



SUMMARY OF THE TWENTY-EIGHTH MEETING OF THE CITES ANIMALS COMMITTEE:

30 AUGUST - 3 SEPTEMBER 2015

The twenty-eighth meeting of the Animals Committee (AC28) of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) convened from 30 August - 3 September 2015 in Tel Aviv, Israel. Over 200 participants from national governments, intergovernmental organizations, and non-governmental organizations of 50 countries attended the meeting. This was the first meeting that the European Union (EU) attended as a full member, the first regional economic integration organization to join CITES.

The Animals Committee addressed a lengthy agenda, including: extinct or possibly extinct species; freshwater stingrays; periodic review of species included in Appendices I and II; evaluation of the Review of Significant Trade; captive-bred and ranched specimens; snake trade and conservation management; production systems for specimens of CITES-listed species; review of Significant Trade of Appendix-II species; and conservation and management of sharks. Delegates also considered proposals for possible listings at the seventeenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP17) in September 2016.

Throughout the week, participants advanced many issues related to conservation and international trade. Some crossover issues still need to be considered at the twenty-second meeting of the Plants Committee in October, with all recommendations then to be considered at the 66th meeting of the Standing Committee in January, before CoP17 in Johannesburg.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF CITES

CITES was established as a response to growing concerns that over-exploitation of wildlife through international trade was contributing to the rapid decline of many species of plants and animals around the world. The Convention was signed by representatives from 80 countries in Washington, DC, on 3 March 1973, and entered into force on 1 July 1975. There are currently 181 parties to the Convention.

The aim of CITES is to ensure that international trade of wild animal and plant species does not threaten their survival. CITES parties regulate wildlife trade through controls and regulations on species listed in three appendices. Appendix I lists species endangered due to international trade, permitting such trade only in exceptional circumstances. Appendix-II species are those that may become endangered if their trade is not regulated, thus they require controls aimed at preventing unsustainable use, maintaining ecosystems and preventing species from entering Appendix I. Appendix-III species are those subject to domestic regulation by a party requesting the cooperation of other parties to control international trade in that species.

In order to list a species in Appendix I or II, a party needs to submit a proposal for approval by the Conference of the Parties (CoP), supported by scientific and biological data on population and trade trends. The proposal must be adopted by a two-thirds majority of parties present and voting. As the trade impact

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on a species increases or decreases, the CoP decides whether or not the species should be transferred or removed from the appendices.

There are approximately 5,600 fauna species and 30,000 flora species protected under the three CITES appendices. Parties regulate international trade of CITES species through a system of permits and certificates that are required before specimens listed in its appendices are imported, exported or introduced from the sea. Each party is required to adopt national legislation and to designate two national authorities, namely, a Management Authority responsible for issuing permits and certificates based on the advice of a Scientific Authority. These two national authorities also assist with CITES enforcement through cooperation with customs, police and other appropriate agencies. Parties maintain trade records that are forwarded annually to the CITES Secretariat, thus enabling the compilation of statistical information on the global volume of international trade in an appendix-listed species.

The operational bodies of CITES include the Standing Committee (SC) and two scientific committees: the Plants Committee (PC) and the Animals Committee (AC).

CONFERENCES OF THE PARTIES: The first CoP was held in Bern, Switzerland, in November 1976, and subsequent CoPs have been held every two to three years. The CoP meets to, *inter alia*: review progress in the conservation of species included in the appendices; discuss and adopt proposals to amend the lists of species in Appendices I and II; consider recommendations and proposals from parties, the Secretariat, the SC and the scientific committees; and recommend measures to improve the effectiveness of the Convention and the functioning of the Secretariat. The CoP also periodically reviews the list of resolutions and decisions, as well as the species listed in its appendices.

CITES CoP13: CoP13 met in Bangkok, Thailand, from 2-14 October 2004. Delegates addressed a range of topics, including 50 proposals to amend the CITES appendices. CoP13 approved the listing of ramin, agarwood-producing taxa, the great white shark and the humphead wrasse in Appendix II, as well as the uplisting of the Irrawaddy dolphin from Appendix II to I. Regarding the African elephant, Namibia saw its request for an annual ivory quota rejected, but was allowed to proceed with a strictly-controlled sale of traditional ivory carvings. Delegates also agreed on an action plan to curtail unregulated domestic ivory markets. Namibia and South Africa were each allowed an annual quota of five black rhinos for trophy hunting, and Swaziland was allowed to open up strictly controlled hunting of white rhinos. Other decisions focused on synergies with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), while enforcement issues also received considerable attention.

CITES CoP14: CoP14 met in The Hague, the Netherlands, from 3-15 June 2007. Delegates addressed a range of topics including: the CITES Strategic Vision 2008-2013; a guide on compliance with the Convention; management of annual export quotas; and species trade and conservation issues, including Asian big cats, sharks and sturgeons. Delegates agreed that no

cetacean species should be subject to periodic review while the International Whaling Commission (IWC) moratorium is in place. CoP14 approved the listing of: slender-horned and Cuvier's gazelles and slow loris on Appendix I; Brazil wood, sawfish and eel on Appendix II; and to amend the annotation on African elephants to allow a one-off sale of ivory from Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe with a nine-year resting period for further ivory trade. Media spotlight was on negotiations on the future of ivory trade and African elephant conservation, with many highlighting the consensus by African range states as a major achievement of this meeting.

CITES CoP15: CoP15 met in Doha, Qatar, from 13-25 March 2010. The meeting considered 68 agenda items and 42 proposals to amend the CITES appendices. CoP15 adopted resolutions and decisions directed to parties, the Secretariat and Convention bodies on a wide range of topics including: electronic permitting; Asian big cats; rhinoceroses; bigleaf mahogany; and Madagascar plant species. Regarding species listings, CoP15 decided to list, among others: Kaiser's spotted newt; five species of tree frogs; the unicorn beetle; rosewood; holywood; and several Madagascar plant species.

CITES CoP16: CoP16 met in Bangkok, Thailand, from 3-14 March 2013. The meeting adopted 55 new listing proposals, including on sharks, manta rays, turtles and timber. Nine proposals were rejected (caspien snowcock, tibetan snowcock, saltwater crocodile, siamese crocodile, South American freshwater stingray, Rosette river stingray, blood pheasant and two species of freshwater turtles). Three proposals were withdrawn: Southern white rhino and two African elephants. Three were not considered: Indochinese box turtle; Ryukyu black-breasted leaf turtle; and Annam leaf turtle. The CoP also adopted strong enforcement measures to address wildlife crime.

SC64: SC64 convened in Bangkok, Thailand, on 14 March 2013. The meeting discussed: national ivory action plans, wherein the SC Chair noted the willingness of the eight parties concerned to cooperate to produce ivory action plans and to report on their implementation; and the establishment and renewal of working groups.

AC27 AND PC21 MEETINGS: AC27 convened in Veracruz, Mexico, from 28 April to 1 May 2014. AC27 was followed by the Joint Meeting of the AC and PC, which took place in Veracruz, Mexico, from 2-3 May 2014. Finally, PC21 met in Veracruz from 4-8 May 2014. The Committees focused on the levels of global commercial trade in products and derivatives of CITES-listed species, and the identification of cases of unsustainable use of species of conservation concern. Some species were highlighted for special review, including lions and cheetahs. The Committees also recommended bringing international trade in long-tailed macaque monkeys, Fischer's two-horned chameleons, West African and Asian three-spot seahorses and *Euphorbia itremensis* back to sustainable levels. The Committees also expressed concern over the sustainability of international trade in specimens of polar bears, pangolins, tortoises and turtles and butterflies, and planned to examine these cases in more detail at their next meetings.

SC65: SC65 convened from 7-11 July 2014 in Geneva, Switzerland. On Asian big cats, the SC agreed to establish an intersessional working group to report back at SC66. On cheetahs, the SC mandated the newly established intersessional working group to coordinate with the Secretariat on the organization of a workshop before the next AC meeting. On rhinos and elephants, the SC adopted recommendations requesting non-complying countries to meet a tight deadline to take actions, or suspension of trade may be considered.

AC28 REPORT

On Sunday, 30 August, Avi Gabbay, Minister of Environmental Protection, Israel, welcomed participants to the 28th meeting of the Animals Committee, the first time a CITES body had met in Israel. CITES Secretary-General John Scanlon noted that scientific advice and recommendations made at the AC will provide guidance to the seventeenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP17), which will meet in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2016. He added while there are many legitimate and passionately held views on wildlife management and trade, some issues lie outside of the current remit of the AC and the Convention.

