

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



Fifty-fourth meeting of the Standing Committee  
Geneva (Switzerland), 2-6 October 2006

Interpretation and implementation of the Convention

Species trade and conservation issues

Sturgeons and paddlefish

CAVIAR EXPORT QUOTAS FOR THE CASPIAN SEA BASIN FOR 2006

1. This document has been submitted jointly by the Islamic Republic of Iran and Kazakhstan, and with the agreement of Azerbaijan.

Background

- Resolution Conf 12.7 (Rev. CoP13) on establishing the catch and export quotas per basin requires annual quotas to be communicated to the CITES Secretariat before 30 November each year.
- Catch and export quotas should be supported by relevant scientific data.

Action taken by Caspian Sea range States

- Summer and winter stock assessment surveys have been conducted.
- All necessary scientific information has been compiled.
- The Caspian Sea range States convened a meeting of the Caspian Sea Bioresources Commission in November 2005.
- Agreed quotas were communicated to the CITES Secretariat by the specified deadline.
- The Secretariat confirmed receipt of the quotas, but requested further clarification on a limited number of issues.
- Some Parties responded individually while others were preparing a coordinated response. At the request of the range States, the Secretariat agreed to host a meeting in Geneva for further discussions and clarification of key issues. Iran and Turkmenistan were the only range States that attended the Geneva meeting; other States could not attend the meeting.

Action and decision taken by the Secretariat

- In light of the failure of many range States to attend the Geneva meeting and submit appropriate documentation, the Secretariat decided not to publish any quotas for 2006.
- The Secretariat announced this decision to the press with a recommendation for a zero export quota for Caspian Sea shared stocks of the beluga (*Huso Huso*), Russian sturgeon (*Acipenser gueldenstaedtii*) and sevruga (*Acipenser stellatus*).

### Impact of the CITES decision on sturgeon resources and trade

- All stocks of legally harvested caviar are waiting for the trade ban to be lifted.
- The attitude of the Secretariat towards Caspian range States is having a profoundly negative effect on the conservation of sturgeon resources in the region.
- Continuation of the negative position taken by the Secretariat will adversely affect the credibility of the Secretariat in the region.
- The substantial loss of income that fishery organizations derive from sturgeon resources will have a negative impact on:
  - i) implementing effective enforcement;
  - ii) fingerling production; and
  - iii) conducting research on sturgeon conservation and management.
- The loss of employment within the legal fishery will create socio-economic problems as well as stimulate illegal trade in the commodity that is based on illegal fishery.
- The established legal chain of custody for caviar will be compromised by the continuation of the present ban.

### Recommendations to the Standing Committee

2. The 54th meeting of the Standing Committee is requested to:
  - Lift the current caviar trade ban on 2006 quotas no later than 20 October 2006;
  - Instruct the Secretariat to issue an appropriate Notification to the Parties and publish the Standing Committee's decision on the CITES website; and
  - Support the recommendations of the informal sturgeon discussion group that convened during the 22nd meeting of the Animals Committee (AC22, Lima, July 2006) (see Annex), including amendments to Resolution Conf. 12.7 (Rev. CoP13).

AC22 INFORMAL DISCUSSION GROUP CONCERNING  
INFORMATION ON ACIPENSERIFORMES SPECIES

1. This document has been prepared by an informal discussion group concerning information on sturgeon and paddlefish species led by the representative of Asia (Mr Pourkazemi) in relation with the recommendations made in AC22 Doc. 10.1 and with agenda item 20 of AC22 regarding the provisions of Resolution Conf. 12.7 (Rev. CoP13).

Membership

- a) Representative of Asia (Dr Mohammad Pourkazemi, Iran) – Chair;
- b) Representative of Europe (Katalin Rodics, Hungary) – Participant;
- c) Observers from Parties: Belgium (Caroline Raymakers), People's Republic of China (Lu Xiaoping), France (Sylvie Guillaume), Germany (Irina Sprotte), Russian Federation (Alexander Efimov); and
- d) Observers from inter- and non-governmental organizations: ICIA (Armen Petrossian), IWMC (Jaques Berney), Pew Inst. (Phaedra Doukakis), SMS (Hank Jenkins).

Additionally, the working group is grateful to the CITES Secretariat (David Morgan) – ref. Agenda item 20 of AC22, and to FAO (Marcelo Vasconcellos) for their short interventions.

