



NOTIFICATION TO THE PARTIES

No. 2006/055

Geneva, 31 October 2006

CONCERNING:

Review of Significant Trade

Strombus gigas (queen conch)

1. Through Notification to the Parties No. 2006/034, of 12 May 2006, the Secretariat informed Parties about the recommendations of the Standing Committee concerning 16 range States where the Animals Committee had determined that *Strombus gigas* was of 'possible' or 'urgent' concern in the context of its Review of Significant Trade.
2. The Animals Committee has also made long-standing recommendations that extend beyond the timeframe of the Review of Significant Trade. In particular, it invited all range States of *S. gigas*, including those where the species was 'of least concern', to consider to and implement the recommendations of the International Queen Conch Initiative – CITES Workshop (Montego Bay, Jamaica, 11-12 June 2003) which are presented in Annex 1 to this Notification, particularly the recommendations concerning:
 - development of a regional management regime, including cooperative quota setting;
 - law enforcement capacity and effectiveness; and
 - population assessments and other research relating to the management of *S. gigas*.
3. Parties are also reminded that the Animals Committee, in compliance with paragraph I) of Resolution Conf. 12.8 (Rev. CoP13), identified problems in the course of its Review that were not related to the implementation of Article IV, paragraph 2 (a), 3 or 6 (a). These were communicated with Notification to the Parties No 2003/057 of 29 September 2003 and are presented in Annex 2 to this Notification. All relevant Parties and range States of *S. gigas* are advised to address these concerns and take the recommended measures into consideration in their management of and trade in *S. gigas*.
4. The present Notification replaces Notification to the Parties No. 2003/057 of 29 September 2003.

Annex 1

Recommendations of the International Queen Conch Initiative – CITES Workshop
(Montego Bay, Jamaica 11-12 June, 2003)

Recognizing that *Strombus gigas* is one of the most important fisheries for the region and that this species is experiencing continued and significant declines;

Recognizing also that due to its biological characteristics, this species is vulnerable to over-exploitation and that once depleted, recovery can take many years to occur;

Recognizing further the 1996 San Juan Declaration establishing the International Queen Conch Initiative;

Considering that an active program to cooperate on the conservation and management of this species will directly respond to guidance from leaders given at the World Summit on Sustainable Development with respect to the need to take action at all levels to restore depleted fish stocks on an urgent basis;

Reaffirming our commitment to proper implementation of Article IV of CITES;

Recognizing that a lack of financial and human resources limits the ability of national governments and regional organizations to implement the recommendations in this document;

Noting that stock declines have occurred despite 10 years of listing on Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES);

Deeply concerned that a lack of focused attention to this species will result in the loss of this species as a commercially viable resource in many parts of the region;

Acknowledging the management and regulatory measures including closures, gear and size restrictions already underway at the national level in support of the sustainable use of this species,

Fully aware of the need to consider management of this species in the context of scarce resources for fisheries enforcement and as one component of a sustainable fisheries management program at the national, sub-regional and regional level;

Noting that reliability, compatibility and quality of data on the status and trends of queen conch stocks and on trade constitutes a serious impediment to effective management of conch stocks;

Understanding the need for greater networking among countries and regional partners to manage this shared resource;

Committed to building partnerships among all interested organizations, institutions and stakeholders in the region to maximize effective use of scarce human and financial resources; and

Welcoming the recent establishment of the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism in this regard;

The International Queen Conch Initiative – CITES Workshop submits the following recommendations, pending approval by governments, for consideration by national governments and appropriate inter-governmental bodies, in particular CARICOM, CRFM, CITES and FAO:

Relating to significant trade review process and improvement of CITES implementation capacities

