

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



Eighteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties  
Colombo (Sri Lanka), 23 May – 3 June 2019

Administrative and financial matters

DRAFT RESOLUTION ON LANGUAGE STRATEGY FOR THE CONVENTION

1. This document has been submitted by Iraq.\*

GREATLY APPRECIATING the generosity of the Republic of Sri Lanka to host the 18th Conference of Parties to the CITES Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, which is being held after the agree in the last CoP (17) that was held in October 2016 in Johannesburg, South Africa, this will be the second time for the cop to be held in South Asia after CoP8 in Japan in 1992;

CALLING that the interest of all the Arab Parties, to develop strategies that explore the Arabic Language as one of the UN languages into the Convention, in its work at national, regional, and global levels, the enhancement of synergies with multilateral environmental agreements;

REMINDING the adoption of General Assembly Resolution 3190 at its 28th session in December 1973, the Arabic language to be an official language of the General Assembly and its bodies;

APPRECIATING the work of the Secretariat and its working group on language strategy for their work in relation to the development of a language strategy for the Convention;

BEARING that adding the Arabic language provide parties with translation of the most important CITES information documents into their own official languages and to provide them to the Secretariat, so that it may make them publicly accessible on the CITES website;

CONSIDERING the use of multiple languages in the work of the Convention, the governing and subsidiary bodies and the Secretariat could: help to improve the implementation of the Convention by Parties; make the Convention more accessible to a wider public; and foster the interest and engagement of non-party States. However, as for some other conventions, budgetary constraints have precluded the provision of a language service in all six official languages of the United Nations; and

CONCERNED when seeking to fill vacancies in the Secretariat, the Secretary General should take into account the language skills of applicants, with a view to augmenting the capacity of the Secretariat to communicate in all official languages;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION

1. ACKNOWLEDGES that the use of multiple languages in the work of the Convention, the governing and subsidiary bodies and the Secretariat could: help to improve the implementation of the Convention by Parties; make the Convention more accessible to a wider public; and foster the interest and engagement of

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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.*

non-party States. However, as for some other conventions, budgetary constraints have precluded the provision of a language service in all six official languages of the United Nations;

- 2 AGREES that the key goals for a language strategy are:
  - a) an equal language service for other official languages of the Convention at the start of the 19th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties; and
  - b) introduction of Arabic as an official language;
- 3 AGREES that, when seeking to fill vacancies in the Secretariat, the Secretary General should take into account the language skills of applicants, with a view to the capacity of the Secretariat to communicate in all official languages; and
4. FURTHER AGREES that the cost of translation of non-official documentation that results from projects or from externally funded activities should also be provided from external funds unless the Conference of the Parties specify otherwise.

#### COMMENTS OF THE SECRETARIAT

- A. The Secretariat acknowledges the value of increasing the number of working languages of the Convention by including Arabic. The Secretariat notes that Arabic is the official language in 24 countries and spoken by over 400 million people among the CITES Parties. According to Article XXV of the Convention, the original text of the Convention exists in Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish and each of these versions shall be equally authentic. At its 16th meeting (CoP16, Bangkok, 2013), the Conference of the Parties agreed that, at the next extraordinary meeting of the Conference of the Parties, the Secretariat should propose an amendment to the Convention in order to adopt an official text of the Convention in Arabic [see paragraph 3 d) of Resolution Conf. 4.6 (Rev. CoP17) on *Submission of draft resolutions, draft decisions and other documents for meetings of the Conference of the Parties*].
- B. As further detailed below, the proposal to include Arabic as a working language of the Convention would have significant cost implications and would require additional core funding for language service and human resources within the Secretariat, if adopted.
- C. Parties have decided in the Rules of Procedures that for the Conference of the Parties and its permanent committees, the official working languages of the Convention are English, French and Spanish.
- D. Based on the adopted Rules of Procedures, the Secretariat has received financial resources to provide for language services and human resources to cover the three working languages within the Secretariat and for the Convention for the triennium budgets. In Resolution Conf. 17.2 on *Financing and the costed programme of work for the Secretariat for the triennium 2017-2019*, financial resources are included for the three years amounting to a total amount of USD 2,576,116 as per below details:

Translation services: USD 1,235,000  
Interpretation services to CoP, SC, AC and PC: USD 415,872  
Human resources (1 P-3 and one General Service): USD 925,244
- E. With introduction of one additional working language, further core funded resources for the triennium 2020-2022 will be required for translation, interpretation and human resources (increase by one P-3 and one support staff to existing staff) within the Secretariat to process the documents for meetings. This would amount to around USD 1.8 million for the three years as per below details:

Translation services: USD 420,000  
Interpretation services to CoP, SC, AC and PC: 145,000  
Human resources (2 P-3 and 2 General Service): USD 1,264,876  
Internal transaction cost for the Secretariat to operate in additional languages: not costed
- F. The Secretariat notes that the other biodiversity-related conventions have adopted the working languages presented in below table.

<b>Conventions</b>	<b>Working languages</b>
Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)	Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish
Convention of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)	English, French and Spanish
Ramsar Convention on Wetlands	English, French and Spanish

- G. The Secretariat is continuously working on ensuring that all UN official languages are represented when filling vacancies and are happy to report that the Secretariat will have staff knowledgeable in all UN official languages except Russian from mid-March 2019.
- H. The Secretariat further notes that the United Nations has six working languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish) and suggests that whether the working languages of the Convention should include the six official UN languages should be explored before any decision can be taken to add Arabic. Based on the above considerations, the Secretariat cannot recommend the adoption of the draft resolution as presented in the present document.

TENTATIVE BUDGET AND SOURCE OF FUNDING  
FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF DRAFT RESOLUTIONS OR DECISIONS

According to Resolution Conf. 4.6 (Rev. CoP16) on *Submission of draft resolutions, draft decisions and other documents for meetings of the Conference of the Parties*, the Conference of the Parties decided that any draft resolutions or decisions submitted for consideration at a meeting of the Conference of the Parties that have budgetary and workload implications for the Secretariat or permanent committees must contain or be accompanied by a budget for the work involved and an indication of the source of funding. The authors of this document propose the following tentative budget and source of funding.