Mandate

1. Evaluation of the regional conservation strategy and monitoring regimes for stocks of Acipenseriformes species shared between different range States to be implemented by range States in cooperation with the Secretariat;
2. Development of a mechanism to support the range States in improving the communication on and gathering of the necessary scientific data and other relevant information used as basis to establish catch and export quotas;
3. Explore ways to reduce the risk of laundering of caviar from the wild through the trade in caviar from farmed sources;
4. Verification of the shelf life of caviar to confirm the adequacy of the 18-month limit for re-export of caviar after the date of issuance of the relevant original export permit –ref. paragraph h) of the first "RECOMMENDS" in the Resolution;
5. Preparation of the workshop planned by the IUCN-SSC Sturgeon Specialist Group, to be held in Berlin from 29 September to 1 October 2006 on DNA-based identification of specimens per species for wild sourced specimens and per individuals for captive-bred sturgeons and paddlefish (i.e. DNA fingerprints of broodstock in commercial fish farms);
6. Basic framework and minimal standards for the Action Plans proposed by the range States of the various river and sea basins through establishing a standardised level of activities;
7. Facilitation of the drafting of project proposals related to activities described in the Action Plans and submission to the relevant potential sponsors for funding;
8. In order to reach an adequate implementation of the above-mentioned Action Plans, transfer of knowledge, experience and results from new research projects throughout the range of sturgeon and paddlefish;
9. Drafting of recommendations to the Standing Committee on issues regarding the implementation of Resolution Conf. 12.7 (Rev. CoP13) and possible amendments needed. Issues a) to g) included in the report; and

10. Future possible activities (including inter-sessionally) of an Acipenseriformes working group, e.g. in preparation of SC54, before CoP14 and as follow-up of CoP14.

### **Report and Recommendations – Acipenseriformes Working Group**

The working group wishes that the present document be submitted at the next meeting of the Standing Committee (SC54) as an information document.

#### **1. of the Mandate**

Based on the short introduction by the CITES Secretariat of agenda item 20 of AC22, the working group agreed that the Animals Committee can play a significant role in helping to efficiently carry out the afore-mentioned provision of Resolution Conf. 12.7 (Rev. CoP13).

The Animals Committee support will be of particular relevance to “monitoring regimes for stocks of Acipenseriformes species”, which refers essentially to scientific issues and fisheries techniques. Experts on Acipenseriformes are attending Animals Committee meetings as representatives of range States, with knowledge on restocking programmes as well as on capacity of scientific institutions in the region to complement for instance the outcome of the FAO Technical Cooperation Project.

The working group recognised that the “regional conservation strategy” (which includes the Action Plans adopted at national level), incl. management and enforcement aspects, including ILLEGAL trade and catch that relate to tasks deferred to the Standing Committee.

The working group believes that clarification would be needed on the way the “evaluation” will be undertaken and reported on:

- a) The timeframe for the periodic review, i.e. When will the review occur within the 3-year cycle?
- b) Composition of a panel of experts: for instance FAO and other independent specialists, need to be clearly identified.
- c) The reporting requirements in order to keep CITES Parties informed: When and to whom (e.g. Animals Committee, Standing Committee) should the progress and results of the evaluation be reported?

#### **2. of the Mandate**

Creation of independent scientific committees (one per basin) to advise the regional administrative agencies on the quota setting and other issues related to sturgeon resource management. These independent scientific committees should also invite representatives of inter-government organisations (e.g. FAO, CEP, Caspian Sea Convention) and give the opportunity for the private sector (traders, fishing companies...), NGOs, ... to contribute as observers. The representative of the Russian Federation stated that he did not have the authority to agree on this point.

Examples and other aspects discussed by the working group are:

- Within the Caspian Aquatic Bioresources Commission, creation of an “international scientific sub-commission”.
- Concerns in the Amur River basin: take into consideration the real socio-economic issues in the region and provide support to establish realistic quotas.
- Activities of the independent scientific committee could also comprise the involvement of the drafting of the Action Plan (see points 3, 4 and 5), and the drafting of a progress report on the Action Plan, incl. for instances compilation of all actions and projects that have been implemented, research work and any other relevant initiatives.

The working group also expressed the importance for the relevant regional commissions to carry-out the:

- creation of a website,
- design of a database on sturgeon resources, restocking programmes, ...
- launch of public awareness campaigns, preparation of press releases, ...
- establishment of mechanisms to exchange information amongst agencies within and between basins,
- search for necessary funding, technical advice,
- preparation of annual reports,
- ....

### **3. of the Mandate**

- Agreement was reached on the registration of aquaculture facilities inside and outside of range States, including information on the species and possibly on the capacity (tonnes of fish).
- No agreement was reached on the possible establishment of export quotas, for caviar from aquaculture, i.e. the potential need and feasibility to establish quotas for all captive-bred specimens, including aquaculture operations in non-range States, i.e. amendment of footnote 2 on page 3 of the Resolution.
- Development of methods that differentiate caviar from wild and farmed sources, e.g. DNA fingerprints of broodstock kept in aquaculture for parenthood identification of specimens in trade (caviar, meat, live specimens,...), biochemical composition of the caviar.

