

CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA

Interpretation and implementation of the Convention

Conservation and trade in *Chamaeleo excubitor* (currently listed as a subspecies of *Chamaeleo fischeri*)

RECOGNITION AS A SEPARATE SPECIES

1. This document has been prepared by Kenya.

Introduction

2. The CITES checklist currently includes *Chamaeleo excubitor* (also known as *Bradypodion excubitor*) as a synonym of *Chamaeleo fischeri* (also known as *Bradypodion fischeri*). All *Chamaeleo* species are listed on Appendix II.

3. In 2002, well known herpetologists Stephen Spawls, Kim Howell, Robert Drewes and James Ashe published the first comprehensive field guide to East African reptiles.¹ The guide lists *Chamaeleo excubitor*, the Mount Kenya Hornless Chameleon, as a separate species. The taxonomic notes state that for a long time it was regarded as a subspecies of the Eastern Usambara Two-horned Chameleon (*Chamaeleo fischeri*), but that now it is regarded as a full species.²

4. This newly recognized species is a Kenyan endemic with a very restricted range. It is found on the eastern side of Mt. Kenya, from Meru to the vicinity of Embu. The known range is small and within a forest area which is rapidly being logged. The impact of this on the species is not known and no work has been done to establish the species population estimates in the wild or in captivity. However, it is likely that population levels are declining. As well as being potentially affected by deforestation and habitat loss, there are indications that the species is in international trade.

5. Currently it is impossible to assess the extent of trade in *Chamaeleo excubitor* since it would be included in trade figures for *Chamaeleo fischeri*. CITES trade data obtained from UNEP-WCMC show that there has been extensive trade in *Chamaeleo fischeri* from Tanzania between 1975 and 2002. Importing countries include Denmark, Netherlands, USA, Canada, Spain, Hong Kong, Japan, Thailand, Belgium, UK, France, Indonesia, Mexico, Italy, Russian Federation, Germany, Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Switzerland, Greece, South Africa, Mauritius, El Salvador, Malaysia, China, Taiwan, Bangladesh and the Republic of Korea. If specimens of *Chamaeleo excubitor* were included in any of these shipments they would have been illegally smuggled from Kenya since Kenya does not allow exports.

6. Confiscations of illegally traded specimens of *Chamaeleo excubitor* have been made in Kenya and the culprits charged in a court. This indicates an illegal trade exists.

7. Taking into account the above considerations, Kenya would like to request the Nomenclature Committee to consider recognizing *Chamaeleo excubitor* as a separate species.

¹ Spawls, S., Howell, K., Drewes, R. and Ashe, J. *A Field Guide to the Reptiles of East Africa*. Academic Press, London, UK and San Diego, California, 2002.

² Ibid, p. 220.

Annex

DRAFT DECISION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

Dec. xx directed to the Nomenclature Committee

The Nomenclature Committee shall consider the evidence and determine whether *Chamaeleo excubitor* (also known as *Bradypodion excubitor*) is a full species, separate from *Chamaeleo fischeri* (also known as *Bradypodion fischeri*).