

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

NOTE FROM THE FAO ON GLOBAL REVIEW OF PRECIOUS CORALS
IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE (ORDER ANTIPATHARIA/FAMILY CORALLIDAE)

1. This document has been submitted by the Secretariat at the request of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in relation to agenda item 64.*
2. The Global Review of Precious Corals (plus two regional annexes) can be downloaded at these weblinks:
<http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca5643en>
<http://www.fao.org/3/ca5643en/ca5643en.pdf>
3. The report concerns precious (red, pink, white and black) coral species within the hexacoral order Antipatharia, and the octocoral family Coralliidae. According to the requirements of CITES, the study considers all available data and information on the biology, population status, use and trade in each species, including the identification of gaps in such data and information. It contains information on the management and harvest regulation schemes for these coral species, with the aim of considering the effectiveness of their management and conservation. The report provides guidance on the actions needed to enhance the conservation and sustainable use of precious corals.

Background

4. At its 17th meeting (CoP17, Johannesburg, 2016), the Conference of the Parties adopted Decisions 17.190 to 17.193 on Precious corals (Order Antipatharia and family Coralliidae). In Decision 17.91 the CITES Secretariat was 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). The FAO was requested to commission a study that:
 - a) *considered any responses received to the Notification issued in response to Decision 17.190;*
 - b) *compile 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) *compare the management and harvest regulation schemes for black and red and pink coral species; and*
 - d) *prepare a report 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.*

* 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.

5. A CITES Animals Committee (17.192) established a precious corals intersessional working group that was tasked with reviewing progress of the the study produced pursuant to Decision 17.191 as soon as it becomes available. At the thirtieth meeting of the Animals Committee the precious corals intersessional working group, including FAO and authors of the global precious corals study jointly reviewed a draft of the report that comprised three components, i) a Asian component, ii) a Mediterranean component, and iii) a global review component.
6. With regard to summarizing knowledge of precious corals, the precious corals intersessional working group and thirtieth Animals Committee noted the challenges of amassing and analysing information of fishing and trade in precious corals, as precious coral products are not well described under the current Harmonized System (HS) of trade classification and adoption of specific custom codes for precious corals on an international level are not foreseen.

Acknowledgements

7. The FAO completed the study of precious corals with input of species experts on CITES and non-CITES listed precious coral species. In its finalization, the report was further improved with advice of the members of the precious corals intersessional working group, CITES Parties and Secretariat. Of special mention is the input made by a broad range of expert peer reviewers (Dr Andrew Bruckner, Dr Georgios Tsounis, Mr Marco Pani), whose comments improved the text. The FAO wishes to thank the Government of the United States of America for funding this study, and the close cooperation of the CITES Secretariat in its completion. FAO also wishes to thank FAO Membership, and especially the Japanese Government for their capacity and administrative support of this work.

Contact

8. As the FAO Fisheries Focal Point on CITES and as one of the authors of this study, Mr. Kim Friedman, a Senior Fisheries Resources Officer with the Marine and Inland Fisheries Branch of FAO is available to provide further feedback on any questions you may have. Mr. Friedman will attend CoP18 and can be contacted in person or reached on Kim.Friedman@fao.org.