AC Chair Carolina Caceres (Canada) thanked participants for their commitment to support CITES Parties and the Standing Committee (SC) with the best possible science-based advice.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

On Sunday, the CITES Secretariat called on members of the AC to declare financial interests that might impair their objectivity and independence. The AC noted that none declared any such interest.

RULES OF PROCEDURE: On Sunday, the Secretariat introduced the Rules of Procedure (AC28 Doc.2 (Rev.1)) and the changes (options a) and b)) proposed to Rule 13 concerning the election of the Chair and Vice-Chair of both the AC and Plants Committee, Rule 20 on submission of documents, and Rule 22 on dissemination of documents.

On Rule 13, the Europe representative, supported by the Africa and Central and South America and the Caribbean representatives, favored the proposed option a), wherein the regional representatives or their alternates present at the CoP elect a Chair and Vice-Chair immediately following the CoP. On Rule 20, he objected to the insertion of the word “normally” on how documents to be considered at a meeting shall be provided to the Secretariat, explaining the word leads to too much subjectivity.

The Oceania representative also favored option a) with “members of the Committee” replacing “regional representatives” and agreed with the Europe representative on deleting the word “normally” in proposed Rule 20. Mexico favored proposed option b), wherein the previous Chair and Vice-Chair hold office until their successors are elected at the first meeting of the Committee after the regular meeting of the CoP.

Outcome: The AC adopted the amendments to Rule 13 proposed in paragraph 7 of document AC28 Doc. 2 (Rev. 1),

choosing option a) with the following amendments: in paragraph 1 replace “the regional representatives” with “members and alternate members,” and “among them” with “the Committee”; and in paragraph 2 replace “regional representatives” with “members.” The AC adopted the proposed amendments to Rule 20 in paragraph 11 of the same document, with the addition of the words “in one of the working languages” after “by the members of the Committee,” and the changes to Rule 22 as contained in paragraph 13.

With the incorporation of the agreed amendments to Rules 13, 20 and 22, the AC adopted the Rules of Procedure.

The AC also agreed to report to the Plants and the Standing Committees that it was supportive of an overall review of the Rules of Procedure for the meetings of the committees.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA: On Sunday, the AC adopted the agenda (AC28 Doc.3.1 (Rev. 1)) and the working programme (AC28 Doc.3.2 (Rev. 1)) without amendments. The Committee agreed to admit all observers that had met the criteria to attend the meeting (AC28 Doc.4 (Rev. 1)).

STRATEGIC MATTERS

PREPARATION OF THE REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF THE ANIMALS COMMITTEE FOR THE 17TH MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES: On Sunday, Chair Caceres explained that preparation of the report of the AC Chair for CoP17 was ongoing.

COOPERATION WITH OTHER BIODIVERSITY-RELATED MULTILATERAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS (MEAS): On Wednesday, September 2, Mexico, Chair of the Standing Committee Working Group on the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), reported on the implementation of the set of decisions on IPBES adopted at CoP16 (Decision 16.13-16.16) (AC28 Doc.6.1). He said the working group has focused on the adoption and development of the “Thematic assessment on sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity and strengthening capacities and tools” and encouraged parties to consider whether and how the Chairs of CITES scientific advisory bodies could further participate. Noting that their roles as observers in the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel (MEP), he lamented that no Chairs of the CITES scientific committees have attended any meetings to date.

Peru reported that at a national level they have made a call for all CITES scientific experts to participate and enroll as experts at IPBES, adding they already have two experts enrolled to participate at a meeting on sustainable use and are also creating a national committee to provide reports for assessments relating to sustainable use. The Europe representative, supported by the US, cautioned on the need to be selective of how the CITES Chairs engage, with the US adding they do not want such engagement to detract from the overall work of the CITES scientific committees. Colombia urged CITES experts to engage with IPBES to exchange information and their experiences with the Convention.

The AC noted the report.

CAPACITY BUILDING: Report of the Secretariat:

On Wednesday, the Secretariat introduced the report (AC28 Doc.7.1), highlighting the different capacity-building activities it has supported and the recommendations, including how best the working group on capacity building and the working group on the review of identification and guidance materials may communicate, collaborate and align their work with each other. The US supported combining the two groups to avoid duplication.

Outcome: The AC recommended that the working group on capacity building and the working group on the review of identification be combined.

Report of the joint working group on capacity-building:

On Wednesday, the Secretariat introduced the report (AC28 Doc.7.2), tasked with providing guidance to the Secretariat on its relevant capacity-building activities, noting that the working group has discussed its mandated tasks virtually and agreed to a number of activities it intends to undertake during the period leading up to CoP17. The AC noted the report.

AMENDMENT OF THE APPENDICES**EXTINCT OR POSSIBLY EXTINCT SPECIES: On**

Monday, the Europe representative introduced Document AC 28.8, offering three recommendations formulated by the joint AC/PC working group: species classified in the IUCN Red List as “extinct in the wild,” as well as critically endangered taxa in the sub-categories “possibly extinct” and “possibly extinct in the wild,” should not be part of the group’s mandate; clarification and guidance should be sought from the CITES Secretariat and SC on the issue of whether species included in a higher taxon listing, but which were known to be extinct before the listing came into force, are considered to be covered by the listing; and CITES should adopt the IUCN Red List category and definition of “extinct” instead of the term and definition of “possibly extinct” currently used in Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP16).

Mexico noted that there is a clear consensus on the definition of extinct species and proposed removing extinct species from the CITES appendices. The US urged the inclusion of text that is consistent with the IUCN definition. China also preferred using the IUCN definition of “extinct” as opposed to “possibly extinct,” adding that extinct species should not be on appendices. Humane Society International (HSI) suggested amending the IUCN definition, if adopted by CITES, to include “where appropriate” when referring to an extinct species. Creative Conservation Solutions (CCS) said that a mechanism was needed for rapidly relisting a species in case one deemed extinct is rediscovered.

AC Chair Caceres asked the working group to formulate one option to then be considered by the PC before being sent to the SC. The working group, chaired by the Europe representative, met on Tuesday.

Outcome: In the recommendation (AC28 Com.1), the AC:

- adopts the option which includes the decision to comply with IUCN’s “extinct” definition; and
- is asked to bring to the attention of the SC whether higher taxon listings include species known to be extinct at the time of listing for clarification.

COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT**REVIEW OF SIGNIFICANT TRADE IN SPECIMENS****OF APPENDIX-II SPECIES: Evaluation of the Review of**

Significant Trade: On Sunday, the Secretariat introduced the documents on the evaluation of the Review of Significant Trade (RST) (Decision 13.67 (Rev. CoP14)) (AC28 Doc.9.1), reporting that the Advisory Working Group on the Evaluation of RST had reviewed the process, attempted to assess its effectiveness, drawn conclusions and revised the process to make it more streamlined.

The Europe representative, supported by the US and the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) urged that funding for the database for Evaluation of RST come from core funds, rather than being subject to availability of external funds. The Oceania representative urged strengthening the information used to define species distribution and sought clarification on the process of conducting whole-country reviews. The AC established a working group.

The working group, chaired by the AC Chair, met on Tuesday. It was tasked with: reviewing the guidance to the Secretariat regarding their initial letter to range states; and the proposed revised Resolution Conf. 12.8 (Rev. CoP13) on RST in specimens of Appendix-II species; and the four decisions found in paragraph 24, paragraph 27 and paragraph 28, to be jointly submitted by the AC and PC for adoption at CoP17.

Outcome: The recommendations (AC28 Com.4) call on:

- the Secretariat to develop, test and establish a RST Tracking and Management database, develop a user-friendly RST guide that can be included in the initial letter to range states and develop a comprehensive training module on the RST;
- the AC together with the PC, with the assistance of the Secretariat, to explore potential benefits and disadvantages of country-wide significant trade reviews; and
- the AC to adopt the guidance as amended in Annexes 1-4 of the working group report (AC28 Com.1) for consideration by the PC and transmission to CoP17.

