



NOTIFICATION TO THE PARTIES

No. 2018/030

Geneva, 26 March 2018

CONCERNING:

Implementation of Decision 17.297 on *Tortoises and
freshwater turtles (Testudines spp.)*

1. At its 17th meeting (CoP17, Johannesburg, 2016), the Conference of the Parties adopted Decisions 17.297 and 17.298 on *Tortoises and freshwater turtles (Testudines spp.)*.
2. Decision 17.297 directs Parties to:
 - a) *take steps to strengthen implementation and enforcement of the Convention for tortoises and freshwater and terrestrial turtles, especially the recommendations of the Standing Committee under Decision 17.298 a) and b); and*
 - b) *report to 70th and 71st meetings of the Standing Committee, through the Secretariat, on steps taken to implement the Committee's recommendations, under Decision 17.298 a) and b).*
3. Decision 17.298 directs the Standing Committee to:
 - a) *at its 69th meeting, consider the findings and recommendations of the Secretariat and the Task Force, under Decisions 17.295 d) and 17.296 c) and recommend actions by the Parties, as it deems appropriate, to strengthen enforcement and implementation of the Convention for these species;*
 - b) *at its 70th and 71st meetings, evaluate the reports of the Parties under Decision 17.297 b) and determine whether additional recommendations or measures are needed, including appropriate compliance measures in accordance with Resolution Conf. 14.3 on CITES compliance procedures; and*
 - c) *report on actions and progress achieved by the Committee, Task Force and the Parties at the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.*
4. At its 69th meeting (SC69, Geneva, November 2017), the Standing Committee agreed the recommendations developed by participants of the CITES Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles Task Force, including amendments suggested by the Secretariat. The full set of recommendations on *Tortoises and freshwater turtles (Testudines spp.)* adopted at SC69 is presented in the Annex to the present Notification.
5. Parties are invited to submit their reports in accordance with the provisions of Decision 17.297, paragraph b), on the implementation of recommendations 1. a) to f), 2. a) to c), and 3. a) to d), as presented in the Annex to the present Notification, to the Secretariat by **31 May 2018**. This will allow for compilation of the reports in a timely manner for consideration of the Standing Committee at its 70th meeting (SC 70, Sochi, October 2018). Reports should be submitted by email at info@cites.org.
6. With regards to SC69 recommendation 4. d), contained in the Annex to the present Notification, the Standing Committee requested the Secretariat to prepare a draft revised version of Resolution Conf. 11.9 (Rev. CoP13) on *Conservation of and trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles*, incorporating the revisions

proposed in recommendation 4 d) i. to v. and taking into consideration the other recommendations developed by the Task Force and discussions at SC69, for consideration by the Standing Committee at its 70th meeting.

7. The Standing Committee further noted the success achieved during “Operation Save Kurma” initiated by India, and encouraged Parties affected by significant levels of illegal trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles to consider undertaking similar operations in future.
8. The Secretariat also take this opportunity to remind Parties about the provisions of SC69 recommendation 6. c), contained in the Annex to the present Notification, and that access to the World Customs Organization’s ENVIRONET can be requested as outlined in Notification to the Parties No. 2015/039 of 25 June 2015. Parties are also encouraged to consult the CITES Management Authorities Forum as may be needed.

**Recommendations of the CITES Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles Task Force
as adopted by the Standing Committee at its 69th meeting
(SC69, Geneva, November 2017)**

1. All Parties affected by illegal trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles should:

Targeting illegal trade

- a) Undertake risk profiling and provide capacity-building interventions and detection equipment to enforcement officers at ports to enable them to better target known modes of transport used for trafficking in tortoises and freshwater turtles;
- b) Scale up activities to address illegal trade in tortoise and freshwater turtle specimens being shipped through postal and courier services, and to address illegal trade at identified key locations in domestic markets;

Information and intelligence sharing

- c) Where possible, use platforms such as INTERPOL's Regional Investigative and Analytical Case Management (RIACM) meetings, and the Wildlife Inter-Regional Enforcement (WIRE) meetings of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) for information sharing regarding trafficking in tortoises and freshwater turtles;
- d) Encourage national agencies responsible for wildlife law enforcement to engage with their INTERPOL National Central Bureau (NCB) to request that access to the INTERPOL I-24/7 global communications system and databases be extended to them;

Species identification

- e) Implement a three-step identification process for tortoises and freshwater turtles as follows:
 - i) Enforcement officers (including customs officers) use available identification materials to identify the most frequently traded tortoise and freshwater turtle species and their parts and products;
 - ii) Where doubt remains about identification after using available identification materials, enforcement officers should share photographs of traded animals with national identification experts, for specific identification or confirmation. National authorities are encouraged to designate a national facilitator for this purpose; and
 - iii) Where doubt continues to remain after consulting national identification experts, enforcement officers should share photographs and other information, through their national designated facilitator, with global identification experts, and draw upon forensic analysis, in particular molecular analysis, as may be needed; and
- f) Develop supplementary identification guidance containing basic information on the characteristics used for tortoise and freshwater turtle identification to support the accurate application of existing identification materials. This guidance should be tailored to the specific needs of each country.

