



NOTIFICATION TO THE PARTIES

No. 2024/108

Geneva, 30 September 2024

CONCERNING:

Draft CITES Partnership Strategy

1. At its 19th meeting (CoP19; Panama City, 2022), the Conference of the Parties adopted Decision 19.20 on *Cooperation with Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and other international organizations* directing the Secretariat to, *subject to external funding, prepare for consideration by the Standing Committee a partnership strategy for the Parties, the Permanent Committees and the Secretariat to identify priorities for collaboration that specifically enhance the implementation of the Convention, as well as its effectiveness and efficiency, through strategic partnerships.*
2. Thanks to funding from Switzerland, the Secretariat has developed the draft CITES Partnership Strategy, contained in the Annex to the present Notification. The draft strategy is anchored in the [CITES Strategic Vision: 2021 – 2030](#) and serves as a means of implementation of the Strategic Vision as a whole. It is intended to provide high-level guidance on how to approach partnerships to enhance the implementation and enforcement of the Convention.
3. To inform the draft Partnership Strategy, the Secretariat undertook an internal assessment of ongoing partnerships to identify thematic areas covered, gaps where CITES needs to engage more intentionally and (new) types of partnerships that should be explored further.
4. In accordance with Decision 19.21, the Standing Committee is directed to review the draft partnership strategy and make recommendations to the 20th meeting of the Conference of the Parties. To facilitate the review of the draft by the Standing Committee, the Secretariat hereby invites Parties and stakeholders to provide their feedback for the Secretariat to take into consideration in its document to the 78th meeting of the Standing Committee.
5. Parties and relevant stakeholders are invited to provide comments and feedback by email with the subject line “Notification No. 2024/108 on Draft CITES Partnership Strategy” to info@cites.org with a copy to sofie.flensburg@cites.org by **18 October 2024**.

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CITES Partnership strategy (draft)

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NB: the partnership strategy will be prefaced by the working document submitted to SC78, which will include background information about how the strategy was developed, including reference to the relevant Decisions.

I. OBJECTIVE AND PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGY

1. The preamble of the Convention recognizes that *“international co-operation is essential for the protection of certain species of wild fauna and flora against over-exploitation through international trade”*.
2. Goal 5 of the *CITES Strategic Vision: 2021 – 2030*¹ states that *“Delivery of the CITES Strategic Vision is improved through collaboration”*. As such, the collaboration called for under Goal 5 serves as a means of implementation for the other Goals of the Strategic Vision, in a similar fashion to how Sustainable Development Goal 17² promotes the use of partnerships to strengthen the implementation of the other Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
3. The objective of this Partnership Strategy is to ensure that strategic partnerships contribute to the effective implementation of the Strategic Vision and thereby the Convention, such that Parties may achieve Goals 1 to 4, and their respective objectives.
4. Partnerships and collaboration have always been essential for the implementation of the Convention, and over the years, collaboration has evolved around a wide range of areas. The CITES Secretariat has formal relationships with some partners, but also in many cases works informally with a wide number of entities on specific issues and projects (see Section IV).
5. This Partnership Strategy outlines a systematic approach to partnerships. It establishes principles and approaches to support strategic and intentional selection and establishment of partnerships, with a view to strengthening coherence and alignment at all levels of CITES. The strategy aims to focus collaboration efforts where the needs are greatest and prioritize partnerships to optimize the use of limited resources.
6. In the same vein, the Partnership Strategy provides guidance on how to approach the identification of non-traditional partners (see Section IV), to enable collaboration with new stakeholders who can add previously untapped value to the effective implementation of the Convention, consistent with the terms of the Convention.

