



## INFORMATION FOR MEDIA

### 1. What is CITES?

CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) is an international legally binding agreement between governments, which was adopted on 3 March 1973 and came into force on 1 July 1975. Its aim is to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival. Today, it accords varying degrees of protection to more than 35,000 species of animals and plants and their derivatives.

#### **Parties**

States and Regional Economic Integration Organizations that have agreed to be bound by the Convention ('joined' CITES) are known as Parties. There are currently 183 Parties<sup>1</sup>, namely 182 countries and the European Union. CITES is legally binding on the Parties and provides a framework to be respected by each Party, which has to adopt its own domestic legislation to ensure that CITES is fully implemented in all areas under its national jurisdiction.

#### **Trade**

As both a conservation and a trade-related Convention, CITES neither promotes nor discourages trade, rather it regulates trade in specimens of CITES-listed species when it does take place to ensure it is legal, sustainable and traceable. CITES has harmoniously coexisted with the WTO regime for over 40 years, with no dispute ever being taken in the WTO directly challenging a CITES trade measure.

Under international law States have sovereign rights to exploit their own biological resources. The decision whether or not to allow trade is one for the country itself to determine – subject, of course, to meeting their international commitments, and in particular those under CITES.

#### **Reviews**

CITES continually reviews the levels of international trade in CITES-listed species through its Review of Significant Trade. This is conducted by the CITES Animals and Plants Committees, which can ask exporting Parties questions about the levels of trade, including about their non-detriment finding (a science-based biological sustainability finding that determines that trade will not be detrimental to the survival of the species and takes account of the role of the species in the in its ecosystem), and make recommendations to the Party. If recommendations are not adequately implemented, the Standing Committee can take compliance measures, which can, as a last resort, result in a recommendation to suspend trade in the affected species.

### 2. Why is CITES needed?

Annually, international wildlife trade is estimated to be worth many billions of dollars and to include hundreds of thousands 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 curios and medicines.

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<sup>1</sup> This number includes The Kingdom of Tonga that will formally become a Party on 20 October, 2016. It will participate in #CoP17 but will not have the right to vote.

Levels of exploitation of some animal and plant species are high and the trade in them, together with other factors, such as habitat loss, is capable of heavily depleting their populations and even bringing some species close to extinction.

Many wildlife species in trade are not endangered, but the existence of an agreement to ensure the sustainability of the trade is important in order to safeguard these resources for the future.

Because the trade in wild animals and plants crosses borders between countries, the effort to regulate it requires international cooperation to safeguard certain species from over-exploitation and illegal trade. CITES was conceived in the spirit of such cooperation.

### **3. How does CITES work?**

CITES works by subjecting international trade in specimens of selected species to certain trade controls. All import, export, re-export and introduction from the sea of species covered by the Convention must be authorized through a system of permits and certificates. Each Party to the Convention must designate one or more Management Authorities in charge of administering the licensing system and one or more Scientific Authorities to advise them on the effects of trade on the status of the species, including through the conduct of non-detriment findings.

The species covered by CITES are listed in three Appendices, according to the degree of protection they need.

*Appendix I* includes species threatened with extinction. Trade in specimens of these species is permitted only in exceptional circumstances and commercial trade in wild taken specimens is prohibited.

*Appendix II* includes species not necessarily threatened with extinction, but in which trade must be strictly regulated in order to avoid utilization incompatible with their survival.

*Appendix III* contains species that are protected in at least one country, which has asked other CITES Parties for assistance in controlling the trade. Changes to Appendix III follow a distinct procedure from changes to Appendices I and II as each Party is entitled to make unilateral amendments to it.

A specimen of a CITES-listed species may be imported into or exported (or re-exported) from a State party to the Convention only if the appropriate requirements are met, namely the need to:

- make a legal acquisition finding – being a certification that the specimens have been taken in accordance with national law;
- make a non-detriment finding – being a science-based biological sustainability finding that determines that trade will not be detrimental to the survival of the species and takes account of the role of the species in the in its ecosystem;
- issue the appropriate permit/certificate and report the trade – being the formal authorization and report of the trade transaction to the CITES Secretariat (details of which are made publicly available through the CITES trade database).

### **4. How is CITES financed?**

The core administrative costs of the Secretariat, the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies, the Standing Committee and the other permanent Committees, are financed from the CITES Trust Fund. This Trust Fund is replenished from contributions from the Parties to the Convention based on the United Nations scale of assessment, adjusted to take account of the fact that not all members of the United Nations are Parties to the Convention.

