

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



Nineteenth meeting of the Animals Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 18-21 August 2003

Any other business

RESEARCH PROJECTS

1. This document has been prepared by the Management Authority of Switzerland.
2. Annex 2 of Resolution Conf. 11.1 (Rev. CoP12) on Establishment of Committees states that among the many problems faced by the Conference of the Parties and individual Parties are the lack of biological data and expert knowledge of animal and plant trade and management. Such information is needed for evaluating whether a species is appropriately listed in the CITES Appendices or to evaluate whether the level of trade in a given species is detrimental to the survival of that species.
3. The Animals Committee's (AC) mission statement states that the AC is to provide the Conference of the Parties, Parties, other Committees and working groups, and the Secretariat with reliable scientific information and advice on biological matters concerning international trade in animal species included in the Appendices as well as, when applicable, animal species subject to international trade that may be considered for inclusion in the Appendices in the future.
4. The AC (and the Plants Committee) are also to establish priorities for projects to collect information for those species for which there is insufficient information available on which to base a judgment as to whether the level of trade is sustainable or detrimental.
5. Collecting such information (e.g. on biological status, population size, distribution, population development in time, population dynamics etc.) reliably in the field is a task that requires scientific and technical knowledge and expertise, is often time consuming and is dependent upon sufficient financial means.
6. In past years there existed within CITES a process whereby scientific projects for the purpose of obtaining the needed data and information were submitted officially to the Secretariat and were then examined and evaluated by the Standing Committee and after having been accepted by it were given an official CITES Project registration number and were then open to support – in particular financial support – by the Parties. Indeed an impressive number of such projects received financial support from Parties and other sources and were successfully completed, such as 'The green Turtle and hawksbill turtle world status, exploitation and Trade' (B. Groombridge and R. Luxmoore, 1989), 'Pythons in South-East Asia' (B. Groombridge and R. Luxmoore, 1991), 'Survey of the Status of Asian Bonytongue in Kalimantan' (Forest Protection and Nature Conservation, Indonesia Scientific Institute, Bogor Agricultural University, 1992), 'Snakes of the Family Boidae in the Cooperative Republic of Guyana' (S. Gorzula and K. Pilgrim, 1992), 'Etude de l'état, la repartition géographique et l'utilisation du perroquet gris dans la République démocratique du Congo' (R. Fotso, 1998), 'Status, Management and Conservation of the African Grey Parrot in Nigeria' (P.McGowan, 2001), 'Status of the African Grey Parrot and Development of a Management Program in Guinea and Guinea-Bissau' (J.R. Clemmons, 2002), etc.
7. This shows that financial means are available and can be made available, provided that there is a process or mechanism through which such projects can be submitted officially, where they are reviewed and

receive an official approval by a competent body (Animals Committee, Plants Committee, Standing Committee?), and through which potential donors are informed who intends to do what, for what purpose, with what technical and scientific means, in what time and at what price.

8. Unfortunately in recent years this process has come to a stop within CITES. What concerns Switzerland, which contributed financially to a number of such projects in the past, is that funds that were available and provided for such CITES research projects were left unused in the last years.
9. The purpose of this document is therefore to:
 - a) Remind the members of the AC (and Plants Committee) as well as observers and Parties that there existed (exists?) an active process within CITES whereby scientific projects could be submitted, were classified and, through a Notification to the Parties, presented for support;
 - b) Provide information about how this process had been structured;
 - c) Open the discussion on how such a process could be reactivated;
 - d) Make Parties, CITES committees, scientific institutes and individual scientists aware of this process, call upon them to support the reactivation of this process and thus initiate and facilitate the undertaking of much-needed research projects in the framework of CITES again; and
 - e) Call upon Parties, not only to submit or assist in submitting such projects, but also to reserve funds in their budgets and make available such funds for these projects.

Comments from the Secretariat

10. The Secretariat welcomes this document, particularly as it reminds Parties, members of the Animals and Plants Committees, observers and others that there is a procedure for approval of externally funded projects.
11. However, contrary to the indication in paragraphs 8 and 9 (particularly 9c), this procedure has not stopped. It was revised during CoP12, resulting in the adoption of Resolution Conf. 12.2 on a procedure for approval of externally funded projects. Under this new procedure, the Secretariat, instead of the Standing Committee, and in consultation with the Animals and Plants Committees, approves and prioritizes projects to be implemented.
12. Unfortunately, the Secretariat has not received any project proposals recently and would like to encourage Parties to submit such proposals for its consideration.
13. The Secretariat would like to clarify that the priorities for projects referred to in paragraphs 4 and 5 above are to be established by the committees in the context of the Review of Significant Trade as laid down in Resolution Conf. 12.8.