

Presentation on CITES to the European Parliament

27 January 2010

Speaking points

Ladies and Gentlemen

Thank you for the invitation to speak to you today, to highlight CITES as a Convention and to introduce IUCN and its role in supporting CITES.

i) CITES History

- CITES, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, came into force in 1975 but had its origins in discussions at least a decade earlier, as a resolution at an IUCN congress in 1963 (Nairobi).
- At that Nairobi meeting, IUCN members urged the establishment of “an international convention on regulations of export, transit and import of rare or threatened wildlife species or their skins and trophies”.
- CITES was established in an era when global attention was on the situation for charismatic species such as tiger, elephants and rhinos and the focus on skins and trophies underscores this.
- The text of the Convention was finally agreed at a meeting of representatives of 80 countries in Washington DC., United States of America, on 3 March 1973, and on 1 July 1975 CITES entered in force. Today, CITES has 175 Parties.
- In its formulation, it is both a conservation treaty and a trade treaty. It aims to ensure that trade does not threaten the survival of plants and animals listed in the Appendices
- Decisions taken at CITES have both environmental and economic impact as they are legally binding and accompanied by enforcement measures and sanctions.

ii) How does CITES work?

- CITES regulates INTERNATIONAL trade in wildlife through a system of permits and certificates
- The level of regulation that trade in any individual species undergoes is dependent on whether or not and where the species may be listed on the CITES Appendices
- The decision as to which list a species is on is made based on how the species biology and trade profile fit across a series of criteria established and agreed by the Parties themselves. The most recent version of the criteria are included in Resolution 9.24, adopted in 1994 and still in effect today. Those criteria were heavily influenced by the criteria that had already been established for the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species – again, IUCN playing an important supporting scientific role for the Convention.
- Species of concern are included in one of three lists:
 - App I – no commercial trade – however some international movement related to scientific research and for zoos - about 800 species
 - App II – regulated trade – about 32,500 species on this list
 - App III – export country requests assistance in managing trade – about 170 species on this list
- Parties meet regularly to discuss the Appendices as well as resolutions and decisions.
- The Appendices list the species to be regulated, but regulation is guided through the Resolutions.
- Working documents tend to receive less attention than proposals, despite forming the backbone for implementation of the Convention. Introduction from the Sea continues to provide a challenge to the Parties and agreement yet to be reached over interpretation
- Implementing CITES effectively also requires ensuring links to other relevant bodies including the other biodiversity conventions and organizations such as FAO and WTO. The link with the Convention on Biological Diversity is particularly strong as the work of CITES falls squarely within the 2nd of the CBD objectives, namely sustainable use of biodiversity

iii) Where does CITES fit in the bigger picture of environmental conventions, and current biodiversity issues?

- CITES, which came into force in 1975, is one of the earliest global biodiversity conventions to take effect
 - At 175 Parties, it does not have as many members as the Rio Conventions (>190 Parties) but remains higher than the UNCLOS, CMS, Ramsar
 - The annual Secretariat budget is on par with other UNEP conventions (~ 4-4.5 million) but, again, doesn't come close to the Rio Conventions (15-25 million).
 - Compared to another major global trade organization, the WTO (annual budget 175 million), CITES has a lot of catching up to do.
- 2010, as you know, is the International Year of Biodiversity. It is the target year for the biodiversity goal set at the CBD meeting in 2002 and confirmed at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg later that year.
- CITES will also be participating in many of the IYB activities. The strategic plan 2008-2013 specifically includes the target of contributing to the WSSD target of significantly reducing the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010 – which unfortunately we are unlikely to meet
- However, CITES will be part of the discussion and preparation for a post-2010 strategy
- Other biodiversity-related initiatives currently underway will also have an impact on CITES and how effectively it will be implemented.
- Just two examples include:
 - The Intergovernmental Panel on Ecosystems and Biodiversity - IPBES represents an important opportunity towards goal 3 and meetings taking place this year will determine the direction of IPBES but currently it looks like a promising means by which governments can generate the policy relevant science they are looking for, CITES could be a beneficiary of the work of such a Panel
 - The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity which will help to highlight the full value of nature and provide needed input to CITES decisions.

iv) CITES COP 15 in Doha

- The COP 15 agenda reflects the fact that CITES CoP's are increasingly focusing on commercially important species, especially fisheries and timber and coral.
- However, they also reflect the continuing conservation challenge for species for which the convention was originally established, so Asian big cats, elephants and rhinos remain a fixture on the Agenda.
- But other agenda items also merit attention. Issues relating to implementation such as defining "introduction from the sea" and ensuring it's coherence with similar work in other bodies (such as UNCLOS) will have an impact on how some of the species listings will be managed. The budget discussions will have an influence on how well the Convention and Secretariat can support Parties to have the capacity to implement effectively.

Role of IUCN and Traffic at COP 15

- As I noted earlier, IUCN was present at the 'birth' of CITES and that IUCN science and scientists underpinned many critical aspects of CITES implementation such as development of the listing criteria and analysis of the proposals to change the CITES appendices for more than 20 years.
- IUCN attends CITES as an intergovernmental observer – a status that is the result of our observer status at the United Nations General Assembly – we are nature's ambassador to the UN.
- Traffic, a joint programme of IUCN and WWF also has a long history of engagement with CITES since its establishment in 1976 and will support Parties again at COP 15
- At COP 14 an evaluation of IUCN's role in CITES was undertaken through interviews of COP participants. The results included the following:
 - The most important roles were that of technical advisor, support for M&E and awareness raising for CITES issues
 - The product most valued by Parties were the Analyses followed by ongoing intersessional support for CITES processes and briefing documents targeting issues on the COP agenda.

For COP 15

- IUCN and Traffic have again completed the analyses – objective assessment against 9.24 criteria.
- Technical advisors as requested by the COP and CITES bodies
 - Eg. AfRSG support for information on rhinos
 - Crocodile SG support
 - Support for Elephant Dialogue
 - Reporting on ETIS
- In addition to providing technical support to Parties, IUCN also has a role to promote the policy of the Union.
 - Note that IUCN membership includes many EU member states as well as representatives from civil society across Europe – the European membership is the largest regional group in the Union – and that this inherently means reflecting the views of the Union’s European conservation.
 - The single most relevant piece of IUCN policy is the policy on Sustainable Use of Natural Resources (Resolution 2.29) which highlights the social as well as ecological aspects of sustainable use.
 - In addition, at the recent 4th World Conservation Congress, a number of other resolutions were adopted relating particularly to fisheries that will be relevant at COP 15

As you listen to news reports of the events in Doha this March, remember that the discussions taking place represent one of the most important mechanisms to manage a key threat to biodiversity, namely illegal trade.

The debates in Doha will be lively and at times contentious.

IUCN and Traffic will be doing everything we can to ensure that the resulting decisions are based on the best available science.

Thank you again for the invitation to speak to you today. I would welcome any questions you might have.