## **5. What is CITES CoP?**

The Conference of the Parties (CoP) to CITES is the ultimate decision-making body of the Convention and comprises all its Parties. It is also known as the 'World Wildlife Conference'.

At each regular meeting of the CoP, Parties submit proposals based on an agreed set of biological and trade criteria to help determine whether a species should be included in Appendices I or II or to amend the listing of a species in these two Appendices. Proposals are discussed and then submitted for decision.

The CoP is attended by designated government officials coming from multiple different ministries, such as those responsible for environment, fisheries, forestry, agriculture etc. or foreign affairs. They take part in discussions based upon their respective countries' position on particular proposals and decisions.

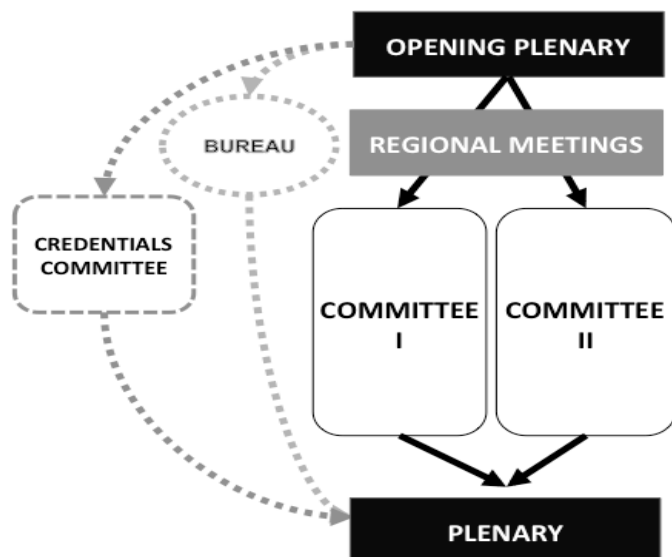
Regular meetings of the CITES CoP take place every three years. The 16<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP16) took place in Bangkok, Thailand in 2013. The 17<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of the Parties (#CoP17) will take place in Johannesburg, South Africa from 24 September to 05 October 2016 where the date and venue of the next regular meeting will be determined.

## **6. How does CITES CoP work?**

Every three years, the rules which govern CITES are debated and agreed on at its Conference of the Parties (CoP). Prior to each CoP, Parties can submit proposals for amending the three Appendices or existing resolutions or proposals to adopt new decisions and resolutions as well as to amend the rules of procedure. The cut-off date for countries to submit proposals for inclusion on the #CoP17 agenda was 27 April this year. The provisional agenda and the list of Proposals offers a good indication of some of the key issues that are likely to be debated at the Convention.

At the CoP, the Proposals are discussed in Committees and then decided upon, by consensus or by a vote, if there is no consensus. Most of the Proposals involve requests to either elevate or demote species from one Appendix to another. Decisions are taken on every Proposal in Committees. They go to Plenary for formal adoption but can only be reopened if one third of Parties request it to be opened.

Decisions taken at #CoP17 will find their way into legislation, regulation, and operating practices across the globe.



### **a. Plenaries**

Plenaries are the decision-making sessions of the CoP.

### **b. Committees**

*Committee I* discusses and makes recommendations concerning proposals to amend the Appendices and any matter of a primary biological matter.

*Committee II* discusses and makes recommendations concerning all other matters – primarily related to the implementation and operation of the Convention, including the budget of the CITES Secretariat.

Recommendations of Committee I and II, some of which may be in draft resolutions or decisions, are forwarded to the Plenary session for final adoption.

### **c. The Bureau**

The Bureau ensures effective enforcement of the Rules of Procedure, forwarding of the business of the meeting, and effective completion of business. It comprises:

- the Chair, Alternate Chair and Vice-Chairs of the CoP
- the Chairs of Committees I and II
- the Chair of the Credentials Committee
- the Chair and the other members of the Standing Committee
- the Secretariat

### **d. The Credentials Committee**

The Credentials Committee examines the credentials and recommend their acceptance for adoption by the Conference of the Parties. Credentials are powers granted by the Head of State, Head of Government or the Minister of Foreign Affairs, enabling a delegate to represent the Party at the meeting.

Pending a decision on their credentials, delegates may participate provisionally in the meeting but not vote.

