

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



Sixty-fifth meeting of the Standing Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 7-11 July 2014

Administrative and financial matters

Meetings of the Conference of the Parties

STRUCTURE AND LENGTH OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Background

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.
2. At the 61st meeting of the Standing Committee (Geneva, August 2011), the Secretariat submitted a document seeking the views of the Committee on the possibility of reducing the length of meetings of the Conference of the Parties. The Committee requested the Secretariat to take account of comments made at the meeting and to prepare a further document for consideration at the 62nd meeting (SC62, July 2013).
3. At SC62, the Secretariat submitted a further document on this subject. The summary record of the meeting indicates the following decision:

The Committee agreed to propose that the second week of [the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties] CoP16 be four days only, and that this should be a trial run. It agreed that the operation of CoP16 would be reviewed at its first subsequent regular meeting (SC65), where the Secretariat should present a financial analysis, so that it could be determined whether there had been savings on costs. The Committee also noted the view that the change of structure of meetings of the Conference of the Parties should not result in more work being done in working groups, as this could disadvantage small delegations.

4. Accordingly, at CoP16, the provisional working programme presented in document CoP16 Doc. 3 (Rev. 2) provided for a meeting in which the second week consisted of four days only. This was achieved by:
 - a) holding the first plenary session on the first Sunday afternoon;
 - b) assigning only one session for regional meetings; and
 - c) extending each working day for Committees I and II by 30 minutes.

This provisional working programme was adopted by the Conference of the Parties at CoP16.

Effects on the conduct of business of CoP16

5. To the Secretariat's knowledge, the reduced length of CoP16, compared to previous meetings, had no negative consequences on the conduct of the meeting. An important disruption to the working programme was caused by the calling of two unplanned plenary sessions in order to discuss amendments to the Rules of Procedure. This took approximately three-and-a-half hours that had been scheduled for sessions of Committees I and II. In spite of this, those Committees completed their work on time and without the need for any evening sessions. This was due in particular to the outstanding chairmanship of the Chairs of Committee I and Committee II.

Financial consequences

6. There were potential financial consequences from the reduced length of CoP16 for three entities: the Host Country; the participants; and the Secretariat.
7. For the Host Country, there was a potential impact in two ways:
 - a) The costs of renting the conference centre and the associated staff costs should have been reduced by one day;
 - b) In accordance with Resolution Conf. 16.2 on *Financing and the costed programme of work for the Secretariat for the triennium 2014-2016*, and its predecessors relating to financing:

all meetings of the Conference of the Parties and all regular meetings of the Standing Committee, the Animals Committee and the Plants Committee should be held in Switzerland unless a candidate host country pays the difference in costs between its proposed venue and Switzerland

Consequently, the costs of travel of the staff of the Secretariat and the CITES conference staff (assistants, interpreters, rapporteurs, translators), and the costs of their accommodation and subsistence have to be paid by the Host Country at the United Nations rate. The total number of CITES Secretariat and conference staff at CoP16 was 62 people. At the time of the meeting, the UN Daily Subsistence Allowance for Bangkok was USD 233. Therefore, reducing the length of the meeting by one day resulted in a saving of USD 14,446 for the Host Country.

8. The States and organizations that participated in the meeting should also have benefited in the same way, by a saving of the costs of accommodation and subsistence of one day for each of their representatives.
9. For the Secretariat, and thus for the CITES Trust Fund, there was no negative impact from the changed programme. Although there was an extra 30 minutes interpretation each day for seven days, the interpreters provided this for no additional cost. On the positive side, one day less of salary was required for the interpreters, rapporteurs, translators and typists, amounting to a reduction in costs of USD 22,018.
10. The Secretariat would like to take this opportunity to thank the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, United Kingdom, for its generosity in once again providing a rapporteur for CoP16 free of charge.

Recommendation

11. The Secretariat is not aware of any negative consequences of the reduction of CoP16 by one day compared to the length of previous meetings, and notes that there was an overall reduction of expenditures.
12. Consequently, the Secretariat seeks the agreement of the Standing Committee that, when preparing the provisional working programme for future meetings of the Conference of the Parties, the Secretariat should, as a general rule, follow the pattern of CoP16, as follows;
 - Day 1: pre-CoP meeting of the Standing Committee;
 - Day 2: morning: opening ceremony
afternoon: plenary sessions
 - Day 3: morning: regional meetings
afternoon: sessions of Committees I and II
 - Days 3-7: sessions of Committees I and II
 - Days 8-9: no formal sessions
 - Days 10-11: sessions of Committees I and II
 - Days 12-13: plenary sessions.