1. States should provide specific comments on the report in its totality and national implementation of Article IV to CITES Secretariat by June 30 2003 deadline.
2. After consideration in Capitals, meeting organizers should provide to CITES, by the June 30 2003 deadline, these recommendations along with a summary report as a regional response to the TRAFFIC Report.
3. States should urge appropriate authorities to review relevant national legislation implementing CITES with a view to meeting minimum standards in the CITES National Legislation Project.
4. States that have not already done so should consider establishing catch and export quotas to improve the management of *Strombus gigas* and should report those quotas to CITES authorities for notification to Parties.
5. States, where appropriate, are urged to find the most effective channel of communication between authorities responsible for queen conch management and national CITES authorities and stakeholders, and between the CITES Secretariat and the Parties.
6. CITES and FAO are urged to work together to finalize the Memorandum of Understanding between them as soon as possible.
7. One goal of the CITES-FAO MOU is to facilitate improved communication and exchange of information between CITES and fisheries authorities at the national level bearing in mind the existing FAO communication network.
8. States should consider designating authorities responsible for management of conch stocks as CITES authorities for this species.

Relating to improvement of scientific research on queen conch biology

9. Establish regional database and/or standardized data storage formats for conch biological research.
10. Promote partnership with existing organizations working on similar activities.
11. Stock assessment, early life history, growth and recruitment studies need to be priorities in national and regional research programs.

12. Promote the undertaking of more abundance surveys for *Strombus gigas*.
13. Need to develop standardized methodologies and implementation strategies for more robust abundance surveys taking into account the biological characteristics of *Strombus gigas*.
14. Explore stock enhancement opportunities for this species as well as opportunities for transplantation of spawning stocks to locations that will maximize spawning success.
15. Biological research should also focus on identification of essential spawning and recruitment habitat as well as research addressing dispersal of larvae for *Strombus gigas* with a view to assisting planners in establishing effective marine reserves to promote rebuilding of stocks.
16. Cooperative arrangements should be sought to conduct stock assessments, based on the best science available and transparency of data, for queen conch, as necessary.

Relating to improvement of status and trends reporting for queen conch stocks

17. Promote exchange of standardized data to facilitate a more accurate regional picture of status and trends of *Strombus gigas* stocks. In this regard, a harmonized conversion factor for conch product types is critical.
18. Favourably consider CRFM Project proposal for Strengthening Assessment and Management of the Conch Resources in the Region.
19. As a matter of priority, States should consult within governments to reduce discrepancies in reporting on status and trends of stocks as well as trade data (e.g. differences in CITES data and fisheries export data).
20. The region should actively participate in the implementation of FAO's Strategy for Improvement of Status and Trends of Fisheries - requesting that Queen Conch be considered as a priority by FAO in implementing the Strategy.

Relating to improved cooperation on management of queen conch stocks

21. States should favourably consider CRFM proposal to establish a Caribbean regional lobster and conch fisheries management organization. CRFM should consult with other regional bodies in order to avoid duplication of efforts.
22. Non-CARICOM countries are encouraged to become Associate Members of CRFM at the earliest opportunity. Non-CARICOM countries should work closely with CRFM to establish criteria for associate member status in CRFM.
23. During discussions/negotiations to establish a Caribbean regional lobster and conch fisheries management organization, consideration should be given to the use of the CRFM Lobster and Conch Working Group as a mechanism to organize efforts in this regard.
24. Pursue discussions and cooperative opportunities on the utility and feasibility of establishing marine reserves for queen conch stocks, and in particular pursue cooperation

between CRFM initiative, Caribbean Environment Program, FAO, and other governmental and non-governmental organizations on these issues.

25. Cooperation on management measures at the sub-regional level will be critical to leveraging scarce resources.

Relating to improved law enforcement capacity and effectiveness

26. States should pursue, as a matter of priority, regional cooperation to deter and eliminate IUU fishing activities in the Caribbean region.
27. Recognize the need for and initiate capacity building programs to implement these recommendations, in particular with respect to law enforcement issues.
28. Cooperative programs should include but not be limited to information sharing, law enforcement initiatives, training opportunities, technical assistance, and other relevant means.
29. States, where appropriate, should strengthen their legal and regulatory structures for law enforcement relating to fisheries management.
30. Promote opportunities for regional cooperation on implementation of the FAO International Plan of Action to deter, prevent and eliminate IUU fishing, in particular Caribbean regional participation in upcoming FAO consultations on IPOA implementation.
31. Consider participation in the voluntary Fisheries Monitoring Control and Surveillance Network.
32. Explore opportunities to strengthen bilateral communication, cooperation and exchange of data on law enforcement issues. This cooperation should especially be sought between importing and exporting States.