Overview of the species-based RST: On Sunday, the Secretariat introduced, and participants took note of, the document on the overview of the species-based RST (AC28 Doc.9.2), which requires the Secretariat to report at each AC meeting on the implementation by concerned range states of recommendations made by the AC. He said that the updating of all existing reviews of animal species in the RST Management System is ongoing, adding that the database needs to be upgraded and more user-friendly, and requires adequate resources from trust fund allocations.

Species selected following CoP13, CoP14 and CoP15: On Sunday, the Secretariat introduced the document on selected species for its RST following the 13th, 14th and 15th meetings of the CoP (AC28 Doc.9.3 (Rev.2)) in compliance with the provisions in Resolution Conf. 12.8 (Rev. CoP13) on RST in specimens of Appendix-II species.

He said of the taxa selected following CoP13, only two from Madagascar remain in review: *Mantella crocea* (yellow mantella) and *M. viridis* (green mantella). He added that Madagascar does not currently allow export quotas for these two taxa.

The Secretariat noted that 19 taxa selected following CoP14 remain under review, including *Hippopotamus amphibius* (common hippopotamus) in Cameroon. While Cameroon provided a management plan for the hippopotamus (AC28 Doc. 9.3 Rev. 2 Annex 1), as requested by the SC, Belgium, supported by the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), invited Cameroon to provide more solid evidence of the population. Thailand provided an update on ongoing actions to protect several species of *Hippocampus* (seahorse), including the expansion of national parks, no-take zones and seasonal quotas.

Following CoP15, the AC selected 24 taxa for RST; 17 taxa remain in review. The recommendations that were formulated at AC27 included requests for additional information from selected range states to be provided to the Secretariat. Cambodia and Viet Nam provided detailed information concerning *Macaca fascicularis* (crab-eating macaque) (AC Doc.9.3 Rev.2 Annex 2 and 3). Viet Nam noted that the numbers of *M. fascicularis* exported were not detrimental to the survival of the species in the wild. He recognized that there was some illegal hunting of the species but efforts were being made to manage the situation. The UK sought clarification from Cambodia on a five-year ban on taking macaque species from the wild that was set to expire in October 2015 and if the ban would be extended. Malaysia noted there is no evidence that trade in *Python reticulatus* (reticulated python) has been detrimental to its survival.

Species selected following CoP16: On Sunday, the Secretariat introduced the relevant document (AC28 Doc.9.4 (Rev.2). The Oceania representative expressed concern over the general lack of response from range states. Several parties provided clarifications on the distribution status of some of species selected.

The AC established a working group, chaired by the Europe and North America representatives, on agenda items 9.3 and 9.4 with the following mandate: review the information on *H. amphibius* provided by Cameroon; review the information provided by Cambodia and Viet Nam regarding *M. fascicularis*; and review the 20 taxa selected by the AC for its RST following CoP16.

The working group met on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Outcome: In the recommendation (AC28 Com.8), the AC recommended the following regarding species selected following CoP13, CoP14 and CoP15:

- *Hippopotamus amphibios* in Cameroon should be retained within the review and there should be no increase in the quota;
- *Macaca fascicularis* in Viet Nam should be deleted, while *M. fascicularis* in Cambodia should be retained; and
- *Podocnemis unifilis* (yellow-spotted Amazon river turtle) in Peru should be removed.

The AC made the following recommendations regarding species selected following CoP16:

- *Ursus maritimus* (polar bear) in all range states should be deleted, with all range states encouraged to apply a cautious approach in relation to the management of sub-populations that are assessed as declining or data deficient;

- *Tayassu pecari* (white-lipped peccary) in all range states should be deleted;
- *Manis gigantea* (giant pangolin) and *M. tricuspis* (white-bellied Pangolin) in all range states should be retained, except Tanzania;
- *Amazona festiva* (festive parrot) in Guyana should be deleted but retained for Colombia, Brazil, Ecuador and Venezuela;
- *Uromastix ornata* (ornate mastigure) in all range states should be deleted;
- *Uromastix aegyptia* (Egyptian mastigure) should be retained for Jordan and Syria but deleted for Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Yemen;
- *Trioceros montium* (Cameroon sailfin chameleon) in Cameroon should be retained;
- *Varanus ornatus* (ornate monitor lizard) in all range states should be deleted, except for Togo;
- *Ophiophagus hannah* (king cobra) in all range states should be deleted, except in Indonesia and Malaysia;
- *Malayemys subtrijuga* (Mekong snail-eating turtle) in Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia and Thailand should be retained while deleted in Cambodia, China and Viet Nam;
- *Notochelys platynota* (Malayan flat-shelled turtle) should be deleted from all range states, with the exception of Indonesia and Thailand;
- *Chelonoidis denticulate* (yellow-footed tortoise) should be deleted from all range states, but retained in Guyana and Suriname;
- *Geochelone sulcate* (African spurred tortoise) should be deleted from all range states, except for Benin, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Sudan and Togo;
- *Testudo graeca* (spur-thighed tortoise) should be deleted from all range states, but retained for Jordan and Syria;
- *Hippocampus erectus* (lined seahorse) in all range states should be deleted;
- *Ornithoptera croesus* (Wallace's Golden Birdwing butterfly) in Indonesia should be retained;
- *Ornithoptera meridionalis* (Southern Tailed Birdwing butterfly) in Indonesia and Papua New Guinea should be deleted;
- *Ornithoptera rotschildi* (Rothschild's birdwing butterfly) in Indonesia should be retained; and
- *Hirudo medicinalis* (European medicinal leech) in all range states should be deleted, except for Turkey.

TRADE CONTROLS AND MARKING

REVIEW OF IDENTIFICATION AND GUIDANCE

MATERIAL: On Wednesday, the Oceania representative and Co-Chair of an intersessional AC/PC working group introduced the document on the review of identification and guidance material (AC28 Doc.10). He noted that the intersessional working group was tasked with determining the current availability of identification and guidance material to increase accessibility to parties and assess the need for additional identification material.

Outcome: The AC noted the report, recommending that the work of the intersessional group should occur jointly with the capacity-building working group and report their findings at CoP17. He added that the mandate of the working group would most likely extend beyond the next CoP.

IDENTIFICATION OF STURGEONS AND PADDLEFISH SPECIMENS IN TRADE: On Wednesday, the Secretariat introduced the agenda item (AC28 Doc.11).

Outcome: The AC noted the report and noted with regret that funds have not been made available to support the study requested in the document.

EXEMPTIONS AND SPECIAL TRADE PROVISIONS PRODUCTION SYSTEMS FOR SPECIMENS OF

CITES-LISTED SPECIES: On Sunday, the Secretariat introduced the relevant document (AC28 Doc.12), followed by a presentation by IUCN on a draft guide to advise the parties on the appropriate use of source codes. The North America representative advised that the guide needs further work. Other parties offered detailed suggestions, which prompted the AC Chair to establish a working group to be chaired by the Europe representative.

The working group met on Wednesday and was tasked, *inter alia*, with reviewing the draft guides in the annexes to document AC28 Doc.12 and provide feedback to the Secretariat towards improving the proposed guide on the appropriate use of source codes.

Outcome: In the recommendations (AC28 Com.7), the AC recommends a new version of this guide be prepared taking into account its suggestions, the additional comments from parties at the meeting, and the comments from the PC.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION RELATING TO CAPTIVE-BRED AND RANCHED

SPECIMENS: On Sunday, the Secretariat introduced the relevant document (AC28 Doc.13.1). He introduced various reports that the AC is invited to consider and noted that the contract for developing draft checklists or guides for inspecting captive-breeding and ranching facilities and reviewing permit applications for captive-bred and ranched specimens have been placed with IUCN but was not available for review in time for AC28.

The Chair of the intersessional working group introduced its report (AC28 Doc.13.2), noting that the group considered, among others, ways to address the misuse of source codes.

The EU endorsed the working group's recommendations and, supported by the US, favored developing a new resolution on the topic to be submitted to the sixty-sixth meeting of the Standing Committee (SC66) and eventually to CoP17. Canada cautioned against developing a complex mechanism that would fall out of the purview of the Convention.

Parties expressed mixed opinions on the establishment of a captive-breeding database, as considered by the intersessional working group. WCS called for negative consequences for parties that are not in compliance.

