

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

Interpretation and implementation matters

Regulation of trade

Identification of specimens in trade

IDENTIFICATION OF STURGEONS AND PADDLEFISH SPECIMENS IN TRADE

1. This document has been submitted by the Secretariat.
2. At its 17th meeting (CoP17, Johannesburg, 2016), the Conference of the Parties extended a number of Decisions on *Sturgeons and paddlefish (Acipenseriformes spp.)* that had originally been adopted at its 16th meeting (CoP16, Bangkok, 2013), and adopted Decision 17.32 on *Capacity-building* as follows:

Directed to the Secretariat

16.136 (Rev. CoP17)

The Secretariat shall:

- a) *subject to external funding and in consultation with the Animals Committee, organize a study to:*
 - i) *provide an overview of molecular, DNA-based and other forensic methods that could assist in identifying the species and populations of Acipenseriformes specimens in trade, determining the origin or age of specimens, and differentiating wild from captive-bred or aquacultured specimens;*
 - ii) *review relevant developments in this area, including the availability and reliability of uniform identification systems;*
 - iii) *evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of the different methods (including practicality, costs, time-efficiency, reliability, technical requirements, etc.); and*
 - iv) *formulate relevant guidance for CITES Parties, enforcement agencies, the private sector and other stakeholders;*
- b) *ensure consultation with Parties that authorize trade in specimens of sturgeons and paddlefish, appropriate experts, institutions and organizations, and the private sector in the conduct of the study;*
- c) *make the results of the study available to the Animals Committee for its consideration; and*
- d) *disseminate the recommendations formulated by the Standing Committee pursuant to Decision 16.138 (Rev.CoP17) in a Notification to the Parties.*

Directed to the Animals Committee

16.137 (Rev. CoP17)

The Animals Committee shall assist the Secretariat in determining the specifications for the study referred to in Decision 16.136 (Rev.CoP17) and monitoring its conduct. It shall review the report of the study, and make recommendations as appropriate for consideration by the Standing Committee.

Directed to the Standing Committee

16.138 (Rev. CoP17)

The Standing Committee shall review the study undertaken in accordance with Decision 16.136 (Rev.CoP17) and the recommendations that the Animals Committee formulated in compliance with Decision 16.137 (Rev.CoP17), and make its own recommendations, as appropriate, for communication to Parties concerned or for consideration at the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

Directed to Animals and Plants Committees, and the Secretariat:

17.32

The Animals and Plants Committees shall establish a joint working group on capacity-building and identification materials to undertake the following tasks, in consultation with the Secretariat:

- a) provide assistance to Parties in identifying CITES-listed taxa and in undertaking capacity-building activities that contribute to the enhanced implementation of the Convention;*
- b) determine the current availability of capacity building materials, including identification guides and other tools, and enhance their accessibility;*
- c) review selected capacity building and identification materials, and assess the need for their revision and improvement, taking into account the materials that are being developed or have already been developed by Parties and materials requested in Decisions;*
- d) undertake, or provide scientific guidance to the Secretariat's undertaking of the revision and development of selected capacity building and identification materials, including materials on the development, establishment and implementation of voluntary national export quotas*
- e) review the project proposal on Improvements to the CITES identification materials: Options to promote accuracy and availability of identification material to the Parties to CITES, drafted by the United Nations Environment Programme-World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC), as well as any other projects or programmes identified by the Secretariat, and consider whether funding should be actively sought to support the activities;*
- f) review Resolution Conf. 3.4 on Technical Cooperation and Resolution Conf. 11.19 (Rev. CoP16) on Identification Manual, and make recommendations, including possible amendments to these Resolutions if appropriate, to promote accuracy and availability of capacity building and identification materials; and*
- g) report on progress with these activities at the next meetings of the Animals and Plants Committees as well as at the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.*