### **e. Regional meetings**

Six regions meet separately on the morning of Day 2 (at #CoP17, on 25 September 2016) after the opening Plenary. At these meetings, Parties elect new regional and alternate regional members for the Standing Committee and the Animals and Plants Committees. The six major geographical regions are: Africa, Asia, Europe, North America, Central and South America and the Caribbean, and Oceania.

#### **f. Working Groups**

Parties may create working groups within the two Committee meetings to resolve difficult issues. A Budget Working Group – or sub-committee - is established by Committee II and it is the only session limited to Parties only. Others are open to observers.

#### **g. Participation**

Before the Parties undertake any business in Committee I/II or Plenary sessions, a quorum of the Parties must be present in the room. This entails one half of Parties having registered delegations at the meeting. The Chair will wait until the necessary number is reached.

#### **h. Rules of Procedure**

The Rules of Procedure define the structure for the conduct of meetings of the CoP, and the process for making decisions. Adoption of the Rules of Procedure is needed at each meeting and takes place in Plenary session.

Chairs are primarily responsible for ensuring that the Rules are implemented.

#### **i. Interventions**

- **Substantive intervention**

- **Motion**

A motion is a formal proposal by a delegation that the assembly take a certain action. A Party may request action on a particular subject by making a 'motion'. In Committee I, for example, a Party may make a motion to amend a species proposal.

- **Point of order (procedural motion)**

Party delegates at a Committee or Plenary session may challenge a procedural decision of the Chair by raising a 'point of order'. The Chair will apply the Rules of procedure in deciding on the point of order.

If a Party disagrees with the decision of the Chair on a Point of Order, the Party may appeal. The Chair must immediately put the appeal to a vote.

#### **j. Decision-making**

The Conference shall as far as possible decide on draft resolutions, draft decisions and other documents by **consensus**.

Whenever the Conference of the Parties does not reach a consensus, the Chair must propose its adoption be put to a vote.

#### **k. Voting**

Each delegation of a Party to CITES that has its credentials accepted by the CoP has the right to vote when a decision is put to a vote.

Pending a decision on their credentials, delegates may participate provisionally in the meeting but not vote.

**a. Number of affirmative votes necessary**

A two-thirds (2/3) majority vote is necessary for most issues decided in a Committee and in Plenary session:

- Committees I & II: *recommendations to approve resolutions and decisions;*
- Committee I: *recommendations to amend Appendices I & II*
- Plenary: *adoption of resolutions and proposals to amend Appendices I & II; adoption of amendments of the rules of procedure and Motions to amend resolutions and proposals.*

A simple majority is required (more than 1/2 of the votes if options are 'in favor' vs. 'against') for all *procedural motions*. If the votes are equal, the motion shall not be carried.

An affirmative vote of 1/3 of the Parties is necessary to *reopen debate in Plenary session on a matter covered by a recommendation from one of the Committees.*

**b. Calculation of votes**

Only the votes of those Parties "present and voting" are counted:

- Must have credentials accepted
- Must be represented in the room
- Must cast an affirmative or negative vote  
(abstention are not counted for the purpose of calculating majority)

**7. What is the CITES Secretariat?**

The CITES Secretariat is established by the Convention and has designated roles and functions, including to arrange and service the CoP. It is administered by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and is located at Geneva, Switzerland. It has a pivotal role, fundamental to the Convention and its functions are laid down in Article XII of the text of the Convention. They include:

- playing a coordinating, advisory and servicing role in the working of the Convention;
- assisting with communication and monitoring the implementation of the Convention to ensure that its provisions are respected;
- arranging meetings of the Conference of the Parties and of the permanent Committees at regular intervals and servicing those meetings (i.e. organizing them, preparing and circulating meeting documents, making necessary arrangements for delegates to attend the meetings, providing advice and support, etc.);
- providing assistance in the fields of legislation, enforcement, science and training;
- undertaking, under agreed programmes, occasional scientific and technical studies into issues affecting the implementation of the Convention;
- making recommendations regarding the implementation of the Convention;
- acting as the repository for the reports, sample permits and other information submitted by the Parties;
- distributing information relevant to several or all Parties, for example, proposals to amend the Appendices, sample permits, information about enforcement problems, national legislation, reference material or news of a new Party;
- issuing new editions of Appendices I, II and III, whenever there is a change, as well as of the Resolutions and Decisions adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its meetings, and information to assist identification of species listed in the Appendices; and
- preparing annual reports to the Parties on its own work and on the implementation of the Convention;

The Secretariat distributes information to the Parties mostly through meeting documents and Notifications.

