



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

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PRESS STATEMENT

CITES has not “banned” caviar or “punished” producers

A response to recent press articles on CITES quotas for sturgeon and caviar

Geneva, 3 September 2004 – In recent days various newspapers have published articles on caviar based on an interview with the CITES Secretariat. These articles have contained a number of errors and misquotes that are likely to have misled readers about the current situation concerning the 2004 quotas for international trade in sturgeon and caviar.

Because the Caspian Sea produces some 90% of world caviar, the articles focused in particular on that region. The actual situation today is, in brief, as follows: CITES responded to high levels of poaching and illegal trade in 2001 by halting the caviar trade by Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Russia and Turkmenistan under the so-called Paris Agreement. It gave these countries until the end of that year to conduct a scientific survey of stocks and to start developing a common management plan. The fifth Caspian state, Iran, was not subject to the caviar ban, but, commendably, it too joined the regional effort.

The Paris Agreement established three deadlines for taking steps that would lead to the resumption of trade. Because the various anti-poaching and other actions specified in the first two deadlines were met, CITES agreed to sturgeon and caviar trade quotas for the Caspian States in 2002 and 2003.

In November 2002, the member Governments of CITES developed a list of conservation measures for all of the world's sturgeons. These measures were derived from the obligations detailed in the Paris Agreement and were formalized in Resolution Conf. 12.7 (see <http://www.cites.org/eng/resols/12/12-7.shtml>). This Resolution requires all sturgeon-producing nations that share stocks to develop coordinated conservation management plans and to ensure that all catch and export quotas are based on these plans and on recent stock assessments. Importantly, the CITES Secretariat cannot publish a country's annual quotas unless it is satisfied that this country as well as the other states with which it shares stocks have complied fully with the requirements of the Resolution.

To date, none of the world's sturgeon range States has complied fully with the 'Sturgeon Resolution' and, hence, the CITES Secretariat has not published any wild sturgeon quotas for 2004. These facts are presented on the CITES web site (see http://www.cites.org/eng/resources/quotas/sturgeon_intro.shtml). It should be noted that the 2003 quotas were not issued until late September of that year.

The CITES Secretariat, which has been mandated by the CITES member Governments to oversee this process, continues to work with all sturgeon-producing States to help them implement the required measures as soon as possible.
