

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



Sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties  
Bangkok (Thailand), 3-14 March 2013

Interpretation and implementation of the Convention

Species trade and conservation

SNAKE TRADE AND CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT

1. This document has been submitted by Switzerland on behalf of the Standing Committee and as Chair of the Standing Committee Working Group on snake trade and conservation management .
2. At its 15th meeting (Doha, 2010), the Conference of the Parties adopted Decisions 15.75 to 15.78 as follows:

***Directed to the Secretariat***

15.75 *The Secretariat shall, subject to available funds, convene a technical workshop to consider the conservation priorities and management and enforcement needs related to the trade of snakes in Asia, with a particular focus on the markets and commercial trade in East, South, and Southeast Asia.*

- a) *The Secretariat shall invite the members of the Animals and Standing Committees, representatives from range, exporting and consumer states, and relevant inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations to participate in this workshop, to be held within 12 months of the conclusion of the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.*
- b) *The Secretariat shall contract with appropriate technical experts to prepare documents on Asian snake conservation, trade management, enforcement, and biology for the workshop and shall invite workshop participants to submit the same.*
- c) *The findings and recommendations of this workshop should be reported by the Secretariat to the Animals and Standing Committees.*

***Directed to the Animals Committee***

15.76 *The Animals Committee shall consider the results of this workshop and provide their recommendations to the Standing Committee for its consideration.*

***Directed to the Standing Committee***

15.77 *The Standing Committee shall consider the recommendations by the Animals Committee and make its own recommendations at the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.*

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**Directed to Parties, non-governmental organizations, commercial traders, and donors**

15.78 *Parties and non-Parties, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, commercial traders, and donors are encouraged to provide funding to the Secretariat for this technical workshop.*

3. In compliance with Decision 15.75, the Secretariat convened an Asian snake trade workshop in Guangzhou, China, from 11 to 14 April 2011. The findings and recommendations of the workshop were reported to the Animals and Standing Committees in documents AC25 Doc. 18 and SC61 Doc. 46.1, respectively.
4. In compliance with Decision 15.76, the Animals Committee considered the results of the Asian snake trade workshop at its 25th meeting (Geneva, July 2011), and reported its recommendations to the Standing Committee at its 61st meeting (SC61, Geneva, August 2011) in document SC61 Doc. 46.2 (Rev. 1). The Standing Committee was requested to consider these recommendations and make its own recommendations for the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP16).
5. At SC61, the Standing Committee noted the recommendations of the Animals Committee in document SC61 Doc. 46.2 (Rev. 1). It agreed to establish an intersessional working group on snake trade and conservation management to review the recommendations of the Animals Committee and develop further recommendations for consideration at SC62 (Geneva, July 2012).
6. The working group met in the margins of SC61. It agreed that Switzerland would chair the working group and that members would communicate by electronic means.
7. The working group reviewed the recommendations of the Animals Committee and the results of the Guangzhou workshop on Asian snake trade, and formulated a number of recommendations to be considered at SC62. It presented them in document SC62 Doc. 48, recognizing that some further discussions would be required to streamline and consolidate the draft outputs. The working group therefore met in the sidelines of SC62 and presented the results of its work in document SC62 Com. 2. The Standing Committee agreed to the working group's recommendations for CoP16, and these are contained in the Annex to the present document.
8. The Standing Committee's recommendations for CoP16 consist of a number of draft decisions that are grouped according to the actors to which the different tasks are directed. They include: studies on production systems of Asian snakes; guidance for monitoring and controlling such systems; guidance for making non-detriment findings for trade in snake species included in Appendix II; methods to differentiate wild from captive-bred specimens of snakes in trade; traceability; capacity building and training; and collaboration in Southeast Asia on enforcement issues relevant to trade in snakes. The draft decisions also propose to examine other relevant reports, studies and sources of information, such as *The trade in Southeast Asian Python skins* (International Trade Centre, 2012).
9. The monitoring of the implementation of these activities and studies should be ensured by decisions directed to the Animals and Standing Committees.
10. The draft decisions also ensure that the current activities on the subject of trade in Asian snakes conducted by other actors, such as the International Trade Centre, UNCTAD's Biotrade initiative, as well as other relevant information, are included in the CITES decision-making processes.

Recommendation

11. The Standing Committee recommends that the Conference of the Parties adopt the draft decisions contained in the Annex to the present document.

COMMENTS FROM THE SECRETARIAT

- A. In principle, the Secretariat supports the recommendation of the Standing Committee that the Conference of the Parties adopt the five draft decisions presented in the Annex to the present document. However, the Secretariat is aware that some of the initiatives and organizations that are specified in these draft decisions

may undergo organizational or institutional changes before CoP16, which may necessitate minor amendments to the decisions.

- B. Although this is not specifically mentioned in the document, Decisions 15.75, 15.76, 15.77 and 15.78 have all been implemented. Consequently, the Secretariat recommends their deletion.

