

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

HUMPHEAD WRASSE (*CHEILINUS UNDULATUS*)

1. This document has been submitted by the Standing Committee.\*
2. At its 17th meeting (CoP17, Johannesburg, 2016), the Conference of the Parties renewed and adopted the following Decisions on *Humphead wrasse* (*Cheilinus undulatus*):

***Directed to Parties***

16.139 (Rev.CoP17)

*To implement effectively the Appendix-II listing of the humphead wrasse, Parties should:*

- a) use existing documents listed in paragraph 13 of document CoP16 Doc. 62 (Rev.1) in their implementation of the Appendix-II listing of the humphead wrasse; and*
- b) investigate reported violations of the Convention and of related national laws in relation to trade in the humphead wrasse, and take appropriate enforcement actions in accordance with their national legislation; and*

*In addition, range States and importing Parties should strengthen bilateral and regional cooperation, including intelligence exchange and enforcement actions.*

***Directed to the Standing Committee***

15.87 (Rev. CoP17)

*The Standing Committee shall:*

- a) review the actions taken by relevant Parties to implement the Appendix-II listing of the humphead wrasse;*
- b) consider whether it is necessary to ask range States and importing States to provide further information on their actions taken to ensure the effective implementation of the Convention regarding trade in this species;*
- c) develop, as appropriate, recommendations for improving the regulation of international trade in the humphead wrasse, and the enforcement of controls, to ensure the effectiveness of the Appendix-II listing of the species; and*

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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.

- d) report its conclusions and recommendations for any appropriate follow-up actions at the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

**Directed to the IUCN**

16.140 (Rev. CoP17)

*The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Groupers and Wrasses Specialist Group continue its support to Parties in achieving sustainable fishing of the humphead wrasse and in making non-detriment findings in compliance with CITES.*

**Directed to the Secretariat**

17.201 Subject to external funds, the Secretariat shall collaborate with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in undertaking an FAO project to support Indonesia in achieving sustainable management of, and trade in humphead wrasse, and shall cooperate with FAO to report on the progress and outcomes of this project to the Standing Committee.

17.202 The Secretariat shall report on the implementation of the decisions on humphead wrasse (*Cheilinus undulatus*) at the 69th or 70th meeting of the Standing Committee.

Implementation of Decisions

3. Based on the Secretariat's report contained in document [SC69 Doc. 48](#) and the studies undertaken by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and TRAFFIC on behalf of the Secretariat referred to therein ([CoP17 Inf. 43](#) and [CoP17 Inf. 44](#)), the Standing Committee, at its 69th meeting (SC69, Geneva, November 2017), adopted the following recommendations in support of the implementation of Decision 15.87 (Rev. CoP17) (see [SC69 summary record](#), pp. 48-49):

*The Standing Committee congratulated Hong Kong SAR and Indonesia on their work and progress being made on this matter, particularly regarding harvest management, production systems, export/import control and tracking, and habitat protection.*

*The Standing Committee recognized advances made by Indonesia in the implementation of its National Plan of Action, with development of a non-detriment finding (NDF) that facilitates legal international trade in specimens of humphead wrasse ensuring that it does not threaten their survival.*

*The Standing Committee appreciated the efforts of the Groupers and Wrasses Specialist Group of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), with the assistance from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), in collaborative efforts to move towards sustainable production and trade of humphead wrasse.*

*However, the Standing Committee also recognized that there is still ongoing and observed illegal trade of live and frozen fish with little understanding of the origin of the product in the market.*

*The Standing Committee encouraged donors to make external funding available to the CITES Secretariat, FAO and IUCN in a timely manner to continue to support Indonesia in achieving sustainable fishery management of the species, including fishing in relation to ranching and novel production systems, pursuant to Decisions 16.140 (Rev. CoP17) and 17.201.*

*The Standing Committee requested the Secretariat to issue a further Notification to request Parties to share information on national regulation in place on the management, conservation and trade in humphead wrasse prior to the 70th meeting of the Standing Committee (SC70).*

*The Standing Committee urged source and consumer States of humphead wrasse to intercept and take action on illegal shipments, and, as appropriate and to the extent possible, share information on such illegal catch and illegal trade, with the Secretariat, as well as CITES authorities of relevant Parties.*

*The Standing Committee recognized that the novel practice of grow-out and ranching of newly settled humphead wrasse in shallow water algal beds may offer significant livelihood and stock recovery opportunities that would benefit from further research support and benefit policy development related to*

*these novel practices, in order, inter alia, to minimize the risk of product acquired in violation of the Convention and related national laws entering the market.*