### **4. of the Mandate**

- working group discussions led to the confirmation that the “18-month limit” is acceptable from a sanitary stand point. There is no need to reduce it to 12 months –ref. to an experiment undertaken in Germany that concluded that caviar can be kept for more than 2 years at  $-4\text{ C}^{\circ}$  to  $-2\text{ C}^{\circ}$ .

### **5. of the Mandate**

- Development and adoption of standardized methodology for species and population identification of wild products in trade.
- DNA fingerprints of captive broodstock for eventual differentiation of aquaculture products; request from captive producers for reference specimens of pure species; reference database should also be obtained for hybrids. Eventual need for system to differentiate wild and captive products.
- Reference database of tissue samples for study and development of genetic methodology.
- The CITES coding system for the labelling of caviar from hybrids was discussed and the present provision in Annex 2 of Resolution Conf. 12.7 (Rev. CoP13) was considered adequate.

### **6., 7. and 8. of the Mandate**

Agreement on the importance to contribute to all three discussion points and examples of aspects to be included in the framework for minimal standards for an Action Plan, example of suggested content:

- a) restocking efforts (e.g. number of fingerlings)

- b) long term attitudinal change
- c) domestic and international markets issues
- d) actions on illegal production and trade
- e) hybrids situation in various basins, description and research
- f) ...

It was recognized by the working group that range States may want to seek the transfer of experience: from other basins that can be obtained from the Secretariat and other bodies (e.g. NGOs, Amur-Heilong Eco-region) support the drafting of the Action Plan. The FAO project on Capacity building for the recovery and *management of the sturgeon fisheries of the Caspian Sea*, to be carried out from February 2006 to September 2007 – ref. FAO [TCP/INT3101 (A)] of USD 380,000, will certainly greatly also help other basins to identify crucial fields to be included in their Action Plan.

## 9. of the Mandate

- a) Amendments to Resolution Conf. 12.7 (Rev. CoP13) to try and improve the understanding by Parties of the basis on which quotas are being established (referring to point 2 above);
  - Agreement by the working group was reached on the amendments that are related to paragraph a) under the second "RECOMMEND" S were agreed upon:
    - “iv) The Secretariat has informed the Parties that catch and export quotas have been agreed upon by all relevant range States and communicated to the Secretariat by 30 November of the preceding year.”
    - “v) Range States provide to the Secretariat the scientific data referred to under ii) and iii) that were used to establish catch and export quotas.”
    - “vi) The Secretariat makes all the information mentioned in v) above available upon request.”
- b) Trade in meat and the necessity to estimate the size of domestic markets of both caviar and sturgeon meat;
  - Agreement on the importance of domestic markets of caviar and meat, and on the necessity to amend Resolution Conf. 12.7 (Rev. CoP13) to emphasize this issue (add a recommendation?).
- c) Amendment in Annex 1 of the Resolution;
  - of the definition of “non-reusable” label: the working group agreed that there is no need to change the definition, but Annex 1 should clearly mention a system of caviar packaging that permits visual evidence of any opening of a container, but not necessarily on the label.
  - of the relevance of “the lot identification number” on the label of caviar containers after repackaging: according to the working group the provision included in Annex 1 of the Resolution is satisfactory.
- d) Maximum time limit for submission by all Parties of copies of permits and certificates after their issuance, as described under paragraph i) of the first “RECOMMENDS” in the Resolution, in order to ensure the efficiency of the experimental database currently being designed by UNEP-WCMC under contract with the European Commission and as described in Decision 13.44;
  - Agreement by the working group on amendment of paragraph i) under the first “RECOMMENDS”: replace “on regular basis” by, “no longer than one month after the (re-)export took place”.