3. The Secretariat reported to the Animals Committee at its 30th meeting (AC30, Geneva, July 2017) on the implementation of these Decisions in document [AC30 Doc. 17.2](#). The Secretariat noted that no external funding for the implementation of Decision 16.136 had been obtained since CoP16. It had compiled a list of relevant publications that could form the basis of further work concerning molecular, DNA-based and other forensic methods that could assist in identifying the species and populations of Acipenseriformes specimens in trade, determining the origin or age of specimens, or differentiating wild from captive-bred or aquacultured specimens.
4. In its oral presentation at AC30, the Secretariat noted that in preceding months it had been approached by several Parties and organizations, which stressed that this issue remained highly relevant, in particular in range States for sturgeons that have established aquaculture operations where mixing of caviar originating from captive-bred and wild caught sturgeons can occur more easily.

5. Based on this information, the Animals Committee recommended that Decisions 16.136 (Rev. CoP17) to 16.138 (Rev. CoP17) be renewed by the Conference of the Parties and invited the Secretariat to consult with Parties trading in caviar to better identify their needs in order to propose revisions to Decisions 16.136 (Rev. CoP17) to 16.138 (Rev. CoP17).
6. The Animals Committee noted in this regard paragraph 7 of Resolution Conf. 12.7 (Rev. CoP17) on *Conservation of and trade in sturgeons and paddlefish*, which calls upon *range States, importing countries and other experts and appropriate organizations, such as the IUCN/SSC Sturgeon Specialist Group, in consultation with the Secretariat and the Animals Committee, to continue to explore the development of a uniform DNA-based identification system for parts and derivatives and aquaculture stocks of Acipenseriformes species to assist in the subsequent identification of the origin of specimens in trade and the development and application of methods for differentiating wild from aquaculture origin caviar in cases where DNA-based methods are not useful.*
7. Based on the Animals Committee's report to the 70th meeting of the Standing Committee (SC70, Sochi, October 2018) in document SC70 Doc. 44.2, the Standing Committee invited the Secretariat to submit renewed or, as necessary, revised draft decisions concerning identification of products of sturgeons and paddlefish (*Acipenseriformes* spp.) specimens in trade for consideration at the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.
8. For the preparation of this document the Secretariat reached out to relevant range States with a view to make the renewed decisions more targeted, but at the time of writing of this document no substantive comments had been received. The Secretariat will provide an oral update at the current meeting of the Conference of the Parties if a reply is received in the meantime.
9. The Secretariat notes that since Decisions 16.136 – 16.138 were adopted initially at CoP16, the Animals and Plants Committee pursuant to Decision 17.32 at their joint session at AC29/PC23 (Geneva, July 2017) established an intersessional working group on capacity building and identification materials whose expertise may be pertinent to the implementation of these decisions.
10. The Secretariat further notes that it has established a dedicated page on the CITES website on identification materials (https://cites.org/eng/imp/identification_materials/index.php) that can be used to disseminate the study, once available, and any recommendations arising from it.

Recommendations

11. The Conference of the Parties is invited to extend Decisions 16.136 (Rev. CoP17) to 16.138 (Rev. CoP17) and encourage the Animals Committee to consider involving the Animals and Plants Committee's joint intersessional working group on identification materials in the implementation of Decision 16.137 (Rev. CoP17). Decision 16.138 (Rev. CoP18) would be amended as follows:

Directed to the Standing Committee

16.138 (Rev. CoP17)

The Standing Committee shall review the study undertaken in accordance with Decision 16.136 (Rev.CoP17) and the recommendations that the Animals Committee formulated in compliance with Decision 16.137 (Rev.CoP17), and make its own recommendations, as appropriate, for communication to Parties concerned or for consideration at the 18⁹th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

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 Secretariat proposes the following tentative budget and source of funding.

If the Conference of the Parties decides to extend the validity of Decisions 16.136 to 16.138, their implementation would remain subject to external funding. The Secretariat estimates the cost of the study called for in Decision 16.136 (Rev. CoP17) at USD 10,000.