*The Standing Committee encouraged Parties and donors to collaborate in the development and use of cost-effective tracing techniques, including technologies for tracking live-fish-transporting vessels, individual fish recognition and tracing techniques to assist in excluding from the market product acquired in violation of the convention and related national laws.*

*The Standing Committee agreed to consider at its 70th meeting information provided by range, trading and market States to determine whether other interventions, e.g. additional draft decisions to be reported to the 18th Conference of the Parties, are required to adequately address reported violations of the convention and related national laws.*

4. In response to the request from the Standing Committee, the Secretariat issued Notification to the Parties [No. 2018/066](#) of 4 July 2018, asking Parties to share information on national regulation in place on the management, conservation and trade in humphead wrasse (*Cheilinus undulatus*) prior to the 70th meeting of the Standing Committee (SC70, Sochi, October 2018).
5. In its report to SC70 (see document [SC70 Doc. 47](#)), the Secretariat reported that it had received five responses to Notification No. 2018/066 from Australia, China, Singapore, Thailand and the United States of America. These responses, contained in Annex 2 of document [SC70 Doc. 47](#) in the language in which they were submitted, are summarised below:
  - a) **Australia:** Australia provides information on fisheries management at both the national and sub-national levels, and on the measures available in the country to protect humphead wrasse, including the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act 1999. The only commercial fishery of the species for export is limited to 50 individuals per year. Since 2 January 2017, Australia has issued three CITES export permits for a total of 54 live specimens of humphead wrasse.
  - b) **China:** China outlines its activities, including legislation, trade and enforcement for China, Hong Kong SAR of China and Macao SAR of China. Import of humphead wrasse is taking place into mainland China and Hong Kong SAR of China. Hong Kong SAR of China reports imports of both wild and ranched specimens from Indonesia.
  - c) **Singapore:** Singapore outlines its implementation of the Convention with regard to humphead wrasse under its Endangered Species (Import & Export) Act and related awareness-raising activities. There are only very few trade transactions with very low volumes reported that involve Singapore.
  - d) **Thailand:** Thailand outlines its national regulations with regard to humphead wrasse under “the Ministerial Notification of Natural Resources and Environment on Export-Import Prohibition of Wildlife and Carcasses”, dated 12 April 2017, and reports that no permits for the species have been issued.
  - e) **United States of America:** The United States of America outlines fishing activities, as well as management actions, in four of its territories with regard to humphead wrasse. Only low numbers of fish are caught, and no exports have taken place according to the CITES trade database.
6. The Secretariat drew attention to Notification to the Parties [No. 2018/022](#) of 27 February 2018, which was published by the Secretariat on behalf of Indonesia. While Indonesia has set a voluntary annual national export quota of 1,800 heads of live humphead wrasse of wild origin for 2018 that can be exported by air-only, the Notification explains that these restrictions do not apply under certain conditions for specimens of humphead wrasse produced from sea ranching activities (source code R) with specified size of 1,000 to 3,000 grams.
7. The Secretariat noted that, since the adoption of Decision 15.87 at the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP15, Doha, 2010), a significant amount of work has been undertaken to improve the effectiveness of the Appendix-II listing of the species and that trade volumes and patterns had also changed significantly (see Figure 1 below), with Australia and Indonesia remaining the only notable exporters.

