

# NOTIFICATION TO THE PARTIES

No. 2023/081

Geneva, 12 July 2023

CONCERNING:

## Consultation on trade in stony corals

1. At the request of the Animals Committee and pursuant to Decision 19.177, the Secretariat invites Parties, especially coral reef nations, and stony coral experts and other relevant stakeholders to provide comments and information on the following:
  - a) possible amendments to Resolution Conf 11.10 (Rev. CoP15) on *Trade in stony corals* as shown in Annex 1 to this Notification, aimed at clarifying terms, codes and definitions used in trade and to achieve global consistency in permitting and reporting;
  - b) possible revisions to the *Guidelines for the preparation and submission of CITES annual reports* and *Guidelines for the preparation and submission of the CITES annual illegal trade report* as shown in Annex 2 to this Notification;
  - c) the appropriateness of current conversion factors used<sup>1</sup> to analyze trade in wild stony corals for the CITES Review of Significant Trade process and potential alternative conversion factors and methodologies;
  - d) appropriate units of measure of stony corals in trade, e.g. number of specimens or kilogrammes;
  - e) any other issues relating to definitions and reporting of coral rock in international trade to provide sufficient clarity and avoid confusion in relation to what 'coral rock' means, what forms of coral rock are subject to the provisions of the Convention and how coral rock should be reported in trade; and
  - f) any other issues related to the implementation of the Convention with respect to trade in stony corals.

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<sup>1</sup> Conversion factors are available in the Table in Box 2 on p. 3 of AC32 Doc. 14.2 Annex 1. <https://cites.org/sites/default/files/documents/E-AC32-14-02.pdf>. Source of conversion factors: Green, E.P. and Shirley, F. 1999. *The global trade in corals*. Cambridge, UK. <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/119170#page/6/mode/1up>

2. Responses should be sent to [karen.gaynor@cites.org](mailto:karen.gaynor@cites.org) before **1 October 2023** to allow for consideration by the Animals Committee's intersessional working group on trade in stony corals for reporting to the 33rd meeting of the Animals Committee.
3. At the request of the Animals Committee, the Secretariat further invites Parties, especially coral reef nations, to express an interest in participating in the Animals Committee's intersessional working group on trade in stony corals by sending an email to [karen.gaynor@cites.org](mailto:karen.gaynor@cites.org) by **1 October 2023** and further invites stony coral experts and other stakeholders to express their interest in contributing to the work of the working group by sending an email to [karen.gaynor@cites.org](mailto:karen.gaynor@cites.org) by **1 October 2023**.

POSSIBLE AMENDMENTS TO  
RESOLUTION CONF. 11.10 (REV. COP15) ON *TRADE IN STONY CORALS*

## **Conf. 11.10**                      **Trade in stony corals**

### **(Rev. CoP15)**

AWARE that stony corals (~~in the orders Scleractinia, as well as non-scleractinian corals within the genera *Distichopora*, *Heliopora*, *Millepora*, *Stylaster* and *Tubipora*, Helioporacea, Milleporina, Scleractinia, Stolonifera, and Stylasterina~~) are in international trade as intact specimens for aquaria and as curios;

RECOGNIZING that coral rock, fragments, sand and other coral products are also traded;

NOTING the unique nature of corals, namely that their skeletons are persistent, that they may become mineralized in time and that they are the foundation of reefs, and that, following erosion, fragments of coral may form part of mineral and sedimentary deposits;

NOTING also that coral rock may act as an important substrate for the attachment of live corals and that the removal of rock may have a detrimental impact on reef ecosystems;

AWARE, however, that coral rock can ~~not only~~ be readily identified ~~other than~~ to the order Scleractinia, or in the case of non-scleractinian corals, to the genus level (*Distichopora*, *Heliopora*, *Millepora*, *Stylaster* or *Tubipora*), and that accordingly non-detriment findings under Article IV, paragraph 2 (a), of the Convention cannot be readily applied;

NOTING however, that for practical purposes of implementing the Convention, all coral rock can be reported in trade as "Scleractinia spp." irrespective of whether the coral rock contains Scleractinian corals, non-scleractinian corals, or a mixed composition, for ease of identification and reporting.

NOTING that Article IV, paragraph 3, requires the monitoring of exports of specimens of each species in Appendix II, in order to assess whether the species is being maintained at a level consistent with its role in the ecosystem;

NOTING that assessments under Article IV, paragraph 3, of the impacts of harvesting corals on the ecosystems from which they are derived cannot be adequately made by monitoring exports alone;

ACCEPTING that coral fragments and coral sand cannot be readily recognized;

RECOGNIZING also that it is ~~frequently~~ usually difficult to identify live or dead corals to the species level owing to the lack of a standard nomenclature and the lack of comprehensive and accessible identification guides for the non-specialist;

RECOGNIZING that stony corals that are fossilized are not subject to the provisions of the Convention;

NOTING that it has been difficult to apply and enforce the provisions of the Convention to trade in corals;

#### THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION

1. ADOPTS the working definitions of coral sand, coral fragments, coral rock, live coral and dead coral provided in the Annex to this Resolution;

2. RECOMMENDS that Parties give much greater emphasis to the implementation of Article IV, paragraph 3, when permitting the export of corals and that they adopt the principles and practice of an ecosystem approach, rather than relying on the monitoring of exports alone; and
3. URGES:
  - a) interested Parties and other bodies from range and consumer States to collaborate and provide support, coordinated by the Secretariat, to produce as a priority accessible and practical guides to recognizing corals and coral rock in trade and to make these widely available to Parties through appropriate media; and
  - b) Parties to seek synergy with other multilateral environmental agreements and initiatives to work for the conservation and sustainable use of coral reef ecosystems.