AC Chair Caceres established a working group, chaired by the Europe and Central and South America and the Caribbean representatives. The group, which met on Wednesday, was

tasked with: completing the review of the reports mentioned in document AC28 Doc.13.1 and formulating recommendations; reviewing options for a possible compliance mechanism, and formulating recommendations accordingly; and preparing advice to be reported by the AC to the SC.

On Thursday, China, commenting on the recommendations prepared by the working group, expressed concern about a new compliance mechanism. The US suggested that the AC endorse a process leading up to the adoption of a new resolution. WWF and WCS expressed concern over delays in the adoption of a new resolution, should SC66 defer this matter to AC29 in 2017.

Outcome: The recommendations (AC28 Com.5):

- call on the AC to report the observations of the working group to the SC;
- ask the AC to support, as stated in option 4 in paragraph 12 of AC28 Doc.13.2, a new resolution, contained in Annex I, in which issues concerning compliance with the Convention for specimens declared as having been produced in captivity could be addressed; and
- call on the SC to consider how the respective roles of the SC and the AC might be integrated in any future mechanism; and that to avoid duplication of effort and to achieve maximum efficiency, the outcome of the AC deliberations on this topic are shared with the SC working group under Decision 16.139 on implementation and enforcement of the Convention.

SPECIES TRADE AND CONSERVATION

TORTOISES AND FRESHWATER TURTLES: On Sunday, IUCN presented its study on Non-Detriment Findings (NDFs) and Trade Management for Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles – a guide for CITES Scientific and Management Authorities (AC28 Doc.15). On management, he summarized their findings on the use of closed areas, seasonal closures and rotating closures; nest protection; public awareness efforts; and the establishment of captive operating systems.

Outcome: The AC recommended to the SC that the study be communicated to the parties.

SNAKE TRADE AND CONSERVATION

MANAGEMENT: Review of studies and activities: On Monday, IUCN summarized four studies on snake trade (AC28 Doc.14.1): commercial production in China and Viet Nam; guidance on developing CITES NDFs for snake trade; assessment of the impact of the pet trade on five snake species listed on CITES Appendix II; and a study on methodologies for differentiating between wild and captive bred CITES-listed snakes.

China pointed to notable progress in domestic snake production. Germany expressed concern that the precautionary principle is not followed throughout the NDF study. The EU supported the NDF guidelines on snakes but added they should be further reviewed before being included in a draft resolution.

Animal Welfare Institute (AWI), on behalf of the Species Survival Network (SSN), lamented the reports' lack of guidance on how to control captive breeding and a disregard for the precautionary principle in the context of NDF. HSI expressed concern about the recommendation legalizing the wild trade of some species, pointing to current misuses of captive breeding.

Reptile sourcing and traceability systems: On Monday, the Secretariat presented on reptile sourcing and traceability systems (AC28 Doc.14.2.1). On harmonizing traceability standards across different CITES-traded products, he explained the methodology would require governance, minimum traceability requirements, and adhering to global standards and norms. Mexico, supported by Malaysia, underscored the need to first define components of such a traceability system, and to decide what should be measured and how it can be connected to different links in the value chain before producing a traceability standard. China echoed that traceability management is a difficult task and expressed caution about using universal systems. The US said a traceability system should not be based on a particular technology until there is a thorough understanding of trade and what a traceability system is intended to address.

CCS expressed concern around the focus on high-technology track-and-trace solutions, drawing attention to past successes in the universal tagging system implemented for crocodilian skins.

Identification carrier for a global traceability information system for reptile skins: On Monday, Mexico introduced document AC28 Doc.14.2.2, outlining a number of options for a traceability system to confirm the legal origin of reptile skins. After assessing different options, he recommended that a solution based on biometric systems, using a smartphone application, had the greatest advantages in terms of applicability, reliability and cost effectiveness. He added that the introduction of such a system is to ensure legal, sustainable, stable and continuous supply chains for reptile skins by tracing skins from their origin in the wild or breeding facility up to the final product with controls along the entire supply and regulatory chains.

The Europe representative welcomed the document, expressing interest in how the system could be implemented and contribute to the traceability of snake skins. Colombia stressed that any system needs to be considered within an international governance framework. IUCN expressed concern that the proposal extends beyond the mandate to all reptile skins, noting an existing traceability system that is currently in place for crocodiles.

IUCN Red List assessments of Asian snake species: On Monday, IUCN introduced the Red List Assessment (AC28 Doc.14.3), noting that for four snake species there is evidence suggesting that international trade is a major threat. The US urged the AC to ask the SC to recommend higher protection to snake species that are threatened by international trade.

The AC established a working group on these agenda items, chaired by the Europe representative, to address reptile sourcing and traceability and the IUCN Red List assessments. The working group met on Tuesday and Wednesday. On Thursday, the AC adopted the working group's recommendations on snake trade and conservation management with some textual amendments.

Outcome: In the recommendations (AC28 Com.6), the AC:

- on agenda item 14.1, invites the SC to draft a decision to be reviewed by the intersessional working group and relevant experts and finalized in advance of AC29, on the conservation and sustainable use of and trade in snakes based on

information on NDFs; and the draft guidance to assist parties in the making of NDFs;

- on agenda item 14.2, invites the SC to consider the drafting of a decision on traceability based on the different decisions related to traceability adopted at CoP16 with a view to increasing coherence, reducing duplication of effort and providing guidance to parties implementing traceability systems; and
- on agenda item 14.3, recommends revising text in document AC28 Doc.14.3 paragraph 12 a) with wording to suggest: encouraging range states, importing countries and other parties to conduct more detailed assessments of the four species categorized as “likely to be threatened by trade” and for the three species categorized as “may be threatened by trade.”

CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF SHARKS:

Conservation and management of sharks – Species of Concern: On Monday, Israel introduced a report (AC28 Doc.17.1.2), which revisits earlier lists of species of concern, particularly the Mediterranean shark and ray species for which Israel is a range state, but incorporates nominations for species of concern from other regions. He highlighted the recommendation that the sharks working group and parties review the role of trade in contributing to the threatened status of the *Mobula* devil rays, guitarfishes, threshers and tope shark, all of which have been included for many years in the lists of species of concern produced by CITES and FAO.

The North America representative, supported by the EU, emphasized that Israel's report should be noted but that priority for the working group should be to address issues raised in the Secretariat's report related to the implementation of the shark listings. The UK supported Israel's recommendation to address the status of shark and ray species described in the report. China emphasized that given the challenges in implementing the existing CITES shark listings, CITES should be careful in listing new species. However, if those are biologically warranted, China noted it would support them. The Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) noted that the *Mobula* rays and threshers are listed under the CMS appendices and therefore expressed support for Israel's recommendation.

The AC noted the report and the usefulness of risk assessments to identify challenges and mitigation measures.

Guidance for making non-detriment findings for CITES-listed sharks: On Monday, IUCN on behalf of Germany, presented on guidance for making NDFs for CITES-listed shark species (AC28 Doc.17.2), recommending that parties and institutions make use of the guidance in capacity-building workshops and to report back to the German scientific authority of their experiences and suggested improvements.

The US underscored the importance of communication between fisheries and CITES bodies and said they planned to use the guidance during upcoming workshops and capacity-building events. The US also noted the importance of NDFs “with conditions” in the absence of information where there is good management. Canada noted they had used the guidance for their *Lamna nasus* (porbeagle shark) populations. HSI, on behalf

of SSN, urged parties trading in shark and ray products to work closely with Germany and share related information through the CITES shark and ray portal. Noting this guidance is currently addressed to parties making NDFs individually, WWF explained many species are transboundary and found in the high seas and underscored the need for regional NDFs.

The AC noted the document, encouraging parties to use the guidance for making NDFs.

Implementation of Resolution Conf. 12.6: On Monday, the Secretariat introduced its report (AC28 Doc.17.1.1), noting that it has frequently been approached by parties regarding guidance for the making of NDFs, in particular for situations where little or no biological or trade data is available, and/or where sharks are caught as by-catch.

Mexico shared the results of the workshop it organized to facilitate the making of NDFs for Mexican sharks listed in Appendix II of the Convention, noting that *Sphyrna mokarran* (great hammerhead) shows the higher degree of vulnerability. The EU encouraged parties to share further information on NDFs and the challenges they face, especially for situations where biological or trade data is poor and where sharks are caught as by-catch. The US expressed interest in expanding the mandate of the working group to include the ray listings. CMS noted that the joint work programme between CMS and CITES, adopted in 2014, includes sharks.

