee had nominated H.E. Mr. Thomas Jemmi (Switzerland) as Chair of the meeting, Ms. Awilo Ochieng Pernet (Switzerland) as Alternate Chair, and Mr. Maurice Isaacs (Bahamas) and Mr. James Lutalo (Uganda) as Vice-Chairs. Mr. Rod Hay (New Zealand) and Mr. Craig Hoover (United States of America) had been nominated as Chairs of Committees I and II respectively. These nominations were accepted by acclamation. She then invited the Chair of the meeting to the podium.

H.E. Mr. Thomas Jemmi thanked the conference for his nomination and wished the meeting success.

2. Adoption of the agenda

The Secretariat introduced document CoP18 Doc. 2 (Rev. 1).

The agenda in document CoP18 Doc. 2 (Rev. 1) was adopted.

3. Adoption of the working programme

The Secretariat introduced document CoP18 Doc. 3 (Rev. 4).

In order to balance more effectively the workloads of the Committees, the Secretariat proposed that discussion of agenda item 54.1 on *Identification Manual* be moved to Committee II and be discussed alongside agenda item 22.1 on *Capacity-building and identification materials* on the afternoon of 19 August and that discussion of agenda item 75 on *Pangolins (Manis spp.)* also be transferred to Committee II for discussion on the afternoon of 22 August.

The United States of America proposed that consideration of agenda item 86 on *Saiga antelope (Saiga spp.)* be moved in the Committee I programme to be addressed immediately after consideration of amendment proposal 2 (transfer of *Saiga tatarica* from Appendix II to Appendix I) and that discussion of agenda items 81 on *African grey parrots (Psittacus erithacus)* and 89 on *Totoaba (Totoaba macdonaldi)* be moved to Committee II. Niger urged that the two agenda items on *African lion (Panthera leo)* (76.1 on *Report of the Secretariat* and 76.2 on *Conservation of and trade in African lions*) be considered together.

The working programme in document CoP18 Doc. 3 (Rev. 4) was adopted with the amendments suggested by the Secretariat and the United States of America.

4. Rules of procedure

4.1 Rules of procedure for the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties

The Secretariat introduced document CoP18 Doc. 4.1 as follows:

“At its 17th meeting (CoP17), the Conference of the Parties adopted its Rules of Procedure as set out in the annex to document CoP18 Doc. 4.1. The Secretariat notes that no proposals to amend the rules of procedure have been submitted prior to the present meeting.

At the time of adoption of its Rules of Procedure at CoP17, the Conference took note of the written statement made by the European Union (EU), concerning the distribution of the exercise of voting rights between the EU and its Member States, included in annex 2 of document CoP17 Plen. 2. The Secretariat has been informed that the content of that statement is valid also for the present meeting, including that all 28 Member States of the EU are present and accredited to the present meeting and will remain present during the entire CoP18.

The Secretariat recalls that the participation of a Regional Economic Integration Organization, such as the EU, in the meetings of the CoP is based on the principle of “no-additionality”. This means *inter alia* that such an organization shall not exercise its right to vote if the Member States exercise theirs, and vice versa - as set out in Article XXI of the Convention.

In this context, the Secretariat draws the attention to information document CoP18 Inf. 17 submitted for the present meeting, in which the EU – as the only Regional Economic Integration Organization that have acceded to the Convention – has provided information on the distribution of the exercise of the right to vote between the EU delegation and its Member States with regard to each agenda item. The EU has also indicated that in case of a change to the distribution of the voting rights, such change will be communicated to the Parties in advance of a vote.

As mentioned, no proposals to amend the rules of procedure have been submitted prior to the present meeting; therefore, the Secretariat draws the attention to Rule 32 of the Rules stating that the Rules shall remain valid for each meeting of the Conference unless they are amended by decision of the Conference.

The Secretariat invites the Conference to take note of this introduction and to apply the Rules as set out in the annex to document CoP18 Doc. 4.1.”

The European Union made the following statement:

“We thank the Secretariat for its introduction, and for drawing the meeting’s attention to information document CoP18 Inf. 17, which states – for each agenda item – whether the EU or the Member States will exercise the voting right, should there be a vote. We trust this provides the necessary transparency as to who does what on behalf of our group during this meeting.

We confirm the information provided by the Secretariat in relation to participation in this CoP by the EU and its Member States, and as regards the validity of the statement made at CoP 17. The 28 EU Member States will remain present during the entire CoP 18. It is understood that the EU Member States will attend each session of the CoP and it is understood that no Party will challenge the EU’s exercise of its right to vote at CoP18.

