

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

Species specific matters

PRECIOUS CORALS
(ORDER ANTIPATHARIA AND FAMILY CORALLIIDAE)

1. This document has been submitted by the Standing Committee.*
2. At its 17th meeting (CoP17, Johannesburg, 2016), the Conference of the Parties adopted the following Decisions on *Precious corals (Order Antipatharia and family Coralliidae)*:

Directed to the Secretariat

17.190 *The Secretariat, subject to external funding, is requested to:*

- a) *issue a notification that invites precious coral range States and relevant Regional Fisheries Management Organizations, on a voluntary basis, to complete a questionnaire/survey (Annex 2 of document CoP17 Com. I. 11) 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*
- b) *compile range States' and Regional Fisheries Management Organizations' data into a report for submission to the 29th meeting of the Animals Committee for its consideration.*

Directed to the Secretariat

17.191 *The Secretariat, subject to external funding, is requested to collaborate with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to 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:*

- a) *consideration of any responses received to the Notification issued in response to Decision 17.190;*
- b) *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;*
- c) *comparison of the management and harvest regulation schemes for black and red and pink coral species; and*

* *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.*

- d) *preparation of a report for consideration at the 30th meeting of the Animals Committee, 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

17.192 *The Animals Committee is requested to:*

- a) *analyse 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; and*
- b) *report these recommendations to the Standing Committee at its 70th meeting.*

Directed to the Standing Committee

17.193 *The Standing Committee is requested to consider the information and recommendations of the Animals Committee, made in accordance with Decision 17.192, 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.*

Implementation of Decision 17.190 and 17.191

3. Pursuant to Decision 17.190, the Secretariat issued [Notification to the Parties No. 2017/25](#) of 24 March 2017 inviting Parties and Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) to complete, on a voluntary basis, a questionnaire to provide information on precious coral resources.
4. At the 29th meeting of the Animals Committee (AC29, Geneva, July 2017), the Secretariat reported in document [AC29 Doc. 22](#) that it had received responses to the Notification from Australia, the European Union (Croatia, France, Greece, Monaco, the Netherlands and its territories, Poland, Portugal and Spain), Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Switzerland, the United Kingdom Overseas Territories (Ascension Island, Bermuda, Cayman Islands, Montserrat, Turks and Caicos Islands), the United States of America, and the North Pacific Fisheries Commission (NPFC). The responses were summarized in information document [AC29 Inf. 24](#).
5. At AC29, the Secretariat further orally informed the Animals Committee that the United States, through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), had generously provided funding for the implementation of Decision 17.191, specifically to commission a study by experts on CITES and non-CITES listed precious coral species (black, red, and pink coral species, including species within the order Scleractinia, and family Scleractinidae).
6. As requested in Decision 17.191, the Secretariat collaborated closely with FAO to develop terms of reference for the above-mentioned study. It was decided that the study would be divided into Mediterranean and Asian components. FAO agreed to oversee this work and compile the two components into a single report for consideration by the Animals Committee.
7. At the 30th meeting of the Animals Committee (AC30, Geneva, July 2018), the Secretariat reported in document [AC30 Doc.19](#) that the implementation of the study had been delayed due to administrative challenges. However, FAO advanced the necessary resources for a draft of the study to be available at AC30. The Secretariat expressed its sincere gratitude to the USA and FAO for their commitment to move this important topic forward. The final study is expected to be made available at the present meeting as an information document.

Implementation of Decision 17.192

8. In order to facilitate the implementation of Decision 17.192, the Animals Committee established at AC29 an intersessional working group tasked with analysing and reviewing the study produced pursuant to Decision 17.191 as soon as it became available. The full mandate of the intersessional working group was as follows:
 - a) *to analyse the study commissioned in response to Decision 17.191 and to formulate recommendations for consideration at the 30th meeting of the Animals Committee;*

- b) *to analyse the outcomes of the study and prepare recommendations on actions to enhance the conservation and sustainable harvest;*
 - c) *to review other relevant issues, such as identification of corals and coral products in trade issues; and*
 - d) *to think about potential future enforcement issues such as synthetic corals.*
9. Because the draft study could only be made available to members of the working group shortly before AC30, the intersessional working group did not have sufficient time to fulfil its mandate. An in-session working group on precious corals was therefore established at AC30 with the following mandate:

Taking into account the information provided in document AC30 Doc. 19, the expert study and the analysis of the intersessional working group thereof, as well as discussions in plenary, the in-session working group shall endeavour to prepare draft recommendations, as appropriate, on actions needed to enhance the conservation and sustainable harvest and use of all precious corals in international trade and on any other relevant issues it identified for reporting to the Standing Committee at its 70th meeting. Where this is not possible, the in-session working group shall advise on a way forward, including draft decisions.