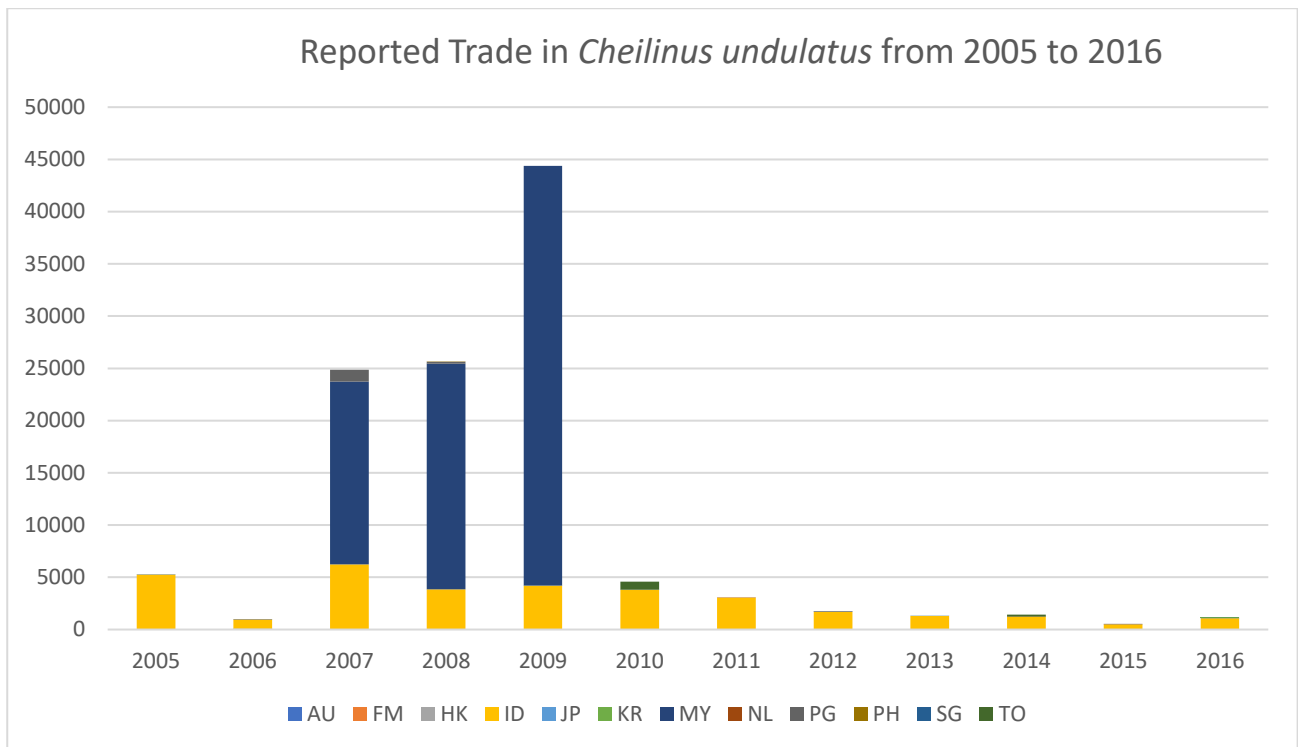


Fig.1: Reported Trade in *Cheilinus undulatus* in the CITES Trade Database from 2005-2016 (accessed 02.08.2018). Years are depicted on the x-axis, trade volume on the y-axis (unit = number of individuals), and exporting countries by colour.

8. At SC70, the Secretariat further noted that if the trade volume in *Cheilinus undulatus* were to increase in the future and if concerns about the possible detrimental nature of that trade for the survival of the species in the wild were to emerge, these cases could be referred to the Review of Significant Trade [Resolution Conf. 12.8 (Rev. CoP17)] or to the Review of trade in animal specimens reported as produced in captivity (Resolution Conf. 17.7), depending on the source code of the specimens. Furthermore, the new annual illegal trade report submitted by Parties pursuant to Resolution Conf. 11.17 (Rev. CoP17) on *National reports* is expected to provide information on any future reported violations of the Convention pertaining to *Cheilinus undulatus*.
9. With regard to Decision 17.201, the Secretariat also reported to SC70 that it had collaborated closely with FAO to try to secure external funding for the implementation of this Decision. However, no funding had become available by SC70, and consequently Decision 17.201 had not been fulfilled.
10. The IUCN Groupers & Wrasses Specialist Group also submitted a brief summary report on its activities and views on progress and remaining challenges in the implementation of the provisions of the Convention for humphead wrasse since CoP17 and SC69, which can be found in information document [SC70 Inf. 37](#).
11. Based on the observations outlined above, the Secretariat proposed a draft decision for adoption at the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP18, Colombo, 2019) in the context of fulfilling its mandate under Decision 15.87 (Rev. CoP17). The Standing Committee reviewed the information made available to it and agreed to submit the draft decision which is found in Annex 1 to the present document.

#### Recommendations

12. The Conference of the Parties is invited to adopt the draft decision contained in Annex 1 to this document to replace the existing set of Decisions on *Humphead wrasse* (*Cheilinus undulatus*) [Decisions 15.87 (Rev. CoP17), 16.139-140 (Rev. CoP17) and 17.201-202].

#### COMMENTS OF THE SECRETARIAT

- A. The CITES Secretariat concurs with the information presented and supports the way forward proposed in this document through the draft decision in Annex 1.