- e) Endorsement of the above-mentioned database as mentioned in Decision 13.45 (see Annex);
  - Agreement by the working group on the interest of such database to try and reduce the abusive use of copies of export permits to obtain re-export certificates on a fraudulent basis.
  - Agreement on the submission of the concept of a pilot project to SC54 (ref. Decision° 13.45).
  - Agreement by the working group on the need for a report on the efficiency of the database, once it has been launched on its secured website, and therefore, agreement on the probable necessity to extend the deadline of Decision 13.46 after CoP14, eventually to SC57.
- f) Use of Customs HS Codes in order to complement the monitoring of CITES trade with more recent data on volumes, although not available at species level, and on values of caviar;
  - Agreement to add one paragraph under the first “RECOMMENDS” regarding the use by Parties of the full eight-digit HS Custom code for caviar i.e. 1604 3010, instead of the insufficiently precise six digits.
- g) Establish a protocol to integrate the support of the Animals Committee through a timely and well-documented reporting by the CITES Secretariat on the evaluation mentioned under the second “URGES” in the Resolution – ref. AC22 agenda item 20 (no document);
  - Agreement on the inclusion of a paragraph in Resolution Conf. 12.7 (Rev. CoP13) that directs the Secretariat to provide to the Animals Committee, for its approval, a written report with all supporting documentation (pending agreement from the relevant range State or organization) attached on the outcome of the 3-year cycle evaluation of the regional conservation strategy and monitoring regimes for stocks of Acipenseriformes species shared between different range States.
  - Agreement on the inclusion of a paragraph in Resolution Conf. 12.7 (Rev. CoP13) that directs the Animals Committee to provide to the Standing Committee, its recommendations on actions to be taken based upon the 3-year cycle evaluation mentioned above.
- h) Reporting on activities undertaken by the CITES Secretariat in relation to the implementation of Resolution Conf. 12.7 (Rev. CoP13);
  - Agreement on the inclusion of a paragraph in Resolution Conf. 12.7 (Rev. CoP13) that directs the Secretariat to provide at each meeting of the Animals Committee, a written progress report with all supporting documentation attached (pending agreement from the relevant range State or organization) on all activities related to the Conservation of and trade in sturgeons and paddlefish.

**10. of the Mandate: future activities that could be carried out by an Acipenseriformes working group inter-sessionally and/or at meetings of the Animals Committee**

- Draft amended Resolution Conf. 12.7 (Rev. CoP13) for consideration at SC54 (deadline 4 August 2006) and possible submission at CoP14.
- Concept of pilot project on the database described in Decision 13.44.
- Announcement of postponement of submission of report on pilot project, i.e. extension of Decision 13.46 from CoP14, tentatively to SC57.
- Comment on the documents on Review of Significant Trade in Acipenseriformes.
- Assist the IUCN-SSC Sturgeon Specialist Group in preparing, holding (29 September to 1 October 2006, Berlin, Germany) and following-up on the DNA-based identification workshop.

- Assist relevant Parties in finalizing draft amended Resolution Conf. 12.7 (Rev. CoP13).
- Pending SC54 decision, assist in the possible follow-up of the Review of Significant Trade in Acipenseriformes.
- Progress made on the DNA identification system.
- The development of trade in specimens from aquaculture and on possible measures to be taken.
- Progress on the creation of independent scientific committees within the regional commission for the management of sturgeon stocks in the Amur River, Caspian Sea and Danube River / Black Sea basins.
- Assist the 3-year cycle evaluation of monitoring regimes for stocks of Acipenseriformes species.
- Minimal standards for a coherent national or regional Action Plan on the conservation of Acipenseriformes; draft based on a comparison of existing plans submitted by range States.
- Assessment of the usefulness of monitoring caviar trade (not at species level) through the special eight-digit Customs HS Code for sturgeon caviar: 1604 3010.
- Efficiency of the database (ref. Decision 13.44) to monitor re-exports and export quotas.

## ANNEX

### CoP13 Decisions on Conservation of and trade in sturgeon and paddlefish

#### ***Directed to Parties***

- 13.44 In consultation with the CITES Secretariat and relevant experts, interested Parties should undertake an assessment of the technical and legal feasibility to establish a database concerning trade in sturgeon specimens subject to annual quotas as outlined in Resolution Conf. 12.7 (Rev. CoP13). This database would be updated regularly and could include, pending needs identified under the assessment, information on species, specimens, volumes exported as well as the status of export quotas, the country, date of issuance and number of export permits and re-export certificates that are sent to the CITES Secretariat by relevant Parties.
- 13.45 Pending the results of the assessment referred to in Decision 13.44, and subject to the availability of funds, the interested Parties may submit a proposal for a pilot project on the provision of a database, for consideration by the Standing Committee at its 54th meeting.
- 13.46 In accordance with the Standing Committee's decision regarding the proposal referred to in Decision 13.45, the Parties concerned should report on the outcome of this pilot project and its recommendations at the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

#### ***Directed to the Secretariat***

- 13.47 Subject to the availability of funds and the Standing Committee's support for a proposed pilot project, as referred to in Decision 13.46, all relevant information and documentation shall be forwarded on a regular basis to the relevant Party in charge, as approved by the Standing Committee at its 54th meeting.