## Annex

## Definitions

*Coral sand* – material consisting entirely or in part of finely crushed fragments of dead coral no larger than 2 mm in diameter and which may also contain, amongst other things, the remains of Foraminifera, mollusc and crustacean shell, and coralline algae. Not identifiable to the level of genus. In accordance with Resolution Conf. 9.6 (Rev. CoP16) on *Trade in readily recognizable parts and derivatives*, coral sand is not considered readily recognizable, and is therefore not covered by the provisions of the Convention.

*Coral fragments (including gravel and rubble)* – unconsolidated fragments of broken finger-like dead coral and other material between 2 and 30 mm measured in any direction, which is not identifiable to the level of genus. In accordance with Resolution Conf. 9.6 (Rev. CoP16) on *Trade in readily recognizable parts and derivatives*, coral fragments are not considered readily recognizable, and are therefore not covered by the provisions of the Convention.

*Coral rock*<sup>1</sup> (*the collective term used for also live rock and substrate*) – hard consolidated material, >3 cm in diameter, formed of fragments of mostly/partly unidentifiable specimens of dead coral and which may also contain cemented sand, coralline algae and other sedimentary rocks. The term 'coral rock' should not be used on permits; which should instead refer to 'live rock' or 'substrate'. Unlike fossil corals, 'coral rock' is harvested from living coral reef ecosystems, mostly from shallow reef flats near the shoreline at less than 1 m depth.

'*Live rock*' is the term given to large pieces of coral rock (usually > 1 kg each) to which are attached live specimens of invertebrate species and coralline algae not included in the CITES Appendices. Live rock should not be covered by CITES-listed coral species. Live rock is used as decoration and habitat in aquariums and is usually and which are transported in moist condition, in order to keep the attached organisms alive, but not in water, in crates. Live rock is subject to the provisions of the Convention.

'*Substrate*' is the term given to small pieces of coral rock (usually < 0.5 kg each), to which are attached invertebrates (of species not included in the CITES Appendices. Substrate is used as pedestal (base) for attached invertebrates, such as sea anemones or soft corals and is therefore and which are transported in water to keep these organisms alive, like live corals. Substrate should not be covered by CITES-listed live or dead coral. Coral rock is not identifiable to the level of genus but is recognizable to the level of order. The definition excludes specimens defined as dead coral. Whether substrate is subject to the provisions of the Convention depends on Parties interpretation of fossil coral; Parties that consider substrate to be fossilized coral do not consider it to be subject to the Convention's provisions.

*Dead coral* – pieces of coral that are dead when exported, but that may have been alive when collected, and in which the structure of corallites (the skeleton of the individual polyp) is still intact; specimens are therefore identifiable to the level of species or genus.

*Live coral* – pieces of live coral transported in water and that are identifiable to the level of species or genus.

**Possible amendments to the  
Guidelines for the preparation and submission of CITES annual reports**

In section 3 “**Regarding stony corals**” add a final paragraph as follows:

Live corals should be reported as ‘LIV’ with the unit ‘number of specimens’. Coral rock (as live rock) should be reported using the trade term code ‘COR’ with the unit kilograms (kg). Coral rock (as substrate) and dead corals should be reported as ‘COR’ with the unit ‘number of specimens’.

In section 6a), update the explanations of ‘live’ and ‘corals (raw)’ in the terminology table:

Description	Trade term code	Preferred unit	Alternative Additional unit	Explanation
live	LIV	no.	(kg) (in addition to the no.)	live animals and plants, excluding live fingerling fish – see FIG. <u>NB: live stony corals should be recorded as ‘number of specimens’; all coral rock (live rock and substrate) should be reported as ‘COR’.</u>
coral (raw)	COR	<del>no.</del> kg (for live rock); no. (for substrate and dead corals)	kg	raw or unworked coral and coral rock (also live rock and substrate) [as defined in Resolution Conf. 11.10 (Rev. CoP15)]. Coral rock (live rock and substrate) should be recorded as ‘Scleractinia spp.’ <del>NB: the trade should be recorded by number of pieces only if the coral specimens are transported in water.</del> Live rock (transported moist in boxes), should be reported in kg; coral substrate should be reported as number of pieces (since these are transported in water as the substrate to which non-CITES corals are attached); <u>dead corals should also be reported as number of pieces.</u>