The AC established a working group, chaired by the representatives of Oceania and Asia, with the mandate to consider this agenda item and advise on the reporting by the AC on progress on shark and ray activities. The working group met on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Outcome: In the recommendation (AC28 Com.9), on NDFs and conservation issues, the AC:

- encourages parties to make their NDFs available to the Secretariat for posting on the CITES Sharks and Rays Portal; and
- encourages parties to take up Germany's offer to present NDF guidance at training workshops and to share feedback on the use of the guidance, noting the availability of the rapid management-risk assessment (M-risk) method that could support the development of NDFs and identify stocks and species of concern.

On collaboration with other relevant UN bodies and regional cooperation, the AC:

- requests interaction between the CITES Secretariat, FAO and CMS be continued and expanded; and
- urges all parties that are also members of Regional Fisheries Bodies (RFB) to encourage the RFBs to make CITES-listed species a priority for data collection, data collation and stock assessments, and to provide these data to their members.

On new information for consideration by AC29, the AC directs the Secretariat to post a list of CITES parties that have adopted stricter domestic measures for CITES-listed shark and ray species, the species that are covered in this way, the dates of these measures, and links to the measures.

On identification and traceability issues, the AC:

- urges the CITES Secretariat to work with FAO to explore extending the existing iSharkFin tool to the identification of dried and skinned shark fins; and with the World Customs Organization to expand customs codes for species and product categories; and
- urges parties to share knowledge of the techniques for DNA testing of shark species to allow rapid and cost-effective identification of shark products.

On by-catch of species listed in the CITES Appendices, the AC urges parties and RFBs to develop and improve methods to avoid by-catch of sharks and rays and reduce their mortality, including by exploring gear selectivity and improved techniques for live release.

Recognizing that CITES-listed species (particularly hammerhead sharks) form an important component of small-scale fisheries catches, the AC encourages parties to exchange information on how the impact of artisanal fishing on total mortality is taken into consideration in the development of NDFs.

FRESHWATER STINGRAYS: On Monday, the Central and South American and the Caribbean representative spoke on management and trade in freshwater stingrays (Family Potamotrygonidae). He presented the outcomes of deliberations of the intersessional working group on freshwater stingrays (AC28 Doc.18), noting four options were generated: retaining the original proposal submitted to CoP15 with additional information as available; making a new proposal that includes all species of the genus *Potamotrygon*; making a new proposal that includes all species of the family Potamotrygonidae; and giving consideration to listing endemic species in restricted areas in CITES Appendix III.

Colombia urged support for studies that reduce discussions on taxonomy issues. Peru underscored the need for capacity for the identification of freshwater stingrays, and said they are working on an identification guide, exchanging information with Colombia and Brazil to unify criteria.

Ornamental Fish International expressed concern about proposals to block-list all species of the Potamotrygonidae family and welcomed species-specific export quotas.

AC Chair Caceres established a working group, chaired by the Central and South America and the Caribbean representative, with the mandate to consider the information in this agenda item. The working group met on Tuesday.

Outcome: In the recommendation (AC28 Com.2), the AC:

- urges parties to take note of the report of the workshop on freshwater stingrays in Colombia in 2014;
- recommends that all range states add all species of concern in the family Potamotrygonidae to Appendix III, and urges parties, particularly range states, to consider options for listings on Appendix II; and
- requests parties, NGOs and intergovernmental organizations to provide range state parties with mathematical modeling of population trends for freshwater stingrays.

STURGEONS AND PADDLEFISH: Report of the Secretariat: On Thursday, the Secretariat introduced the report on sturgeons and paddlefish (AC28 Doc.16.1), highlighting that

by 31 December 2014, none of the concerned range states of sturgeons had communicated export quotas for caviar or meat from stocks shared with other range states, and as a result the Secretariat published zero export quotas.

The US suggested that the AC ask the SC working group on sturgeons to provide input to the AC on the process for quota setting. Germany observed that in the absence of a quota, such an input is not necessary.

Outcome: The AC noted the report and said it would be seeking further comments from parties.

Implementation by the AC of relevant provisions in Resolution Conf. 12.7 (Rev. CoP16): On Thursday, the Secretariat introduced the document (AC28 Doc.16.2), noting that the AC is directed to monitor progress on the relevant provisions of this resolution, but the resolution does not specify what provisions are considered relevant for the AC to monitor.

Outcome: The AC noted the document and will report on the implementation of its mandates to the SC.

Sturgeon management in the Russian Federation: On Thursday, the Russian Federation introduced the document (AC28.Doc.16.3), highlighting that all range states that are parties to the Commission on Aquatic Bioresources will not be carrying out commercial catch of sturgeons in the Caspian Sea in 2015 and 2016.

The AC noted the document.

REGIONAL COOPERATION ON THE MANAGEMENT OF AND TRADE IN THE QUEEN CONCH: On Wednesday, Colombia presented on regional cooperation on the management of and trade in the *Strombus gigas* (queen conch) (AC28 Doc.19). Summarizing activities in the region, he said regional guidelines are needed for making NDFs; every country should develop sustainability criteria to ensure environmental and economically favorable fishing; participatory work should continue on the development of a regional management plan; value chain traceability is important, noting the potential of ecological certification and pilot projects with local communities; and education and outreach to ensure responsible catching, trade and consumption should be maintained.

The US said progress in the region is noteworthy and commended Colombia and Panama for their efforts to strengthen regional coordination for management of the species.

Outcome: The AC took note of the progress and congratulated range states of the queen conch on all their activities.

PERIODIC REVIEW OF SPECIES INCLUDED IN APPENDICES I AND II

OVERVIEW OF SPECIES UNDER REVIEW: On Monday, the Secretariat introduced its report (AC28 Doc.20.1 (Rev.1)), outlining the process agreed to undertake periodic reviews and maintain records. He highlighted the eleven species selected for review between CoP15 and CoP17 for which reviews were not completed.

The Europe representative, supported by the US, suggested deleting from the list species that parties and range states have declined to review. The Secretariat noted that some countries, like Bhutan, were not able to complete the review because of lack of funding.

Outcome: The AC noted the report and proposed to remove from the review the eleven species selected for review that were not completed.

REPORT OF THE INTERSESSIONAL WORKING GROUP: On Monday, the AC Chair introduced the report prepared by the Co-Chairs for the intersessional working group on the periodic review of species included in Appendices I and II (AC28 Doc.20.2), which includes proposed revisions to Resolution Conf. 14.8 (Rev. CoP16) on periodic review of species included in Appendices I and II, including on the format of the review and the process for selection of species.

The North America representative supported the proposed changes to the resolution. The Europe representative and Kenya, in supporting the changes, emphasized the advisory role of the scientific committees as distinct from the decision-making role of the CoP.

WWF noted that range states' involvement is essential for the success of the periodic review. He also supported the Europe representative's suggestion for a streamlined process.

The AC established a working group on this agenda item chaired by AC Chair Caceres.

The working group met on Wednesday and discussed the draft guidance on the questions regarding the format of the periodic review and the selection of species.

Outcome: In the recommendations (AC28 Com.3), the AC agrees to the modifications to Resolution Conf. 14.8 (Rev. CoP16) discussed in the working group as amended by Mexico to include the reference that the AC and PC may also consider reviews undertaken independently by parties.

SPECIES REVIEW: African Lion: On Monday, Namibia, also on behalf of Kenya, said no document was available for the periodic review of *Panthera leo* (African lion) and informed of their intention to submit the review to the AC via the postal procedure in time for SC66. Referencing the information document submitted (AC28 Inf.26) and the recent IUCN Red List assessment, Kenya said the African lion meets the biological criteria for listing on CITES Appendix I with the exception of populations in South Africa, Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe. Kenya added that in the absence of a conclusion to the periodic review in the timeline proposed, they intend to submit a proposal to list the African lion at CoP17.

Zimbabwe said decisions on the appropriateness of a CITES listing need to be based on current scientific information while taking into account national-level factors and issues. South Africa highlighted the main threats to African lions identified in the IUCN assessment include indiscriminate killing in defense of life and livestock, and prey depletion. She added that trophy hunting was mentioned in the assessment as having a net positive impact.

