

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

Interpretation and implementation of the Convention

Trade control and traceability

ELECTRONIC PERMITTING

1. This document has been submitted by Switzerland, as Chair of the Standing Committee Working Group on Information Technologies and Electronic Systems¹.
2. At its 16th meeting (CoP16, Bangkok, 2014), the Conference of the Parties adopted Decision 16.54 on *Electronic Permitting*, directed to the Standing Committee, as follows:

The Standing Committee shall extend the mandate of its Working Group on Information Technologies and Electronic Systems in order for it to perform the following tasks:

- a) *collaborate with the CITES Secretariat in the drafting of funding proposals related to the development of CITES e-permitting systems;*
 - b) *work with the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business, the World Customs Organization and other relevant organizations to ensure that CITES e-permits are aligned with international trade standards and norms;*
 - c) *collaborate with the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre to further develop the Electronic Permit Information eXchange to act as a clearing-house of CITES e-permits and certificates and to offer Parties in developing regions a ready-to-use electronic CITES permitting system;*
 - d) *work with the CITES Secretariat to ensure that the CITES toolkit is updated as necessary; and*
 - e) *support the participation in the Working Group of developing countries party to CITES.*
3. The Standing Committee, at its 64th meeting (Bangkok, March 2013), agreed to extend the mandate of the Working Group on Information Technologies and Electronic Systems with the existing membership, with the addition of the United States of America, and with Switzerland as the Chair, in order to initiate the implementation of Decision 16.54. The current membership of the Working Group includes Belarus, Brazil, Canada, Czech Republic, France, Guatemala, Japan, Mexico, Monaco, Philippines, Portugal, Singapore, South Africa, Switzerland, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Viet Nam, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC) and the World Customs Organization.

¹ *The geographical designations employed in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the CITES Secretariat or the United Nations Environment Programme concerning the legal status of any country, territory, or area, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The responsibility for the contents of the document rests exclusively with its author.*

Background information

4. Several CITES e-permitting systems are currently being developed or implemented; one of these is a project launched by the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO) to assist its member States to develop, implement or enhance existing CITES e-permitting systems.
5. The German KfW Development Bank has earmarked 10 million euros for a financial cooperation project, which is expected to be implemented in early 2015. The project aims to improve the infrastructure necessary to support the development of CITES e-permitting systems in ACTO member States.
6. The Management Authorities of France and Switzerland have implemented a project to provide for paperless trade in CITES-listed species. Work on the implementation of this project is ongoing.
7. The Management Authority of Switzerland demonstrated the Swiss e-permitting system and the joint project with France for a paperless trade in CITES-listed species at a meeting with the Management Authority of Germany on 29 January 2014, and discussed issues related to development and implementation of such systems.

Funding proposals related to the development of CITES e-permitting systems

8. With regard to fundraising, the Chair and the Secretariat have held a number of meetings to discuss efforts to support to Parties wishing to develop CITES e-permitting systems, and possible outreach activities aimed at the private sector, particularly technology-related companies. Parties are invited to provide financial support for the tasks assigned to the Working Group and the Secretariat under Decision 16.54.

Ensuring that CITES e-permits are aligned with international trade standards and norms

9. Version 2 of the e-permitting Toolkit fully supports implementation of CITES e-permitting systems aligned with Single Window environments and was also updated to reflect UN/EDIFACT (United Nations rules for Electronic Data Interchange for Administration, Commerce and Transport) UNSM (United Nations Standard Message).

Development of the Electronic Permit Information eXchange (EPIX)

10. The Chair of the Working Group met with UNEP-WCMC to discuss collaboration on e-permitting activities on the margins of the fourth meeting of the Standing Committee Working Group on Special Reporting Requirements, which was held from 26 to 28 November 2013 in Peterborough, United Kingdom.
11. Discussions are ongoing between the Secretariat and UNEP-WCMC on the development of a mechanism to allow Parties to register data from electronic permits and certificates on the improved CITES Trade Database² in a more timely manner. This would make it possible, for example, to register data immediately on issuance or receipt of a CITES electronic permit or certificate. Such a development would provide Parties with up-to-the-minute data on the levels of international trade in CITES-listed species.

Ensuring that the CITES toolkit is updated

12. Version 2 of the e-permitting Toolkit was translated into French³ and Spanish⁴ to promote adherence to CITES e-permitting standards among speakers of these languages.

² See: CITES Trade Database breaks new ground with open-source technology (<http://cites.org/eng/CITES-Trade-Database-Breaks-New-Ground-with-Open-Source-Technology>)

³ <http://www.cites.org/fra/prog/e/e-permitting-toolkit.php>

⁴ <http://www.cites.org/esp/prog/e/e-permitting-toolkit.php>

Participation in the Working Group of developing countries party to CITES

13. Participation by developing countries in the Working Group is limited because of the lack of external financial support. This problem is critical given the investment by many developing countries to develop and implement CITES e-permitting systems. Donor Parties may wish to consider providing the requisite financial support.

Recommendation

14. The Standing Committee is invited to consider the information provided in this report.