10. Based on this draft version of the study, the Animals Committee adopted several initial recommendations., [see document [AC30 Com. 4 \(Rev.\) \(Rev. by Sec.\)](#)]. However, not having been able to draw on the full study, the Animals Committee, in its report to the 70th meeting of the Standing Committee (SC70, Sochi, October 2018), noted that most of the work called for in Decision 17.192 had yet to be accomplished, i.e. the analysis of the final study, and the preparation of recommendations on actions needed to enhance the conservation and sustainable harvest and use of all precious corals in international trade [see document [SC70 Doc.46 \(Rev.1\)](#)].
11. With regard to the analysis of international trade contained in the draft study, the Animals Committee noted the challenges of analysing trade in coral products since the current Harmonized System (HS) classification amalgamates them with other species due to the lack of specific custom codes; and, further noted the cumbersome process of adopting specific custom codes at an international level.

Implementation of Decision 17.193

12. Based on the report of the Animals Committee at SC70, the Standing Committee agreed to propose to the Conference of the Parties the renewal of Decisions 17.192 and 17.193. According to the Executive Summary, [SC70 Sum. 11 \(Rev. 1\)](#) the Standing Committee further noted “*the challenges posed by the lack of specific customs codes for international trade in precious corals and their parts and derivatives, when considering the finalized report of FAO and making recommendations, as appropriate*”.
13. During the writing of this report, the authors noted that the above sentence seems to be missing several words for a full understanding, and suggest the following text to clarify the original intention of the sentence: (New text underlined)

[The Standing Committee further noted] *the challenges posed by the lack of specific customs codes for international trade in precious corals and their parts and derivatives, and the need to take these into account when considering the finalized report of FAO and making its recommendations, as appropriate.*

Recommendations

14. The Conference of the Parties is invited to consider the extension of Decisions 17.192 and 17.193 in Annex 1 to the present document.

COMMENTS OF THE SECRETARIAT

- A. At AC30, the Animals Committee had encouraged TRAFFIC to make its study on trade in precious corals in East Asia, which was conducted independently from the study overseen by FAO, available as soon as possible (AC30 summary record). This work, entitled *Seeing Red: gaps in knowledge threatening precious coral populations*, by Hiromi Shiraishi (available at <https://www.traffic.org/publications/reports/seeing-red/>),

has since been finalized and the Secretariat forwarded it to FAO for its consideration when finalizing the study pursuant to Decision 17.191.

- B. In January 2019, the Mediterranean and Asian components of the study called for in Decision 17.191 were completed by FAO, and the compiled summary report was undergoing final peer-review and editing to be made available as an information document at CoP18.
- C. The Secretariat recommends that the Conference of the Parties adopt the extensions of the Decisions as recommended by the Animals Committee and proposed by the Standing Committee in Annex 1 to this document with a small editorial amendment to the proposed Decision 17.193 (Rev. CoP18) to add "(Rev. CoP18)" after "Decision 17.192".

Draft decisions on precious corals

(new text is underlined and deleted text is ~~struck out~~)

Directed to the Animals Committee

17.192 (Rev. CoP18) *The Animals Committee is requested to:*

- a) analyse 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; and*
- b) report these recommendations to the Standing Committee at its 73rd ~~70th~~ meeting.*

Directed to the Standing Committee

17.193 (Rev. CoP18) *The Standing Committee is requested to consider the information and recommendations of the Animals Committee, made in accordance with Decision 17.192, and make its own recommendations, as appropriate, for communication to the Parties or for consideration at the 1918th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.*

TENTATIVE BUDGET AND SOURCE OF FUNDING
FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF DRAFT 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.

The proposed draft decisions are not expected to have direct financial costs, but would have workload implications for the CITES Secretariat, the Animals Committee and the Standing Committee.