The Born Free Foundation urged the periodic review of the African lion be conducted and submitted before SC66 and CoP17. The International Professional Hunters Association expressed concern about the extent of inferences used to produce lion population trends in the IUCN assessment and recommended range states request access to the IUCN database

used to infer lion population trends to inform decision-making for the periodic review.

Outcome: The AC noted the work done by Kenya and Namibia as well as their intention to submit a final periodic review to the AC by postal procedure prior to SC66.

Florida panther and Eastern cougar: On Monday, Canada introduced the document (AC28 Doc.20.3.2) on the periodic review of *Puma concolor coryi* (Florida panther) and *P. concolor couguar* (Eastern cougar). She noted that because *P. concolor couguar* is considered extinct and *P. concolor coryi* is protected federally, both subspecies should be transferred from Appendix I to Appendix II. The North America and Europe representatives supported the recommendation.

Outcome: The AC agreed with the outcome of the periodic review to downlist both species.

Helmeted honeyeater: Australia introduced the document (AC28 Doc.20.3.3) on the periodic review of *Lichenostomus melanops cassidix* (helmeted honeyeater). Following the review of this endemic bird species, which showed limited non-commercial trade, she recommended that *L. m. cassidix* be transferred from Appendix I to Appendix II. The Oceania representative, with the Europe representative and the US, supported the recommendation.

Outcome: The AC agreed with the outcome of the periodic review to move the species to Appendix II.

Coxen's fig parrot: Australia introduced the document (AC28 Doc.20.3.4) on the periodic review of *Cyclopsitta diophthalma coxeni* (Coxen's fig parrot). Following the review of this endemic bird species, she recommended maintaining *C. d. coxeni* on Appendix I. The Oceania representative said the species meets the biological criteria for an Appendix I listing, but even though there is no trade, based on the precautionary principle, he and the US supported the proposal to leave it on Appendix I.

Outcome: The AC agreed to leave this species on Appendix I.

Hooded parrot: Australia introduced the document (AC28 Doc.20.3.5) on the periodic review of *Psephotus dissimilis* (hooded parrot). Following the review of the species' status, she recommended maintaining *P. dissimilis* on Appendix I. The Oceania representative and the US supported the proposal.

Outcome: The AC agreed to maintain *P. dissimilis* on Appendix I.

Norfolk boobook: Australia introduced the document (AC28 Doc.20.3.6) on the periodic review of *Ninox novaeseelandiae undulata* (Norfolk boobook), recommending that the species be transferred from Appendix I to Appendix II based on the lack of trade and foreseeable trade. The Oceania representative and the US supported the proposal.

Outcome: The AC agreed with the review's conclusions to downlist the species to Appendix II.

Tuatara: New Zealand introduced the document (AC28 Doc.20.3.7) on the periodic review of *Sphenodon spp.* (Tuatara) to retain the endemic reptile species on Appendix I. The Europe representative, with the US, supported keeping the genus on Appendix I based on considerable interest in its trade and as it meets the biological criteria.

Outcome: The AC agreed with the review's conclusions to retain *Sphenodon spp.* on Appendix I.

Indochinese box turtle: Viet Nam introduced the document (AC28 Doc.20.3.8) on the periodic review of *Cuora galbinifrons* (Indochinese box turtle), recommending to transfer all the species from Appendix II to Appendix I. He noted that independent of the nomenclature issue that split the species into three subspecies, they should all be moved to Appendix I. HSI added that any split of a species could result in increased demand for trade and should have an Appendix I listing. The UK, US and WCS supported the proposal.

Outcome: The AC agreed to transfer all the species from Appendix II to Appendix I.

Vietnamese pond turtle: Viet Nam introduced the document (AC28 Doc.20.3.9) on the periodic review of *Mauremys annamensis* (Vietnamese pond turtle), recommending that it be transferred from Appendix II to Appendix I. The US, supported by the UK, supported the findings that the endemic species met the criteria for an Appendix I listing.

Outcome: The AC agreed to transfer the species from Appendix II to Appendix I.

Sampson's pearly mussel: The US introduced the document (AC28 Doc.20.3.10) on the periodic review of *Epioblasma sampsonii* (Sampson's pearly mussel). She noted that even though the endemic species is considered extinct and could be removed from the appendices, a decision to delist it could be deferred until AC29, after the issue of addressing extinct species is resolved.

Outcome: The AC agreed to defer the delisting decision to AC29.

STANDARD NOMENCLATURE: Report of the specialist on zoological nomenclature: On Monday, the AC specialist on zoological nomenclature introduced the report (AC28 Doc.21.1). She highlighted nomenclature references for species suggested for inclusion in the CITES appendices not covered by the nomenclature references listed in Resolution Conf. 12.11 (Rev. CoP16). She also noted that the taxonomy of *Ovis vignei* (urial sheep) remains based on the 2nd edition of Wilson & Reeder, the nomenclature reference for all mammals species taxonomy, while CMS has adopted the 3rd edition (2005) as a reference for *Ovis*.

Revised nomenclature for four species of birds of paradise: On Monday, the US introduced proposed changes to the taxonomy/nomenclature for four species found in the Paradisaeidae family (AC28 Doc.21.2), which would no longer place these bird species in the Paradisaeidae family.

The AC established a working group to address the proposed changes, chaired by the AC specialist on zoological nomenclature. The group met on Tuesday and Wednesday with the mandate to evaluate nomenclature changes. During the meeting, IUCN pointed out that the taxonomy as reflected in Wilson & Reeder (2005) is not in line with taxonomy currently accepted by the IUCN/Species Survival Commission Caprinae Specialist Group.

Outcome: In the recommendations (AC28 Com.10), the AC, *inter alia*, recommends to adopt Wilson & Reeder (2005) for all *Ovis* species listed on CITES appendices.

PROPOSALS FOR POSSIBLE CONSIDERATION

AT COP17: Assessment of three bird species included in Appendix III (*Crax rubra*, *Meleagris ocellata* and *Penelope purpurascens*) based on the criteria of Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP16):

On Thursday, Mexico presented the assessment of three bird species included in Appendix III based on the criteria of Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP16) (AC28 Doc. 22.1). He explained while some criteria are met for listing these species, the level of international trade does not justify inclusion on CITES Appendix I or II and recommended not drafting a resolution to change listing of these species.

The Europe representative and Canada commended Mexico for its work and the EU concurred with the recommendation in the analysis. Wildlife Impact encouraged listing the species on Appendix II, noting that following the precautionary principle, there should be consideration of domestic hunting pressures on these species.

The AC noted the report and conclusions in the analysis.

Draft proposal to remove the zero quota for trade in wild specimens of the Mexican population of Morelet's crocodile (*Crocodylus moreletii*) for commercial purposes:

On Thursday, presenting the draft proposal to remove the zero quota for trade in wild specimens of the Mexican population of *C. moreletii* for commercial purposes (AC28 Doc.22.2), Mexico explained that wild populations in Mexico are in good shape and harvest of species occurs exclusively under closed system captive breeding. Noting that the closed systems production only partially satisfies demand for skins, taking into account that wild populations are in a healthy state and there are legal measures to manage the species, Mexico requested the AC to provide advice and comments to strengthen the proposal for CoP17 to remove the zero quota for trade of *C. moreletii*.

The Central and South America and the Caribbean representative said the data provided proves species can be sustainably harvested and, with Namibia, encouraged Mexico to submit the proposal. South Africa said the report demonstrates the Mexican *C. moreletii* population is healthy and growing but urged Mexico to consult with other range states prior to CoP17.

The AC noted Mexico's proposal.

Proposal for the transfer from Appendices I to II of *Crocodylus porosus* in Malaysia:

On Thursday, Malaysia outlined its proposal for the transfer from Appendices I to II of *C. porosus* (saltwater crocodile) in Malaysia (AC28 Doc.22.3), noting that wild populations of *C. porosus* have been increasing since 1994. He said the purpose of moving from Appendix I to II is to enable sustainable utilization of wild populations in Sarawak to provide economic benefits to local communities and ensure continued sustainable management.

Australia suggested including a mechanism to guard against long-term, low-level population declines and describing the methodology used to extrapolate population data. The US requested further explanation of: what measures are in place to enforce crocodiles are only collected in Sarawak and the other sources of mortality and how they impact populations. IUCN

encouraged providing more explicit detail of the management programme and control measures so parties can be sure adequate precautionary measures are in place.

The AC noted Malaysia's proposal.