Relating to improved education, outreach and involvement of industry and interested stakeholders

33. Develop and implement education and outreach programs targeting fishers, consumers and young people designed to raise awareness of queen conch status and concerns.
34. Seek partnership opportunities with industry and NGO community to fund these efforts. (note: Dominican Republic, Archipelago of the Sciences Program (Guadeloupe), CONACYT (Mexico), CINVESTAV (Mexico), Parque Xelha (Mexico), Conch Heritage Network (USA) and CFMC programs for youth outreach).
35. Ensure transparency throughout the development of a regional fisheries management organization for conch and lobster fisheries by including industry and interested stakeholders in these discussions at local, national, sub-regional and regional levels.

Relating to operationalizing resolutions and international conventions and other relevant arrangements

36. Promote cooperation between intergovernmental organizations interested in this resource, in particular CITES and SPAW protocol, as a means to secure adequate resources for States to implement these recommendations and meet commitments under international conventions.
37. States should solicit donor parties and organizations that are interested in the conservation and sustainable use of the queen conch outside the range States region to provide the technical assistance and financial support in accordance with Conf. Res. 12.8 to ensure that adequate human resources, institutional capacity, legal and regulatory systems, research and management strategies are executed and maintained for the overall improvement of this marine resource.
38. States should promote the continued viability of *Strombus gigas* for the food security of the region by fully implementing appropriate quality assurance programs, recognizing the need for capacity building assistance in this regard and noting the value-added such work would bring to the sector.

Annex 2

Problems identified in the course of the review that are not related to the implementation of Article IV, paragraph 2 (a), 3 or 6 (a)

In compliance with paragraph 1) of Resolution Conf. 12.8 the Animals Committee recognized that there were issues of concern in range States other than those specifically related to the implementation of Article IV, paragraph 2 (a), 3 or 6 (a), and requested the Secretariat to address these in accordance with the appropriate provisions of the Convention and relevant Resolutions.

Issues of concern in particular range States

1. Specimens of *Strombus gigas* are reportedly imported into several countries and territories after being obtained illegally, for example through unauthorized fishing in waters under the jurisdiction of other states and the subsequent transfer of the product across international borders. Often, the product is sold at sea or reported as being landed in national waters. Although this happens in many range States this is of particular concern for **Aruba (NL)**, **Dominican Republic**, **Guadeloupe (FR)**, **Honduras**, **Martinique (FR)** and the **Netherlands Antilles (NL)**.
2. In several countries illegal fishing and subsequent transfer of the product across international borders occurs undermining national management measures. This is of particular concern for **Haiti**, **Jamaica**, **Saint Lucia** and **Venezuela**. These countries should also explore opportunities to strengthen bilateral communication, cooperation and exchange of data on law enforcement issues. This cooperation should especially be sought between importing and exporting States.
3. Insufficient monitoring and reporting of trade occurs in a number of range States and needs to be addressed. Monitoring and reporting of trade volumes seems especially problematic for the dependent territories of **France**, **the Netherlands** and the **United Kingdom**, with trade often not monitored and going unrecorded.

Issues of concern in all range States

4. The majority of Parties have reported trade in *Strombus gigas* meat in numbers of specimens instead of kilograms, which prevents proper monitoring and analysis. All meat in international trade should be reported in kilograms (kg) and live specimens and shells in kilograms (kg) or number of specimens.
5. To properly control and monitor levels of exportation, range States are encouraged to collect and communicate information on percentages of tissue loss (and thus weight) during the processing of *Strombus gigas* meat.
6. All countries are requested to collaborate in the development and establishment of standardized terminology and conversion factors for processed meat of *Strombus gigas* that allow estimation of the number of animals in international trade.

7. Range States of *Strombus gigas*, and particularly those categorized as of urgent concern, should seek assistance from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and urge major importing countries to contribute technical and financial assistance.