- B. The CITES Secretariat contacted FAO and the IUCN Groupers & Wrasses Specialist Group (GWSG) regarding any updates on their work on humphead wrasse since SC70.
- C. The IUCN GWSG informed the Secretariat in December 2018 that through its regular monthly surveys, it had documented that there continues to be a mismatch between the number of specimens of humphead wrasse on sale and those for which CITES permits were issued in Hong Kong, SAR of China. This adds to similar reports by the IUCN Groupers & Wrasses Specialist Group to the 69th meeting of the Standing Committee, based on which the in-session working group had concluded that there was ongoing and observed illegal trade in the species at that time (2017). The Secretariat considers the new report as an indication that this illegal trade may still be ongoing.
- D. The IUCN GWSG also reiterated its concern about the fact that it is currently not easy to distinguish wild from ranched animals on retail sale. FAO acknowledged that this could present a challenge, but noted that buyers seem to be able to discern the products based on their colour and quality and offer a lower price for ranched fish. The IUCN GWSG further noted that through observations made during fieldwork it found that many of the fish imported under the ranched category pursuant to the new regulations communicated by Indonesia through [Notification No. 2018/022](#), were clearly below 1,000 g, which is the minimum size communicated in the Notification.
- E. To provide further background to paragraph 9, FAO explained that it had put together a project proposal in cooperation with an international team of experts with experience in capture and aquaculture production, plus the biological aspects of humphead wrasse. The project was to address remaining gaps in knowledge about the biology of the species, biodiversity conservation and sustainability implications of the novel production method and support to improve fishery and trade regulation, so that humphead wrasse could be collected, reared and traded legally and sustainably under CITES. This project proposal was jointly submitted with the Indonesian fisheries authorities, to an Australian Government Blue Economy Challenge Initiative in 2016. However, this application was not successful in receiving funding and no other funding had become available by SC70.
- F. The Secretariat would like to express its gratitude to the IUCN GWSG for its frequent and detailed reports on its activities and findings to the Secretariat, and thanks FAO for its continued interest for joint work on this species.
- G. The Secretariat notes that the concerns raised by the IUCN GWSG, i.e. potential illegal trade and challenges in distinguishing specimens from the wild and ranching, are not new and had already been echoed in the recommendations adopted at SC69 (see paragraph 3 above).
- H. The Secretariat is therefore of the view that the draft decision proposed by the Standing Committee as presented in Annex 1 would give the Secretariat sufficient mandate to support importing and/or exporting states in addressing challenges such as the ones highlighted by the IUCN GWSG and in the FAO – Indonesian project proposal referred to in paragraph 9.
- I. The Secretariat envisions that draft decision 18.AA, as proposed, could facilitate the implementation of activities such as those outlined below, to support major exporting and importing countries of *Cheilinus undulatus*, in particular Indonesia as the biggest current exporter, to ensure the sustainability of ranching production methods and address any challenges in the implementation:
- a) determining the spatial and temporal availability of post larval fish and rates of their depletion by fishing;
  - b) optimisation of capture and grow-out of post settlement and juvenile fish to market size;
  - c) increase the traceability of these fish across the market chain; and
  - d) address any challenges in the implementation of new regulations from the exporter and importer side.
- J. With regard to addressing illegal trade concerns, the Secretariat takes this opportunity to remind Parties that a suite of training courses, tools and services are available through ICCWC to support national wildlife law enforcement agencies. These can be delivered and upon request and subject funding availability. Parties concerned are invited to consult the *ICCWC Menu of Services* for further information and to request support as may be needed. The *ICCWC Menu of Services* is available at: [https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/prog/iccwc/ICCWC\\_menu\\_of\\_services-revApril18.pdf](https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/prog/iccwc/ICCWC_menu_of_services-revApril18.pdf)

- K. The Secretariat recommends that the draft decision proposed by the Standing Committee in Annex 1 be adopted.
- L. The Secretariat's assessment of the budget implications for adopting the draft decisions are shown in Annex 2.

DRAFT DECISION ON HUMPHEAD WRASSE (*CHEILINUS UNDULATUS*)

***Directed to the Secretariat***

- 18.AA The CITES Secretariat, subject to external funding, shall invite the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Groupers and Wrasses Specialist Group to assist it in supporting major exporting and importing countries of *Cheilinus undulatus*, upon request, to address remaining CITES implementation challenges and ensure well-regulated, sustainable management of, and trade in, the species.

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.

The activities outlined in paragraph I would be part of an FAO-Indonesian fisheries led project, for which a project proposal exists (see paragraph 9) that was prepared in collaboration with international fishery and aquaculture experts in order to support sustainable development of Indonesia's novel ranching production method. Since CoP17, FAO has adjusted its estimate to a total cost of 1.25 million USD over five years, based on the fact that some progress, in particular on regulation, has been made since CoP17.

The CITES component of this project, focusing on NDFs, governance, traceability and market regulations are estimated to cost approximately 300,000 USD over five years (60,000 USD per year).