Status of conservation, use, management of and trade in the species of the genus *Abronia*:

On Thursday, Mexico introduced the document (AC28 Doc.22.4) on the status of a genus of lizard populations, which comprises 28 species found in Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. Because many of the species are facing risk of extinction and there is evidence of illegal trade, he requested advice from the AC on a proposal to include the *Abronia* genus on Appendix II for consideration at CoP17. The Oceania representative, noting similarities between *Abronia* and a genus of geckos in New Zealand, supported the proposal, adding that all range states should co-sponsor it. Israel said that the genus may need more protection than an Appendix II listing and called for the species to be listed on Appendix I and an immediate Appendix III listing to acquire more data and monitor trade.

The AC took note of the proposal to consider the genus in Appendix II.

Proposal to list *Lanthanotus borneensis* in Appendix I in Malaysia:

On Thursday, Malaysia introduced a proposal to list *L. borneensis* (earless monitor lizard) (AC28 Doc.22.5) on Appendix I, noting that while the species' population size is not currently known, the impact of trade is inferred to be great. He added that it is the only species of monitor lizard not listed on a CITES appendix.

The Africa, Oceania and Europe representatives, Helmholtz Foundation, HSI and others supported the proposal, while the nomenclature specialist suggested adding a new nomenclature reference for this species. The US offered to share trade data on the species and make scientific papers available. SSN noted an increase in illegal trade of the species and suggested it be included immediately on Appendix III and for the SC to create working group to make recommendations at CoP17 regarding international trade.

The AC took of the proposal to include *L. borneensis* on Appendix I at CoP17.

REGIONAL MATTERS

AC took note of the regional reports (AC28 Doc.23) and said they will be available on the CITES website.

TIME AND VENUE OF THE 29TH MEETING OF THE ANIMALS COMMITTEE

On Thursday, the Secretariat noted that a joint AC and PC meeting is provisionally scheduled from 24 July to 3 August 2017 in Geneva, Switzerland.

CLOSING PLENARY

AC Chair Caceres thanked the Israel Parks and Nature Authority and the Government of Israel for hosting the meeting. The meeting was gavelled to a close at 6:55 pm.

A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE MEETING

More than 200 participants flocked to the Mediterranean shores of Tel Aviv, Israel, for the 28th meeting of the Animals Committee of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, one of the last two meetings of the scientific bodies of the Convention in the run up to the 17th meeting of the CITES Conference of the Parties (CoP17) in Johannesburg, South Africa in 2016. But this was no beach holiday as participants took on a range of issues, including ways to improve some key compliance tools, such as the Review of Significant Trade (RST), as well as special trade provisions, such as the implementation of the Convention relating to captive-bred and ranched specimens.

This analysis will consider participants' discussions during the week on species that may find their way to CITES Appendix I, such as lions and polar bears. It will also consider tools proposed to improve implementation of and compliance with the Convention and look at what is to be expected at CoP17.

CITES AND THE LION'S DEN

Recent international headlines on the killing of "Cecil" the lion in Zimbabwe by an American hunter, and the subsequent debate on trophy hunting and conservation, were not far from the minds of participants. In a much anticipated periodic review of the Africa lion, Kenya—despite not having submitted an official document for review of *Panthera leo*—provided a glimpse of what may come at the next CoP to be held in the fellow lion range state of South Africa: a possible Appendix I listing proposal of some of the more imperiled populations of the "king of the jungle."

According to a recent IUCN Red List Assessment, the African lion meets the criterion for "endangered" across the majority of its range, but stable populations, and even a reported increase in some parts of Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe, gives the overall species a "vulnerable" listing. However, according to experts, habitat loss due to population growth and human-wildlife conflict, not trade, remain the main causes of worrying declines in some areas, leading some to question whether placing the lion on Appendix I is warranted. For others, an Appendix I listing would put a halt or severely restrict trophy hunting, even though this is recognized as a tool for conservation of the species when sustainably managed.

POLAR BEAR CLUB

Another "megafauna" species to take center stage at AC28 was the polar bear. In a routine review of significant trade of the Appendix II-listed *Ursus maritimus*, the Committee swiftly agreed to remove all range states from the review... all but one: Canada. Despite a detailed presentation on the merits of Canada's management of its polar bear populations, the US strongly requested that its northern neighbor's population be kept on the review due to concerns over "deficient" data for some subspecies.

In a detailed response, Canada said that of its estimated 16,000 polar bears, 352 are harvested annually, with about 2.5% entering international trade. Based on Canadian assessments, the harvest of its polar bears is sustainable and there is no detriment

to their survival. Others, however, cited other research that showed a decline in polar bear populations, as a result of climate change and loss of sea ice, and that more precautions should be put in place and that non-detrimental findings should be updated before any decision can be made regarding taking the range state off the RST.

After what could be described at times as a "frosty" debate, the AC ultimately recommended removing the species from the review, given a majority of parties were in favor of doing so, but with a diplomatic suggestion for Canada to maintain a strict use of the precautionary approach; this was later amended in plenary to include all range states and not just single out Canada.

While the polar bear was deleted from the CITES RST for all range states, the conversation does not end there. As was done at CoP15 in Doha and CoP16 in Bangkok, there is talk that another attempt to propose moving the polar bear to Appendix I is in the works for CoP17 in South Africa next year.

COMING OUT OF THE DESERT

The AC is not just about animals. It is also about implementation and processes, many of which are cumbersome and often outdated. Many said that improving compliance with the Convention starts with simplifying and streamlining processes. This came to the fore in discussions of the working group on the RST. The advisory working group, tasked interessionally to review how to improve this important implementation tool of the Convention, recommended enhancing the transparency of the review process and shortening it. It called to streamline the process by defining stricter criteria for species selection, the use of preliminary categorizations, and improving communication and consultation with range states. The working group also called for creating a mechanism to allow feedback from the scientific committees when reviews are partially fulfilled.

Since the entry into force of CITES in 1975, many technological improvements have been made. For instance, discussions on snake trade and conservation revealed a variety of tools for differentiating wild and captive-bred snakes, including physical, thermal and chemical branding, digital tags and DNA genotyping. Similarly, progress reports by range states on the implementation of shark listings noted the effectiveness of guidance material and potential digital tools such as the FAO's iSharkFin software for species identification. While the AC agreed that the priority is to ensure compliance with existing listings—not other shark and ray species of concern that could be added in the future—participants considered the use of M-Risk, a method for broadly determining species at risk of overexploitation through examining their intrinsic biological vulnerability and management risk for species as a standardized methodology for determining priority species.

During discussions, several countries lamented the lack of capacity and resources to adopt new technologies that can improve compliance with the Convention, especially those related to traceability and identification. For example, in one of the recommendations of the snake trade and conservation management working group, developing a system on the feasibility and implementation of a traceability and marking

system for snake skins was discussed. While much has been done by the CITES Secretariat to assist parties, through the CITES Virtual College and capacity-building activities, a lot of work remains to be done especially with regard to identification and traceability issues.

MIGRATING FROM THE SYRIA-AFRICAN RIFT TO JO'BURG

Before any of the recommendations from the AC can find their way to the hallowed corridors of the next CoP, there are a number of stops along the road for them to be vetted, beginning with the Plants Committee meeting in Georgia in October and then the Standing Committee in Geneva in January 2016, where discussions on the evaluation of the RST, harmonized traceability systems, a resolution on captive bred and ranched species, and others are expected to be high on the agenda. Also in the intersessional period, Kenya and Namibia announced that they would provide the AC a detailed analysis of trade in African lions, which would help the scientific committee assess the future of the species under the CITES appendices.

Overall, participants were satisfied with the progress made on the issues discussed during the week, including the importance of synergies with other multilateral environmental agreements and organizations as a way of making up for the lack of capacity and financial resources mentioned for issues such as shark listings implementation. Similarly, the hiring within the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) of a CITES/CMS Officer is also viewed as a step towards facilitating implementation of both conventions.

