
Report on the CITES workshop on mega-biodiversity exporters (with the assistance of the European Commission)

Held in Brussels, Belgium 29 January - 2 February 2001

The CITES Secretariat, with financial assistance from the European Commission, organized a capacity-building workshop for countries that are engaged in exporting significant numbers of specimens of a large variety of CITES-listed species, and that face certain challenges implementing the Convention.

The workshop was a forum to exchange experiences on, for example, legislation, the methodology used to make non-detriment findings and to establish quotas, and the type of assistance needed to improve implementation. Countries invited to participate were: Benin, Guinea, Guyana, Indonesia, Madagascar, Malaysia, Nicaragua, South Africa, Suriname, the United Republic of Tanzania and Viet Nam. Colombia, the European Commission, TRAFFIC and the United States Agency for International Development attended as observers.

South Africa was invited to attend the workshop to present a case study of CITES implementation in a major exporting and re-exporting country. South Africa thus shared with the other participants its experience of the implementation of the Convention and of how CITES contributes to its national conservation objectives.

The outcome was very positive since participants were open and communicated easily with each other on common issues. The main challenges were identified under the following headings:

Administration

Trade monitoring, recording and reporting in terms of permits; quotas and annual reports; capacity-building issues; decentralization; Management Authority (MA) and Scientific Authority (SA) institutional and working relationship; national legislation; MA resource base, infrastructure and equipment.

Science and resource management

Production systems and source codes; SA capacity building; implementation of Article IV and quotas; species-specific guidelines; monitoring of trade and use of trade data; standardization of trade summaries; inventory; population surveys and species identification; lack of appropriate scientific capacity; lack of published scientific data; conservation value of species listings; recommendations and decisions; ecologically damaging species in trade; impacts of reintroduction and release into the wild and preparation and coordination of listing proposals.

Enforcement

Species identification; marking and forensic techniques; production of manuals; training initiatives; communication of stricter national measures; coordination of enforcement efforts between agencies at national, regional and international levels; bilateral and regional enforcement dialogue, regional or issue specific Enforcement Task Force; lack of intelligence data for law enforcement; promotion and routine use of Ecomessage; alerts, strategic analysis and feedback to Parties; disposal of confiscated specimens; lack of CITES-trained enforcement officers and transit trade.

Coordination and cooperation

Dialogue between wildlife producing countries; dialogue between exporting and importing countries; two-way liaison with the Secretariat; misunderstanding by Parties of the role of the Secretariat; role of civil society, stakeholders, private sector and NGOs; participation in CITES fora; addressing general wildlife issues and practical and political difficulties to collaborate with neighbouring countries on wildlife trade issues.

Education and awareness

National and international information campaigns; improving dissemination of and access to information using the Internet.

External issues

Stricter domestic measures; Gaborone amendment; external influences such as civil strife and political change; transport breakdowns; lack of political will to support CITES processes and pressures against trade in, and use of wildlife.

Economics and development

Revenues; valuation of wildlife versus other land uses; non payments; understanding market evolutions; reinvestment into management and control and promote and demonstrate the use of revenues for conservation and monitoring.

The workshop was not only a successful gathering where experiences were shared and challenges identified, but was used as an opportunity to meet and talk to officials from other countries, irrespective of the differences in language. We as South Africans even learned that we can address the officials from Suriname in our mother tongue.

I would like to thank the Secretariat and the European Commission for the opportunity that we, as officials from countries that are engaged in exporting significant quantities of CITES-listed specimens, had to share our experiences in the implementation of CITES. We are looking forward to a follow-up workshop where we can tackle the challenges identified head-on.

CITES Management Authority of South Africa