

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



Fifty-seventh meeting of the Standing Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 14-18 July 2008

Interpretation and implementation of the Convention

Species trade and conservation

Sturgeons

CAVIAR TRADE DATABASE

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.
2. Resolution Conf. 12.7 (Rev. CoP14) on *Conservation of and trade in sturgeons and paddlefish* contains the following instruction in paragraph k) under the first RECOMMENDS:

the Secretariat shall submit a written progress report at each meeting of the Standing Committee on the operation of the UNEP-WCMC caviar trade database.

3. The UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Centre caviar trade database was launched on 30 November 2007. The database records details of permits and certificates that authorize trade in caviar. It is intended to help detect and deter fraudulent applications to trade in caviar. It also enables national CITES authorities to check the history of caviar shipments to confirm that their original export was lawful and to verify the quantities and caviar types that were authorized for trade. In the past, considerable 'laundering' of illegal-origin caviar occurred when unscrupulous traders obtained genuine CITES documents by making false statements about where the caviar had been obtained. The database allows authorities to identify when such fraudulent applications are made.
4. Access to the database was initially through the home page of the UNEP-WCMC and CITES websites. However, to address concerns of confidentiality of information, it was subsequently moved to the restricted-access Management Authorities and Enforcement Authorities Forums on the website.
5. As stated by the Secretariat several times previously, the database can only be truly effective if all Parties that engage in trade in caviar submit copies of their permits and certificates on a regular basis.
6. At the time of writing (mid-April 2008), the submission of copies continues to be somewhat haphazard and it appears that many countries that authorize trade in caviar need to increase the regularity of their submissions. Of particular concern, with regard to major producing countries, are Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation. The latter has not submitted any copies, whilst Kazakhstan has only submitted a very few. The Secretariat has noted media reports that the Russian Federation has imposed a moratorium upon trade in caviar but no official confirmation of this has been sent to the Secretariat. Two other major producers, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United States of America, do not seem to be submitting data regularly either. No permits have been received from Turkey, which previously had active caviar traders.

Final remarks

7. The Secretariat believes that it is still too early to be able to fully assess the effectiveness of the caviar trade database, especially as its access has only been recently restricted. This move may help incite more Parties to participate in this initiative. The Secretariat hopes that regional representatives in the Standing Committee will encourage caviar-trading States in their regions to comply with this aspect of the Resolution. The Secretariat has no specific recommendations to make to the Committee on this subject at this time.