¹ <https://cites.org/sites/default/files/documents/COP/19/resolution/E-Res-18-03.pdf>

² <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal17>

7. The Partnership Strategy is based on the premise that partnerships should create significant value to each of the partners involved in the partnership and to the implementation and enforcement of the Convention (see Section III).
8. The Strategy was developed in accordance with Decision 19.20 and supports the implementation of Decisions 17.55 (Rev. CoP19), 17.56 (Rev. CoP19) and 19.21 on *Cooperation with Multilateral Environmental Agreements and other international organizations*³.
9. Resolution Conf. 18.3 on *CITES Strategic Vision: 2021 – 2030*, conscious of the need to ensure the effective implementation of the Convention globally, acknowledges the importance of global cooperation to address the threats posed by illegal trade in wildlife as recognized, among others, in Resolution 69/314⁴ and subsequent Resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly on *Tackling illicit trafficking in wildlife*.
10. The *CITES Strategic Vision: 2021 – 2030* recognizes that Parties' efforts to implement the Convention may also provide benefit to, and draw strength from, efforts being undertaken in other fora. In this regard, it is worth recalling that the Vision Statement of the CITES Strategic Vision also recognizes that the implementation of the Convention contributes to achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

II. DEFINITIONS AND SCOPE

11. In the context of this Strategy, a CITES Strategic Partnership is defined⁵ as:

“an ongoing collaborative relationship between the Secretariat (including on behalf of the Permanent Committees or the Conference of the Parties) and one or more other entities, aligning their interests around a common vision, combining their complementary resources and competencies and sharing risk, to maximize value creation towards enhancing the effective implementation and enforcement of the Convention, and deliver benefit to each of the partners.”

³ <https://cites.org/eng/dec/index.php/44344>

⁴ <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n15/238/62/pdf/n1523862.pdf>

⁵ The UNEP Partnership Policy defines a “Partnership” as a “voluntary and collaborative relationship between parties, in which all Partners agree to work together to achieve a common purpose or undertake a specific task and as mutually agreed, to share risks and responsibilities, resources and benefits.” While similar, the definition adopted here is deliberately made more specific to the context of CITES to explicitly enhance the implementation and enforcement of the Convention.

12. The above definition is adapted from *The SDG Partnership Guidebook*⁶, which unpacks this definition further:
- a. *“an ongoing collaborative relationship...”* Partnerships usually require considerable time and effort to develop and commitment from all partners to work together.
 - b. *“...aligning their interests around a common vision...”* Partnerships can only happen where there is a clear alignment of interests.
 - c. *“...combining their complementary resources and competencies...”* Partnerships are able to deliver more through the complementarity and diversity of resources the different partners are able to bring to the table.
 - d. *“...and sharing risk...”* Sharing risks helps to ensure engagement and build equity and trust among partners.
 - e. *“...to maximize value creation...”* Partnerships are all about value creation – being able to deliver benefit and impact far greater than the sum of the parts.
 - f. *“...and deliver benefit to each of the partners.”* For partners to remain engaged, all partners must gain value from their involvement.
13. CITES Strategic Partnerships, as defined in paragraph 11, are key to enabling the implementation of CITES’ core mandate. These may take the form of long-term or medium-term partnerships⁷:
- a. Long-term partnerships are key to the effective implementation of CITES’ core mandate. These partnerships may be renewed for as long as they remain necessary.
 - b. Medium-term partnerships are like long-term partnerships, but only last for a limited, pre-defined period, for example for as long as a specific project lasts. Examples of this would be partnerships engaged in specifically to deliver the CITES Tree Species Project.
14. Short-term partnerships, otherwise referred to as implementation partnerships, are ad-hoc and support the implementation of specific (parts of) Decisions. This category of partnerships is not covered by this Strategy.

⁶ <https://thepartneringinitiative.org/knowledge-centre/partnering-guidebooks/sdg-partnership-guidebook/>

⁷ Both types of partnerships referred to in paragraph 13 may correspond to the ‘cooperation partnership’ or ‘multi-stakeholder partnership’ modalities as defined in the UNEP Partnership Policy.