With the AC coming to a successful close, the march towards Jo'burg is officially underway.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Fourteenth World Forestry Congress: The 2015 World Forestry Congress, the first to be held in Africa, will come together under the theme, "Forests and People – Investing in a sustainable future." The Congress, convened by the FAO and the Government of South Africa, will consider how forests can be mainstreamed into global discussions on sustainable development and will facilitate the development of partnerships to address global forestry issues. **dates:** 7-11 September 2015 **location:** Durban, South Africa **contact:** Conference Secretariat **phone:** +27-21-683-2934 **fax:** +27-21-683-0816 **email:** info@wfc2015.org.za **www:** <http://webapps.daff.gov.za/wfc2015/>

UN Sustainable Development Summit 2015: More than 150 world leaders are expected to attend the UN Sustainable Development Summit to adopt a new development agenda. The post-2015 sustainable development agenda, "Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," includes: a declaration; the Sustainable Development Goals and targets; means of implementation and a new Global Partnership for Development; and a framework for follow-up and review. **dates:** 25-27 September 2015 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **contact:** UN Division for Sustainable Development **fax:** +1-212-963-4260 **email:** dsd@un.org **www:** <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/summit/>

Implementing the Oceans SDG: From Knowledge to

Action: The conference aims to discuss and identify how to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) on oceans, including how to make the best use of scientific knowledge and put oceans on a sustainable pathway. Participants will also address implementation of the proposed SDG. **date:** 2 October 2015 **location:** Paris, France **contact:** IDDRI **email:** carine.antunes@iddri.org **www:** <http://www.iddri.org/Themes/Oceans-et-zones-cotieres/>

Second Our Oceans Conference: The Second Our Oceans Conference aims to promote voluntary governmental and institutional commitments to care for the ocean. Participants will discuss solutions to topics such as illegal fishing, marine plastic pollution, and ocean acidification and climate change. The Conference will also encourage the creation of marine protected areas. **dates:** 5-6 October 2015 **location:** Valparaiso, Chile **email:** ouroceanweb@minrel.gov.cl **www:** <http://www.nuestroocean2015.gob.cl/>

CMS Raptors MoU MoS2: Under the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), the Coordinating Unit of the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia (Raptors MoU) will host the Second Meeting of Signatories (MoS2) to the Raptors MoU, with support from the Norwegian Environment Agency. **dates:** 5-8 October 2015 **location:** Trondheim, Norway **contact:** Nick P. Williams, Programme Officer – Birds Of Prey (Raptors) **email:** nwilliams@cms.int **www:** <http://www.cms.int/en/news/2014039-2nd-meeting-signatories-mos2-raptors-mou>

UNCCD COP12: The 12th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP12) to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) will take place over two weeks in Ankara, Turkey. As the Convention's primary decision-making body, the COP will meet to discuss and make decisions regarding the Convention's implementation. **dates:** 12-23 October **location:** Ankara, Turkey **contact:** UNCCD Secretariat **phone:** +49-228-815-2800 **fax:** +49-228-815-2898/99 **email:** secretariat@unccd.int **www:** <http://www.unccd.int/>

CITES PC22: The 22nd meeting of the CITES Plants Committee will be held for the last time before the seventeenth meeting of the CITES Conference of the Parties in Tbilisi, Georgia. **dates:** 19-23 October 2015 **location:** Tbilisi, Georgia **contact:** CITES Secretariat **phone:** +41-22-917-81-39/40 **fax:** +41-22-797-34-17 **email:** info@cites.org **www:** <https://cites.org/eng/com/pc/22/index.php>

CBD 19th Meeting of SBSTTA and 9th Meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Article 8(j) and Related Provisions of the Convention: The nineteenth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA 19) and the ninth meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Article 8(j) and Related Provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) will be held back-to-back. SBSTTA 19 will convene from 2-5 November. The Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Article 8(j) and Related Provisions of the CBD will convene from 4-7 November. **dates:** 2-7 November 2015 **location:** Montreal, Quebec, Canada

contact: CBD Secretariat **phone:** +1- 514-288-2220 **fax:** +1-514-288-6588 **email:** secretariat@cbd.int **www:** https://www.cbd.int/doc/?meeting=SBSTTA-19 and https://www.cbd.int/doc/?meeting=WG8J-09

Workshop on illegal take of, and trade in cheetahs: This workshop, hosted by the Kuwait Environment Public Authority and organized in accordance with the mandate given to the Intersessional Working Group (IWG) on Illegal Trade in Cheetah of the CITES Standing Committee, will address challenges and best practices to combating illegal cheetah trade. **dates:** 3-5 November 2015 **location:** Kuwait City, Kuwait **contact:** Shereefa Al-Salem **email:** sh.alsalem@epa.org.kw **www:** https://www.cites.org/eng/news/calendar.php

2nd INTERPOL Environmental Compliance and Enforcement Events: Hosted by the new INTERPOL Global Complex for Innovation (IGCI), 2015 events will include, from 16-17 November 2015, the 2nd INTERPOL-UNEP International Environmental Compliance and Enforcement Conference, and on 18 November 2015, the 2nd Meeting of the INTERPOL Environmental Compliance and Enforcement Committee (ECEC). The meetings will review progress in the field of environmental compliance and enforcement; and identify priorities and adopt joint strategies to enhance national, regional and international responses to effectively address environmental crime. **dates:** 16-18 November 2015 **location:** Singapore **contact:** INTERPOL Secretariat **email:** environmentalcrime@interpol.int **www:** http://www.interpol.int/Crime-areas/Environmental-crime/Events/Meetings/2nd-INTERPOL-Environmental-Compliance-and-Enforcement-Events

51st Session of the International Tropical Timber Council: The meeting of the International Tropical Timber Council (ITTC) will consider recommendations for tropical forest-related policies and approve financing for field-level projects. The ITTC serves as the governing body for the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO). **dates:** 16-21 November 2015 **location:** Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia **contact:** ITTO Secretariat **phone:** +81-45-223-1110 **fax:** +81-45-223-1111 **email:** itto@itto.int **www:** http://www.itto.int/

CITES SC66: The CITES Standing Committee will convene for its sixty-sixth meeting. **dates:** 11-15 January 2016 **location:** Geneva, Switzerland **contact:** CITES Secretariat **phone:** +41-22-917-81-39/40 **fax:** +41-22-797-34-17 **email:** info@cites.org **www:** https://cites.org/eng/com/sc/index.php

Second Meeting of the UNEP Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives: The Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives will prepare for the next meeting of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme. **dates:** 15-19 February 2016 **location:** Nairobi, Kenya **contact:** Jorge Laguna-Celis, Secretary of Governing Bodies **email:** jorge.laguna-celis@unep.org **www:** http://www.unep.org/about/sgb

IPBES-4: The fourth session of the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Plenary (IPBES-4) will review progress on the work programme. **dates:** 22-28 February 2016 **location:** Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

contact: IPBES Secretariat **phone:** +49-228-815-0570 **email:** secretariat@ipbes.net **www:** http://www.ipbes.net/index.php/plenary/ipbes-4

Second Meeting of the UN Environment Assembly: The United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP will convene for the second time in 2016. The UNEA of the UNEP represents the highest level of governance of international environmental affairs in the UN system. **dates:** 23-27 May 2016 **location:** Nairobi, Kenya **contact:** Jorge Laguna-Celis, Secretary of Governing Bodies **email:** jorge.laguna-celis@unep.org **www:** http://www.unep.org/about/sgb/

FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) 32nd Session: The 32nd session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries is scheduled to take place at FAO Headquarters in Rome in June 2016. **dates:** June 2016 **location:** Rome, Italy **contact:** Hiromoto Watanabe, Senior Fisheries Officer, FAO **phone:** +39-06-570-55252 **email:** hiromoto.watanabe@fao.org **www:** http://www.fao.org/unfao/govbodies/gsbhome/committee-fi/en/

CITES COP17: The Conference of the Parties to the Convention in Trade in Endangered Flora and Fauna will convene for its seventeenth session. **dates:** 24 September - 5 October 2016 **location:** Johannesburg, South Africa **contact:** CITES Secretariat **phone:** +41-22-917-81-39/40 **fax:** +41-22-797-34-17 **email:** info@cites.org **www:** http://www.cites.org/ For additional meetings, see http://nr.iisd.org/

GLOSSARY

AC	Animals Committee
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
CCS	Creative Conservation Solutions
CMS	Convention on Migratory Species
CoP	Conference of the Parties
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
HSI	Humane Society International
IPBES	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
NDF	Non-detriment finding
PC	Plants Committee
RST	Review of Significant Trade
SC	Standing Committee
SSN	Species Survival Network
WCS	Wildlife Conservation Society