DRAFT DECISIONS RECOMMENDED BY THE STANDING COMMITTEE FOR  
ADOPTION BY THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

***Directed to the Secretariat***

16.AA The CITES Secretariat shall, where appropriate in consultation with the Standing Committee:

- a) subject to external funding, hire independent consultants in liaison with local scientists, and local research and academic institutions to:
  - i) undertake a study of production systems for Asian snakes listed in CITES Appendix II and the use of source codes; and develop guidance to assist Parties in monitoring and controlling captive-breeding operations and other production systems, including information to assess their biological feasibility and, where possible, economic viability (i.e. whether it is financially viable for commercial facilities to produce and export specimens as permitted by national authorities);
  - ii) compile information and develop guidance that can assist Parties in the making of non-detriment findings and the establishment of export quotas for Appendix-II snake species in trade, by undertaking relevant research, consulting with relevant experts, examining suitable examples and case-studies, and building on the results of the International Expert Workshop on CITES Non-Detriment Findings (Cancún, 2008) and recommendations on the making of non-detriment findings from the Conference of the Parties;
  - iii) undertake a study of one or more high-value snake species in the pet trade (e.g. unique colour or morphological forms or range-restricted endemics) to determine the impacts on wild populations of legal and illegal harvest for international trade and to provide information required for making non-detriment findings for trade in these species, and propose actions to enforce the Convention as it relates to trade in these species; and
  - iv) undertake a study on methodologies to differentiate between wild and captive-bred CITES listed snakes in trade, including parts and derivatives, ensuring that the work is carried out in line with recommendations of the Standing Committee concerning source codes;
- b) issue a Notification to the Parties encouraging Parties to engage with interested institutions to investigate the possibility of forensic identification of specimens of CITES-listed snakes in trade, and requesting Parties to inform the Secretariat about the results of such engagement;
- c) inform Parties of the results of the International Trade Centre (ITC) study on trade in python snakes in Asia, the UNCTAD Biotrade Initiative's Working Group on reptile skin sourcing, when these become available, and other relevant studies and information;
- d) present the outcomes of the activities mentioned in paragraphs a) and b) above, together with its recommendations, to the Animals Committee for review at its 27th or, as appropriate, 28th meeting, and make the final results available on the CITES website following review and approval by the Standing Committee pursuant to Decision 16.CC;
- e) issue a Notification to the Parties requesting Asian Parties to report on their implementation of Decision 16.DD to the Secretariat, and submit a compilation of this information and its recommendations for consideration by the Standing Committee at its 65th meeting; and
- f) subject to external funding, conduct one or more interdisciplinary workshops for CITES and other relevant authorities and stakeholders of range States of Asian snake species in international trade on:
  - i) the use of guidance for monitoring and controlling captive-breeding operations and other production systems, as agreed by the Standing Committee pursuant to Decision 16.CC;

- ii) the use of guidance for making non-detriment findings and establishing export quotas for Appendix-II snake species in trade; and
- iii) report on the results of these activities to the Standing Committee before the 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP17).

***Directed to the Animals Committee***

16.BB The Animals Committee shall:

- a) review the results of the activities indicated in Decision 16.AA, paragraphs a) to c), as well as the results of the ITC study and other relevant studies on trade in python snakes in Asia and UNCTAD Biotrade Initiative's Working Group on reptile skin sourcing, when available; and, based on these studies and reports, develop guidance and recommendations for consideration by the Standing Committee;
- b) examine the study undertaken by the UNCTAD Biotrade initiative's Working Group on reptile skin sourcing mentioned in Decision 16.AA, paragraph c), and any other relevant available information concerning:
  - i) existing marking and tracing systems and, where relevant, accompanying certification schemes of all kinds (and not necessarily limited to those currently in use for trade in wild species), which could provide best practices that might be applicable to snakes;
  - ii) a traceability system to confirm the legal origin of snake skins; and
  - iii) the economic feasibility of current technologies to implement such a traceability system;
- c) advise the Standing Committee on the feasibility of implementing such a traceability system for snakes; and
- d) report on the status of this work at the 65th and 66th meetings of the Standing Committee.

***Directed to the Standing Committee***

16.CC The Standing Committee shall:

- a) consider the reports and recommendations from the Animals Committee and the Secretariat provided in accordance with Decisions 16.AA and 16.BB and, as appropriate, the results of the ITC study on trade in python snakes in Asia, the UNCTAD Biotrade Initiative's Working Group on reptile skin sourcing, and any other relevant available information;
- b) examine the study undertaken by UNCTAD Biotrade Initiative's Working Group on reptile skin sourcing, and any other relevant available information concerning:
  - i) the socio-economic implications of such a traceability system; and
  - ii) the potential costs of the system at all levels along the supply chain, from producers to consumers;
- c) make recommendations to the Parties, the Animals Committee and the Secretariat as appropriate; and
- d) report on the implementation of Decisions 16.AA to 16.CC at CoP17, with recommendations for consideration by the Parties, if deemed necessary.

***Directed to Parties***

16.DD Parties should eliminate the important illegal and unreported trade in specimens, whether live or parts and derivatives, of CITES-listed snake species by:

- a) ensuring that CITES permits and certificates are properly issued for trade in these specimens;

- b) including information on trade in these specimens in their CITES annual reports;
- c) ensuring that their annual reports are following the most recent version of the Guidelines for the preparation and submission of CITES annual reports, in compliance with Resolution Conf. 11.17 (Rev. CoP14);
- d) examining their enforcement efforts regarding trade in these specimens to ensure that adequate steps are taken to deter and detect illegal and unreported trade;
- e) undertaking education and outreach activities directed towards snake farms, buyers and sellers of live snakes, parts and derivatives, product manufacturers, shippers, brokers and staff from government agencies involved in controlling and monitoring this trade to ensure that snake specimens are traded in compliance with national laws and CITES provisions; and
- f) in the case of Parties in Asia, reporting on their efforts in all of these areas to the Secretariat in time for its reporting for the 65th meeting of the Standing Committee, in compliance with Decision 16.AA, paragraph d).

***Directed to ICCWC and ASEAN-WEN***

- 16.EE The International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICCWC) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Wildlife Enforcement Network (ASEAN-WEN) are encouraged to take note of the concerns about the illegal and unreported trade in snakes and their parts and derivatives, and take these into account when developing work programmes and, if funding is available, undertaking relevant activities.