III. CORE PARTNERSHIP PRINCIPLES AND APPROACHES

A. Significant added value

15. The primary driver for working through partnerships must be that, by combining resources, partnerships can deliver far more than the sum of their constituent parts. Additionally, every partnership must create net value for each partner, otherwise there is no incentive for their continued involvement⁸.
16. In recognition of these basic premises, a CITES Strategic Partnership should create significant value towards enhancing the effective implementation and enforcement of the Convention, which could not be achieved by either partner working in isolation. The value created by the partnership should outweigh the resources put into it (see Section III.B).
17. Furthermore, each individual partner has value it can bring to the partnership, and value it can gain from the partnership. The value gained by each individual partner should never be at the expense of the other partner(s), but through win-win approaches that deliver mutual benefits.
18. The following paragraphs articulate the value CITES brings to partnerships (sub-section III.A1.), identify how partnerships should create value to CITES and amplify the effective implementation and enforcement of the Convention (sub-section III.A2.), and outlines the principles to consider when defining how a (prospective or existing) partnership creates value (sub-section III.A3.). In other words, the lens of value-creation used here informs the selection, prioritization, and evaluation of partnerships, and should be considered both when designing new and evaluating existing partnerships.
 - A1. CITES' value proposition
19. The unique value CITES brings to partnerships is well-established:
 - a. As a Multilateral Environmental Agreement administered by the United Nations, CITES has been ratified by 184 Parties and is a globally recognized brand that offers legitimacy, credibility, impartiality, and considerable convening power to bring together governments, international organizations, civil society organizations, businesses, and other stakeholders in the regulation of international trade in endangered species of wild fauna and flora.

⁸ <https://thepartneringinitiative.org/knowledge-centre/partnering-guidebooks/sdg-partnership-guidebook/>

- b. As the only legally binding instrument regulating international wildlife trade to ensure it's legal, sustainable, and traceable, thereby ensuring that sustainable use contributes to the long-term conservation of species, CITES is an expression of sustainable development balancing social, economic and environmental objectives.
- c. Compliance (i.e. to act in accordance with and in fulfilment of the Convention's requirements) is the primary responsibility of the Parties and a core business of the Convention. As the cost of non-compliance can be high for the survival of entire species or populations, the Convention has established various compliance procedures to which Parties may be subjected if they fail to comply with the Convention's requirements. Consequently, CITES is sometimes referred to as 'the Convention with teeth', which enhances its credibility and impact.
- d. CITES is a science-based Convention where decisions about allowing trade have to be based on scientific findings that such trade is non-detrimental to the species' survival and its role in the ecosystem (non-detriment findings or NDFs). Likewise, proposals for the listing of species in CITES' Appendices need to be justified by scientific evidence regarding the conservation status and impacts of international trade. CITES' two scientific committees (the Animals and Plants Committees) provide scientific and technical support to the Parties' decision-making about species of fauna and flora that are subject to CITES trade controls, further enhancing the credibility and the impartiality of the Convention.
- e. CITES plays a central role in combating wildlife crime, as the primary legal framework for regulating international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants listed on its Appendices. Combating wildlife crime is a key part of achieving the CITES Strategic Vision, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (the Biodiversity Plan) and the UN SDGs. CITES works to ensure that illegal wildlife trade is treated as a serious crime and prioritized in law enforcement efforts alongside other serious transnational crimes such as human, drugs and arms trafficking.

A2. Value creation through strategic partnerships

- 20. Creating value has multiple dimensions, i.e. creating mutual value for each partner and creating value for the partnership as a whole to achieve results in line with global environmental priorities, including the Convention, the Biodiversity Plan, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

