



CITES Plenipotentiary Conference, Washington, D.C., March 1973.

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, known as CITES or the Washington Convention, was signed in Washington, D.C., the United States of America, on 3 March 1973 and entered into force on 1 July 1975. Today almost all countries in the world are Parties to this international legally binding agreement.

CITES aims to ensure that international trade in wild animals and plants is legal, sustainable and traceable, and does not threaten the survival of the species in the wild. It reflects all three dimensions of sustainable development - social, economic and ecological – and contributes to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals through People, Planet, Prosperity, and Partnership.

CITES regulates international trade in specimens of species of wild fauna and flora based on a system of permits and certificates issued under certain conditions. It covers export, re-export, import and landing from the high seas of live and dead animals and plants and their parts and derivatives.



CITES CoP17, Johannesburg, October 2016.

The CITES Secretariat, hosted by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), has a coordinating, advisory and servicing role in the working of the Convention. It provides support to the Convention's Parties and governing bodies in areas such as **compliance and enforcement, science and capacity building**. The Secretariat also serves as an information and communication hub for Parties in the operationalization of the convention. Further details on the role of the Secretariat can be found in Article XII of the Convention.

CITES SECRETARIAT

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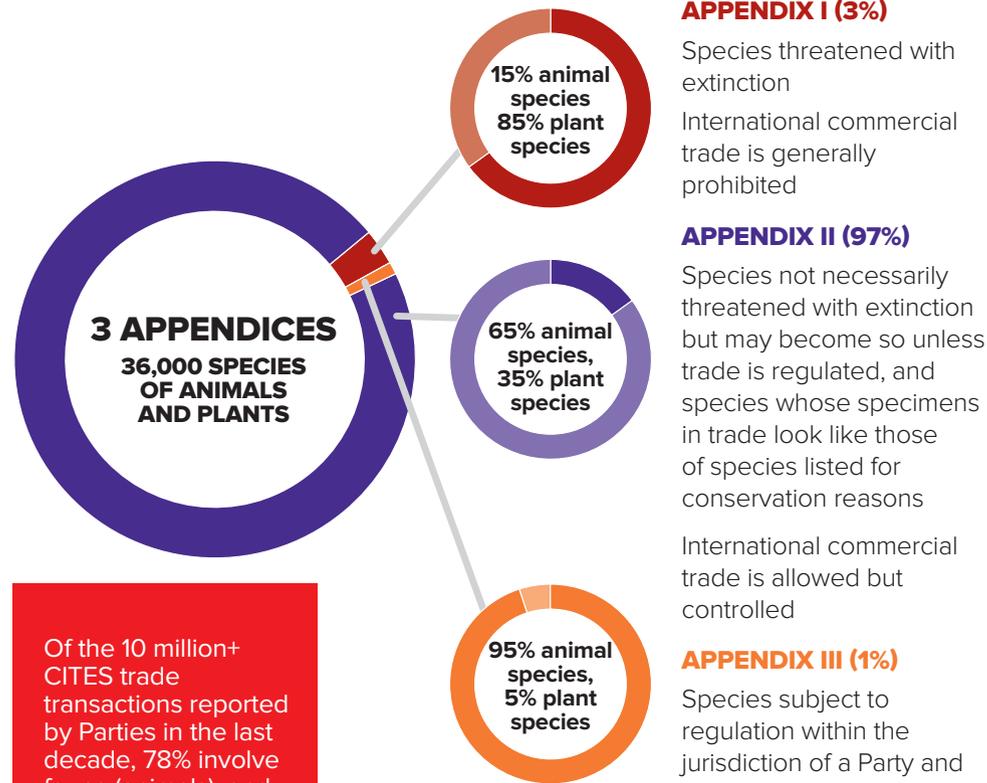
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CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA

DIFFERENT DEGREES OF PROTECTION

CITES accords varying degrees of protection to more than 36,000 species of animals and plants by applying different provisions to species included in three Appendices:



APPENDIX I (3%)
Species threatened with extinction
International commercial trade is generally prohibited

APPENDIX II (97%)
Species not necessarily threatened with extinction but may become so unless trade is regulated, and species whose specimens in trade look like those of species listed for conservation reasons
International commercial trade is allowed but controlled

APPENDIX III (1%)
Species subject to regulation within the jurisdiction of a Party and for which the cooperation of other Parties is needed to control international trade.

Of the 10 million+ CITES trade transactions reported by Parties in the last decade, 78% involve fauna (animals), and 22% flora (plants).



photo: INTERPOL

International trade in the species included in the Appendices of the Convention must fulfil three conditions:



LEGALITY

The specimen has been obtained in accordance with the national laws and regulations for the protection of fauna and flora. Parties must make a legal acquisition finding to confirm this.



SUSTAINABILITY

Parties must make a non-detriment finding: a science-based biological finding which confirms that the trade in the species is sustainable and will not be detrimental to the survival of the species and takes account of the role of the species in its ecosystem.



TRACEABILITY

Parties must ensure that trade can be traced through the issuance and control of appropriate CITES permits and certificates. Parties report on all permits and certificates issued in national annual reports, which are compiled in the CITES Trade Database (<http://trade.cites.org>).

LEGAL TRADE VS. ILLEGAL TRADE

Annually, over 1 million CITES permits and certificates are issued by Parties covering international wildlife trade estimated to be worth billions of dollars and to include hundreds of millions of plant and animal specimens. The trade is diverse, ranging from live animals and plants to a vast array of wildlife products derived from them, including food products, exotic leather goods, wooden musical instruments, timber, tourist souvenirs, cosmetics and medicines.

Effectively regulating trade in wildlife products has great benefits for people, such as ensuring sustainable livelihoods, and protecting ecosystems and the vital services they provide.

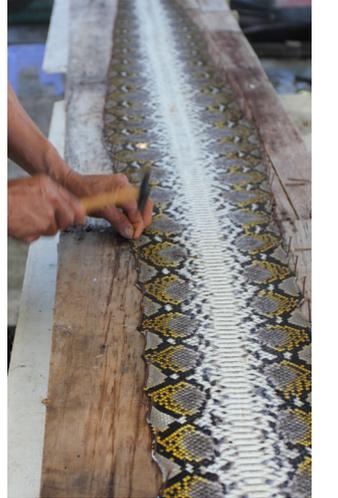


Photo: Daniel Natusch



photo: INTERPOL

CITES requires Parties to the Convention not to trade in listed species other than in accordance with the Convention, to take appropriate measures to enforce the Convention, to prohibit and penalize trade in violation of the Convention and to confiscate illegally traded specimens.

Illegal trade in wildlife undermines conservation efforts and has negative economic, social and environmental impacts. Some CITES-listed species are high-value items targeted by organized crime groups. Organized trafficking of wildlife must be treated as a serious crime and be prioritized in law enforcement work along other serious crimes such as human, drugs and arms trafficking.

No country, agency or organization can tackle illegal trade in wildlife alone. Effective collaboration and collective efforts across range, transit and destination States, and across all involved agencies, including border controls, customs, police and the judiciary, are critical.