

35th Anniversary of CITES Wildlife Convention Entry Into Force

Betty E. King, Permanent Representative of the United States Mission in Geneva. July 1, 2010.

July 1, 2010

**Remarks by Ambassador Betty E. King
Permanent Representative of the United States Mission to the United Nations in Geneva**

On the Occasion of the 35th Anniversary of CITES

Museum of Natural History

Geneva, Switzerland

Your Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to thank the CITES Secretariat, UNEP and the Natural History Museum of Geneva for hosting us and, of course, a special thank you to the government of Switzerland for hosting the convention that brings us all together today on the wonderful occasion of its 35th anniversary. Happy Anniversary CITES!

As many of you know, the final negotiations that resulted in CITES were held in Washington, D.C. in 1973. The United States has always held CITES in great esteem and we like to keep a special close eye on the progress of this Convention that we helped to launch so many years ago. So, it is with particular pleasure that we welcome the new Secretary General of CITES, Mr. John Scanlon. The United States wishes him every success and we are confident that he will accomplish great things for CITES and the life-forms it is designated to protect.

35 years ago, representatives from our nations agreed in Washington, D.C. that the stewardship of our fragile planet and the many life-forms that inhabit it was of the utmost importance. So much so that we determined together that we must – in essence – save our planet's biology from the worst impacts of our own human economic development. And so it was that CITES, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, was established and the United States is very proud that we were the first nation to proudly ratify it.

35 years later this Convention is more important than ever. We are here today to acknowledge and applaud the significant achievements of CITES, not the least of which are the facts that:

- No species listed in the CITES Appendices has been driven to extinction as a result of commercial exploitation, and that
- The status of many species in the wild, such as Crocodylians, has improved as a direct result of CITES.

But we are also gathered together in solemn acknowledgement that we must do more. Tragically some of our successes under CITES, such as limiting the trade in elephants and rhinoceroses, are once again under threat.

The achievements and challenges of CITES are ours – the member countries of CITES. Cooperation and collaboration at all levels are imperative to improve and strengthen enforcement, scientific review and the implementation of actions of individual Parties on the ground.

In the 35 years since the United States first ratified CITES, our interactions with the natural world have become more complex. There are an ever greater number and variety of species that are impacted by trade. We strongly believe that CITES should continue to protect all types of animals and plants and continue to follow the successful course first set out in Washington DC: that is, to evaluate the scientific and trade status of each species to determine whether a CITES listing would afford the critical protection needed for the survival of so many life-forms.

CITES will thrive in a climate of mutual respect, cooperation, scientific excellence and robust enforcement efforts. The CITES community – all of us – will need to find a way through our respective economic crises and find the funds to address the need and desire of many Parties to improve their capacity to fulfill their obligations under the Convention.

As President Obama has stated, “Throughout our history, there’s been a tension between those who’ve sought to conserve our natural resources for the benefit of future generations, and those who have sought to profit from these resources. But I’m here to tell you this is a false choice. With smart, sustainable policies, we can grow our economy today and preserve the environment for ourselves, our children, and our grandchildren. That is what we must do.”

The United States will continue to advocate for CITES and we urge all the Parties to renew their efforts at cooperation and compromise so that CITES can prosper well into the future.

Thank you very much for your