21. Being able to articulate the value obtained from a partnership is vital in considering whether to initiate the partnership at all⁹. It will also enable more objective evaluation of the partnership down the line since it facilitates the creation of milestones and/or indicators against which to measure the success of the partnership. To create value for the Parties and towards the achievement of CITES' mission, a CITES partnership must:
- a. through its contributions to one or more of the Strategic Goals and their respective Strategic Objectives as outlined in the CITES Strategic Vision: 2021 – 2030, create a measurable impact in terms of achieving the CITES Vision, and contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Biodiversity Plan (see also paragraph 24); and
 - b. bring together different kinds of resources or expertise to provide a complete solution towards enhancing the implementation and enforcement of the Convention, as well as its effectiveness and efficiency, that could not be achieved without all these resources. This may be achieved through, for example (this list is not exhaustive):
 - i. the adoption or improvement of national legislation, international standards, policies or principles that enhance the regulation of international trade in wild species of fauna and flora, and combats the illegal wildlife trade;
 - ii. increased capacity of Parties and/or availability of knowledge, tools and guidance to support Parties' efforts to enforce the Convention and to combat illegal wildlife trade;
 - iii. products or services that enhance the legality, sustainability, and traceability of international wildlife trade (for example, the digitalization of permits reduces their vulnerability to fraud); or
 - iv. the generation of scientific data and knowledge regarding the conservation status of CITES-listed species, their sustainable use, and the impacts of CITES-listings on these and other areas of interest.
22. In addition, the Secretariat may derive value from a CITES partnership if it, for example (this list is not exhaustive):

⁹ Tool 4 (“Value assessment framework”) of *The SDG Partnering Guidebook* is a useful reference to facilitate the identification and articulation of value-added of a partnership. <https://thepartneringinitiative.org/knowledge-centre/partnering-guidebooks/sdg-partnership-guidebook/>

- a. leverages financial resources to support the implementation of the Convention and its Resolutions and Decisions;
- b. increases CITES' reach, profile, and recognition in global priorities for trade, the environment and development; or
- c. increases the capacity (expertise, human resources, time, material resources) of the Secretariat to fulfil its mandates, including support to the Parties.

A3. Types of value-creation

23. To identify how value is being added, it can be helpful to answer the following questions when considering a partnership, whether it is to create a new partnership, or to enhance an existing one to fully capitalize on its potential value:
- a. How is it that by working together, the partnership will be able to deliver significantly more than the sum of its parts?
 - b. What specific extra impact will the partnership be able to achieve?
24. Answering these questions should consider how the partnership generates one or more of the following types of value-added, both for the partnership as a whole and for each individual partner¹⁰.
- a. Collective legitimacy and outreach: the partnership, by creating collective legitimacy and outreach that outweigh those of each individual partner, adds weight to new norms, standards and policies developed or influenced by the partnership. **Example**: The CITES Secretariat participates in an inter-agency partnership among 16 UN agencies, international organizations, institutions, and secretariats with substantial programmes on forests, which coordinate and cooperate their work to support countries to achieve SDGs and other global forest-related goals.
 - b. Innovation for effectiveness: the partnership, by connecting a wide range of experts, influencers and/or technologies, catalyzes the development of new, innovative solutions. **Example**: Partnering with a UN agency has enabled the creation of an electronic CITES permit management system. This system is readily accessible to CITES Parties, enabling them to implement the Convention more effectively through modern information and communication

¹⁰ Tool 4 ("Value assessment framework") of *The SDG Partnering Guidebook* serves as a useful reference to support the process of identifying value added.

technologies (ICT). By doing so, it contributes to the streamlining of compliant trade processes and enhances efforts to combat illegal trade.