We agree to include the Secretariat’s introduction and this intervention in the summary record of this meeting if it is the wish of the Conference.

We support the adoption of the Rules of Procedure as set out in the annex to document CoP18 Doc. 4.1. We also support the draft decision directed to the Standing Committee, mandating it to review Rule 25 of the Rules of Procedure propose amendments to the 19th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.”

It was agreed to include these statements in the summary record of the meeting and to apply the current Rules of Procedure as contained in the Annex to document CoP18 Doc 4.1.

5. Credentials Committee

5.1 Establishment of the Credentials Committee

The Secretariat reported that the following had been nominated as members of the Credentials Committee: Ms. Miet van Looy (Belgium) – Chair; Mr. Georges Phrem (Lebanon); Ms. He Jinxing (China); Ms. Kristen Koyama (United States); and Ms. Kathleen Taituave (Samoa). The Secretariat explained that Rule 7(2)(a) of the Rules of Procedure provided for the Credentials Committee to be composed of not more than five representatives of different Parties. Chile and Senegal, supported by Togo, Egypt, Nigeria, the United Republic of Tanzania, South Africa and Kenya, stressed the importance of regional representation on the Committee. The United States suggested that this issue be addressed

under agenda item 4.2 on *Review of the Rules of Procedure*. The Secretariat proposed the nomination of observers from Central and South America and the Caribbean, and from Africa to attend meetings of the Credentials Committee, pending any discussion of amendment of the relevant Rules of Procedure. Kuwait indicated that Asia would withdraw one of its representatives from the Committee to enable another region to be represented. Uganda, supported by Nigeria, proposed that Egypt, as Chair of the African Union, represent Africa on the Committee. Chile stated that Central and South America and the Caribbean would agree a nomination at its regional meeting. The nomination of Egypt as a replacement to Lebanon on the Credentials Committee was accepted by acclamation. The Chair agreed that the region of Central and South America and the Caribbean could nominate an observer to attend the meetings of the Committee and proposed that the rule concerning composition of the Credentials Committee be discussed under agenda item 4.2. This was agreed.

6. Admission of observers

The Secretariat introduced document CoP 18 Doc. 6 (Rev.1) and sought formal acceptance of the observers listed in the Annex to that document. This was agreed.

Strategic matters

9. Committee reports and recommendations

9.1 Standing Committee

9.1.1 Report of the Chair

The Chair of the Standing Committee summarized document CoP18 Doc. 9.1.1, thanking the Russian Federation for hosting the 70th meeting of the Standing Committee in Sochi in October 2018 and drawing attention to the extensive agenda covered by the Committee over the last three years. Supported by the United States of America, she encouraged Parties to consider carefully the increased workload of the Committees and the allocation of tasks to them and to the Secretariat.

Document CoP18 Doc. 9.1.1 was noted.

9.2 Animals Committee

9.2.1 Report of the Chair

The Chair of the Animals Committee summarized document CoP18 Doc. 9.2.1, drawing attention to the extensive list of Resolutions and Decisions directed to the Committee, detailed in its Annex and highlighting some significant achievements by the Committee. He drew attention to the need for resources to ensure Committee members from developing States could participate in Committee meetings and urged that more funding to be made available to support the work of the Committees. In particular, he emphasised the workload of the nomenclature specialist, and the need for resources to ensure that they could attend relevant meetings.

The United States thanked the Animals Committee for the hard work of its members. Senegal urged the provision of sufficient resources for the Committees' work.

Document CoP18 Doc. 9.2.1 was noted.

9.2 Plants Committee

9.2.1 Report of the Chair

The Chair of the Plants Committee summarized document CoP18 Doc. 9.3.1, explaining that the Plants Committee had met twice in the last three years jointly with the Animals Committee. She pointed to the Annex to the document, detailing the work plan and Resolutions and Decisions directed to the Committee. She particularly noted the increase in engagement of a broader range of observers, including industry, in the Committee's work. She recognised the long-standing contributions of outgoing Committee members Greg Leach (Oceania), Noel

McGough (nomenclature specialist), Maurizio Sajeve (Europe), and Vera Rauber Coradin (Central and South America and the Caribbean).

The United States of America acknowledged the Chair's role in guiding the Plants Committee through a period of transition. Uganda highlighted the need to recognize the centrality of the Committees and provide sufficient resources for their work. Georgia also expressed its appreciation for the work of the Committee.

Document CoP18 Doc. 9.3.1 was noted.

The session was adjourned at 11h38.