## 8. What will the #CoP17 cover?

#CoP17 will be the largest global gathering of people focused on wildlife trade, attracting CITES Parties, intergovernmental and international and national organizations, the private sector, philanthropists, local and indigenous groups, NGOs and experts from multiple disciplines.

Over 2,500 government delegates, including delegates representing more than 180 countries and observers from around the world and across very region will attend. Over 300 media representatives will also attend the CoP.

At #CoP17, Parties will review progress made since CoP16 in Bangkok in 2013, the future direction of the Convention, and proposals to include new species under CITES regulatory controls. Parties will also consider a number of proposals to bring additional species under CITES trade controls, as well as to tackle issues concerning livelihoods, the review of significant trade, traceability, and the effectiveness of CITES implementation, amongst other things.

#CoP17 will consider *inter alia* the following issues and proposals:

- A change to the Rules of Procedure for the CoP, including to recognize the first Regional Economic Integration Organization as a Party to CITES, namely the European Union that joined as the 181st party in July 2015;
- Establishing a rural communities committee of the CoP, to better recognize that community-based natural resource management promotes sustainable use of wildlife, and reduces illegal use and trade in wildlife;
- The disposal of confiscated illegally traded specimens of CITES listed species;
- National legislation to implement CITES;
- Procedures to facilitate consistent and effective handling of compliance matters, including on legal acquisition findings;
- CITES National Ivory Action Plans;
- The interrelationship between illegal trade in elephant ivory and legal trade in mammoth ivory;
- A decision making mechanism for a process of future international trade in elephant ivory, or draw the process to an end;
- A review of the implementation of the Convention relating to captive bred and ranched species;
- Tackling corruption as it affects illegal wildlife trade;
- Scaling-up efforts to counter cyber crime in relation to illegal wildlife trade;
- Strategies to reduce demand for illegally traded wildlife animals and plants;
- Improving controls on the international trade in hunting trophies;
- Restricting the legal trade in live elephants;
- Managing the destruction of government-held ivory stockpiles;
- Closing domestic markets for commercial trade in raw or worked ivory;
- How to address wildlife products produced from synthetic or cultured DNA, such as rhino horn;
- The budget for the Convention's Secretariat for the next three years.
- And many other topics related to the legal trade in CITES-listed species

Most importantly, #CoP17 will consider and decide upon 62 Proposals from 64 Parties to amend the Appendices to the Convention by including new species, moving species from one Appendix to another or by changing the annotation (notes) related to the species. This will affect close to 500 species of wild plants and animals. The Secretariat has, as it is required to do, provided recommendations to the Parties on each proposal, which is available [here](#).

There will also be over 150 side events as well as a number of special events on the side of the meeting:

- CITES #CoP17 will host the second meeting of the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC), an alliance between the CITES Secretariat, INTERPOL, the United

Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the World Bank and the World Customs Organization (WCO). CITES Parties have called for increased international collaboration to combat illicit trafficking in wildlife and forest crime and will explore how to make better use of modern forensics and specialized investigation techniques and enhanced cross border cooperation in combating illegal trade.

- The second global Meeting of Wildlife Enforcement Networks will take place during #CoP17, convened by the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC). Wildlife law enforcement officers will share their experiences at combating wildlife crime and discuss ways of further enhancing cooperation. In total, there will be a record 150+ side events, including the screening of Naledi: A Baby Elephant's Tale. The film documents the story of an elephant born into a rescue camp in the wilderness of Botswana. It was a winner of the UN World Wildlife Day Elephant Film Festival in March this year.
- The 27th meeting of the INTERPOL Wildlife Crime Working Group (WCWG) will also be held alongside #CoP17 from 2 to 4 October 2016. The Group brings together specialized criminal investigators from around the world to work on project-based activities on an international level.
- The inaugural Youth forum for People and Wildlife will take place ahead of #CoP17 in Johannesburg. The forum will bring together 34 committed young leaders (aged 18-25) from 25 countries around the world to work together on issues including animal welfare, wildlife conservation, wildlife trade and sustainable community development.
- At #CoP17, delegates will review the first comprehensive survey of global wildlife forensic capacity to support the implementation and enforcement of the Convention. Conducted by United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the document provides a snapshot of current wildlife forensic capabilities and establishes a benchmark against which to assess future developments.
- #CoP17 will be the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES held on the African continent since CITES came into force on 1 July 1975, but it will be the first held on the continent since 2000.