- c. Holistic response: by bringing together actors from across societal and economic sectors, the partnership addresses multiple inter-connected socio-ecological challenges that affect, or are affected by, the implementation and enforcement of the Convention, including those issues that are only indirectly linked to CITES' core mandate. **Example**: See the case study in Box 1 below.
- d. Shared learning: the partnership creates a mechanism for collective learning and capacity-building, raising the level of knowledge, expertise, and capacity widely, and leading to more effective practice and greater impact. **Example**: Through InforMEA, the CITES Secretariat and Secretariats of other Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) pool resources and expertise on knowledge management, ensuring interoperability when developing new tools and services using information and communication technologies. This contributes to shared learning and increased synergies and helps reach out to respective stakeholders among the MEAs at national and international levels.
- e. Synergies: by aligning programmes, sharing resources, and cooperating on the implementation of activities, the partnership reduces costs, increases impact, and avoids a multiplication of effort. **Example**: Partnering with a UN agency with presence on the ground enabled CITES to reduce costs and duplication of effort in the implementation of activities as part of the Compliance Assistance Programme, where these activities were aligned with the objectives of another project being implemented by that same UN agency.
- f. Scale: the partnership combines delivery capacity across geographical locations, thereby scaling up aligned approaches for greater reach to address common challenges across multiple countries, regions, or range States of CITES-listed species. **Example**: Cooperation with regional organizations with presence in specific regions or sub-regions is enhancing CITES' capacity to address common challenges for the conservation of species in international trade across their range facing similar pressures in the different range States in the region(s) concerned.

Box 1 – Case study: the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICCWC)

Launched in 2010, ICCWC is an example of a strategic and powerful partnership that provides a holistic response and is critical to support efforts of CITES Parties to combat

wildlife crime. The Consortium, comprising CITES, INTERPOL, UNODC, the World Bank Group, and the World Customs Organization (WCO), unites the key organizations at global level with complementary mandates to combat wildlife crime, and combines their expertise, tools and resources to tackle wildlife crime.

The importance of ICCWC as a partnership lies in its ability to create a unified and robust response to the complex challenges posed by wildlife crime by coordinating efforts and initiatives at national, regional, and global levels. By integrating partner initiatives and approaches, ICCWC provides a streamlined and coordinated response to strengthen the capacity of Parties to implement CITES, combat wildlife crime and the criminal networks involved, and protect endangered species. Its holistic approach ensures that all aspects of wildlife crime are addressed across the criminal justice chain, from on-the-ground enforcement and capacity-building to high-level policy, intelligence-led or financial investigations, making it a crucial force in the global effort to combat wildlife crime effectively. This approach not only ensures synergies are identified and partner programmes and initiatives are coordinated where possible, but also maximizes the use of resources available, reduces duplication and enhances the effectiveness of interventions.

The partnership has evolved since its inception and is increasingly developing comprehensive coordinated strategies, most recently through the ICCWC Vision and its associated Strategic Action Plans, based on lessons learned and needs and priorities identified to support and strengthen wildlife authorities, police, customs and entire criminal justice systems to ensure that they are well equipped and capacitated to effectively respond to the threat posed by wildlife crime.

B. Cost-benefit analysis

25. As stated in paragraph 12.a., partnerships usually take a significant amount of time to develop (transaction costs) and maintain (implementation costs). Therefore, when considering the value created by the partnership, it is equally important to consider the transaction and implementation costs involved. The value created by a partnership should outweigh these types of costs, for example:
 - a. Staff time: all staff time plus overheads / cost recovery used by each partner for the development and implementation of the partnership.
 - b. 'Hard' costs: monetary and other resources with a financial value (e.g. travel, office space, equipment, etc.) invested by each partner in the development and implementation of the partnership.

- c. Non-tangible: social and political capital invested in the development of the partnership and used in its implementation.

C. Nurturing partnerships

- 26. An important part of effective partnerships is ensuring that all partners are working effectively together and are benefitting from the arrangement, and that there is strong communication, trust, and transparency.
- 27. Regular communication plays a central role in effective partnerships, where an ability to listen to each other and understand each other's differences is key.
- 28. Trust and transparency significantly improve the efficiency of a partnership, both in terms of addressing implementation challenges and the management of limited resources. The higher the level of trust and transparency between partners, the more each partner will be committed to finding solutions to challenges and keeping the partnership on a forward-moving trajectory.
- 29. Differences in mandates and organizational culture¹¹, which may often be hidden, can cause challenges in a partnership. However, when there is effective communication, trust, and transparency across the partnership, this should create awareness and understanding of these differences, which can in turn create opportunities for them to create value-added to the partnership. When challenges do arise, it is important to focus on the goals of the partnership when collaboratively seeking solutions to those challenges.

IV. PRIORITY AREAS FOR CITES STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

- 30. Some issues cut across partnerships, as they tend to be a means to an end, rather than a theme in their own right. These are:
 - a. Capacity-building;
 - b. Information sharing and knowledge management (including the Virtual College);
 - c. Digitalization and technology;
 - d. Communication and awareness raising.

¹¹ Organizational culture is defined by the five Ps: process, principles, policies, practices, and politics.

31. The Secretariat is currently engaged in partnerships, including on behalf of the Permanent Committees and the Conference of the Parties, in the following thematic areas related to the implementation of the Convention:
- a. Sustainable management and use of wild fauna and flora;
 - b. Species conservation and trade, including trade data;
 - c. Scientific research, including non-detriment findings (NDFs);
 - d. Livelihoods of rural communities;
 - e. National legislation for the effective implementation of the Convention;
 - f. Illegal trade and law enforcement, including illegal trade data;
 - g. Permitting and traceability, including legal acquisition findings (LAFs);
 - h. Transportation of live specimens;
 - i. Policies and principles related to biodiversity conservation.
32. The Secretariat's assessment of the current situation of partnerships implemented by the Secretariat, including on behalf of the CITES CoP and Permanent Committees, indicates that the Secretariat is starting to develop and implement partnerships in relation to some thematic areas where it might be desirable to consider increasing current efforts:
- a. Fisheries: There is potential to strengthen and expand partnerships with regional fishery bodies (RFBs) including regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) and other relevant international organizations in line with Resolution Conf. 12.6 (Rev. CoP18) on *Conservation and management of sharks*. By building such partnerships, implementation of CITES could be further enhanced for the increasing number of commercially exploited aquatic species listed in the CITES Appendices. These partnerships are also crucial in improving knowledge sharing and capacity building for addressing key issues such as the Review of Significant Trade and introduction from the sea.
 - b. Stakeholder engagement: Indigenous peoples and local communities, gender-related groups and youth should be explored further as partners who could create significant additional value to partnerships working on relevant issues, including livelihoods, traditional knowledge, and rights. In this regard, Resolution Conf. 16.6 (Rev. CoP18) on *CITES and livelihoods* recognizes that

“the implementation of CITES is better achieved with the engagement of rural communities, especially those which are traditionally dependent on CITES-listed species for their livelihoods” and emphasizes the many ways in which engagement and empowerment of rural communities in the implementation of CITES regulations is key to the effective implementation of the Convention and to realizing potential benefits to those communities, including recognition of resource tenure and ownership and traditional knowledge. Resolution Conf. 19.3 on *Gender and international trade in wild fauna and flora* notes that the engagement and empowerment of women and girls is high on the United Nations agenda, and *“recommends that Parties explore ways to further enhance the representation and participation of people of all genders [...] in conservation [...], including in CITES decision-making”*. Resolution Conf. 17.5 (Rev. CoP18) on *Youth engagement* also notes that engagement and empowerment of youth is high on the agenda of the United Nations, and *“invites the Secretariat to collaborate with relevant UN organizations and conventions as well as the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth on youth engagement initiatives”*. Resolution Conf. 17.5 (Rev. CoP18) further *“invites Parties and the CITES Secretariat to work with universities, youth groups, and other relevant associations and organizations, to create educated and engaged youth networks that can inform and influence conservation decisions”*. The implementation of the aforementioned Resolutions serves as a direct contribution to Sustainable Development Goals 15, 5 and 4, respectively¹².

- c. Zoonotic diseases: As the CITES community continues to consider the nexus between international wildlife trade and zoonotic diseases and the role of the Convention in reducing the risk of future zoonotic disease emergence associated with CITES trade, the Standing Committee and the Conference of the Parties are expected to provide additional guidance on this issue. The Secretariat should prepare for the possibility that implementing such guidance may require new partnerships with actors from the health sector.
- d. Global environmental challenges: The Secretariat’s work on sustainable management of tree species and forests has the potential to contribute to mitigating biodiversity degradation and climate change. Expanding partnerships to include actors from the climate change community could enhance the impact of this work in that regard.

¹² In particular targets 15.7, 15.c, 5.5, 5.a, 4.4 and 4.7.

33. Further, CITES is a science-based convention, covering 40,000 different species, implemented by national authorities. It is also relevant for a number of economic sectors. In addition to existing partnerships with civil society organizations and other non-State actors, it would appear that CITES could benefit from strengthened relationships with groups of actors such as those listed below to support science-based decision-making, enhance visibility and collaboration with industry and the private sector, including the finance sector, to increase the effectiveness of the Convention and the resources available for its implementation:
- a. Academia is still largely missing from CITES partnership efforts. Considering that limited information exists on the conservation status of many species in CITES Appendices, partnerships with academia can add value through shared learning and innovation, and by offering access to the latest science. Such partnerships can also help bridge the gap between researchers and policymakers by catalyzing independent research on relevant topics.
 - b. Media: CITES partnership efforts have tended to engage media on an ad-hoc basis. It is worth exploring how intentional partnerships with media could create additional value for CITES, particularly by delivering communication and awareness-raising on international wildlife trade and the work implemented under the Convention.
 - c. Partnerships with industry could add value by offering access to additional and complementary information on trade and markets, where the demand is, value chains, supply chains, harvest methodologies, etc.
 - d. Partnerships with the finance sector could add value by offering Parties sustainable financing options at scale and complementary to traditional funding mechanisms. Goal 5 of the CITES Strategic Vision: 2021 – 2030 includes an objective to enhance cooperation with *“international financial mechanisms and other related institutions in order to support activities that contribute to CITES implementation and enforcement”*. As noted in an information document ([CoP19 Inf.14](#)) submitted by the Secretariat to the 19th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP19, Panama City, 2022), the nature-based economy may present a strong growth opportunity for the economies of some countries, and several financial mechanisms are worth exploring. These may include, among others, payments for ecosystem services, carbon markets, green bonds and wildlife bonds, debt-for-nature swaps, and Conservation Trust Funds. The use of these financial mechanisms will require multi-stakeholder partnerships that comprise the involvement of local communities, improved

intersectoral coordination, trust-building, enhanced conservation performance monitoring, and policy reforms to incentivize the private sector and donor investment.

34. To provide capacity-building support to Parties on strengthening the implementation of the Convention at the national level, there is a need for a strategic and long-term approach to partnerships. While current efforts involve short-term implementation partnerships, there is potential to create added value by collaborating with other international organizations that have a presence on the ground. By partnering with organizations that have complementary societal, economic, or environmental objectives as CITES, it is possible to provide targeted support to Parties. This approach would allow CITES to build on synergies with ongoing programmes and projects that align with the specific needs of a Party in implementing the Convention. The identification of suitable international organizations for such partnerships should consider the local context, recognizing that the same organization may not be equally suitable in different countries even if the objectives of the partnership are similar.

V. OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

35. This Partnership Strategy will be delivered in accordance with the UNEP Partnership Policy¹³, which outlines the operational procedures for setting up a partnership, including exclusion criteria which dictate when not to engage in a partnership.

A. Risk management

36. Risk management is an important aspect of managing partnerships and requires a proactive and adaptive approach to enable CITES to mitigate risks arising from engaging in partnerships, both during the development phase and during the implementation phase.
37. Risks may include financial risks, legal risks including breach of contract, environmental and social risks, capacity constraints, reputational risks, and operational risks including procurement risks.
38. In accordance with the United Nations' zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse, the capacity of a (prospective) partner to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse should be taken into consideration.
39. The risk management process covers the entire lifecycle of a partnership, from inception through implementation to closure. It is a cyclical process that involves the

¹³ <https://wecollaborate.unep.org/display/PART/UNEP+Partnership+Policy+and+Procedures+2024>

identification of risks, and their subsequent assessment, treatment (mitigation) and monitoring. Monitoring of risks during the implementation phase of a partnership is essential to anticipate and respond to new, emerging, or changing risks and manage them accordingly.

40. Given that risks can represent both threats and opportunities depending on how they are managed, proper risk management in accordance with the procedures prescribed by UNEP (see paragraph 41) will allow CITES partnerships to capitalize on opportunities that would otherwise threaten the success of a partnership.
41. The Secretariat shall undertake risk management in the context of CITES strategic partnerships in accordance with the risk management procedures in UNEP as outlined in the UNEP Programme and Project Management Manual¹⁴.

B. Dependencies and operating environment

42. The delivery of the Strategy will require a high level of ownership of Parties, the Permanent Committees, and particularly the Secretariat.
43. The Partnership Strategy offers non-binding guidance for Parties to consider when developing new or enhancing existing partnerships. Different local, national, or regional contexts may affect the way in which partnerships are developed and managed.
44. At the level of the Secretariat, delivery of the Partnership Strategy falls under the responsibility of the Secretary-General. Subsequent to the adoption of the Strategy by the Conference of the Parties, the Secretariat may develop a more detailed Partnership Plan for how it envisages to implement and deliver the Partnership Strategy, including, as appropriate, development of standard operating procedures (SOP) and key performance indicators (KPIs).
45. As the Secretariat of a Multilateral Environmental Agreement (MEA) administered by UNEP, the CITES Secretariat is subject to the UNEP Partnership Policy¹⁵ and its respective procedures, insofar as there is no specific decision from CITES governing bodies mandating a separate process. Where such governing body decisions do exist, they must be consistent with UN regulations and rules, and in case of conflict, the UNEP Partnership Policy shall apply. See also paragraph 8 of the UNEP Partnership Policy of 2024.

¹⁴ <https://wecollaborate.unep.org/display/PPMM>

¹⁵ <https://wecollaborate.unep.org/display/PART/UNEP+Partnership+Policy+and+Procedures+2024>

46. The UNEP Partners Portal¹⁶ is an online platform and the single location to initiate engagement with partners. It brings more transparency and accountability in terms of how UNEP and the MEA Secretariats administered by UNEP engage with all types of partners. It operates in alignment with the UNEP Partnership Policy, among other policies, guidance, frameworks, and procedures.
47. The CITES Secretariat is currently undertaking an exercise to develop a CITES Resource Mobilization Strategy, which may affect (and be affected by) the emerging thematic areas (paragraph 32) and partnerships with the finance sector (paragraph 33 d).

VI. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

48. The Secretariat may present a report to the 21st session of the Conference of the Parties (TBC, 2028) to take stock of progress achieved with the implementation of this partnership strategy. This progress report should also inform the process of preparing the new Strategic Vision, which should be initiated around that time.
49. At the end of the 2021 – 2030 period covered by the Strategic Vision, the Secretariat will undertake an internal review of the partnership strategy to assess whether so far it has delivered or is on its way to deliver on its intended purpose. The Secretariat will consider the following questions during that review:
- a. Has the partnership strategy enabled CITES to respond to international environmental priorities and take into account new international initiatives, consistent with the terms of the Convention?
 - b. Has the partnership strategy made a meaningful and demonstrable contribution to amplifying the achievement of the Goals and objectives of the CITES Strategic Vision: 2021 – 2030?
 - c. Has the partnership strategy enhanced coherence and alignment of partnerships across all levels of CITES?
 - d. Has the partnership strategy facilitated the engagement of non-traditional partners?
 - e. Globally speaking, are CITES partnerships creating value?
 - i. Is the value-added of CITES partnerships clearly defined?

¹⁶ <https://apps1.unep.org/partners/user>

- ii. Has the strategy enabled CITES to avoid/exit partnerships that do not create value-added?

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