2. All Parties should:**Illegal trade on the internet**

- a) Engage online communities, e.g. auction platforms and closed discussion groups, to create awareness about all aspects of illegal trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles;

Cooperation

- b) When possible make use of INTERPOL's National Environmental Security Seminars (NESS)¹ to promote inter-agency coordination, pursuant to strengthening the implementation of paragraph 1 b) in Resolution Conf. 11.9 (Rev. CoP13) on *Conservation of and trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles*; and
- c) As appropriate, cooperate through regional wildlife enforcement networks for the better involvement of their member countries, pursuant to strengthening the implementation of paragraph 1 b) in Resolution Conf. 11.9 (Rev. CoP13) on *Conservation of and trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles*.

3. All Parties and organizations should:**Public awareness and empowerment**

- a) As appropriate, create and implement awareness tools that can engage target audiences and cultures, in particular young adults, through social and other digital media, pursuant to strengthening the implementation of paragraph 1 f) and g) in Resolution Conf. 11.9 (Rev. CoP13) on *Conservation of and trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles*;
- b) As appropriate, highlight the plight of tortoises and freshwater turtles in their campaigns to address wildlife trafficking;
- c) Empower the general public by raising awareness about existing tools available to report illegal trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles and other wildlife crimes, e.g. mobile phone applications, hotline numbers, toll-free phone numbers, social media, etc.; and
- d) Encourage the general public to act as the eyes and ears of law enforcement through awareness raising initiatives and materials targeting for example public transport, roadside stops and restaurants, airports and other transport hubs, with a particular focus on illegal trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles.

4. The Standing Committee is invited to:**Targeting illegal trade**

- a) Discuss the fact that in some countries non-native species of tortoises and freshwater turtles are not being covered in national legislation;

Illegal trade on the internet

- b) In its deliberations, consider the best way to fight the use of social media platforms as a form of e-commerce for illegal trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles;

¹ <https://www.interpol.int/en/Media/Files/Crime-areas/Environmental-crime/Leaflets-brochures/National-Environmental-Security-Seminar-NESS/>.

Funding opportunities

- c) Encourage donors to increase funding initiatives to combat illegal trafficking in tortoises and freshwater turtles;

Resolutions

- d) Propose to the Conference of the Parties revisions to Resolution Conf. 11.9 (Rev.CoP13) *on Conservation of and trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles*, as follows²:
 - i) Removal of the word “Asian” in the Resolution unless specifically relevant for certain issues;
 - ii) (Para 1a) “all Parties, especially range States and exporting and importing States of Asian tortoises and freshwater turtles, to enhance and increase enforcement and prosecution efforts with regard to existing legislation as a matter of urgency”;
 - iii) (Para 1b) “all Parties, ~~especially range States and exporting and importing States of Asian tortoise and freshwater turtles,~~ to enhance cooperation amongst wildlife-law enforcement agencies at national and international levels concerning control of trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles, and between enforcement agencies and national CITES authorities”;
 - iv) (Para 1h) “all Parties, especially in the Asian region, to collaborate on all aspects of conservation and management of, trade in, and implementation of the Convention for, tortoises and freshwater turtles, ~~taking into consideration the recommendations formulated at the technical workshop on Conservation of and trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles held in Kunming, China, 25-28 March 2002~~”; and
 - v) (Para 2): “DIRECTS the Secretariat to provide assistance with securing financial resources from Parties, United Nations specialized agencies, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, trade associations, industry and others as appropriate, for range States in need of and requesting financial support to develop and implement management and enforcement strategies and action plans concerning CITES-listed tortoises and freshwater turtles in accordance with this Resolution”.

5. Members of the CITES Tortoise and Freshwater Turtles Task Force should:

Information and intelligence sharing

- a) Work towards the development of an enforcement alert on tortoises and freshwater turtles, including information on species trafficked, *modus operandi*, trafficking routes, concealment methods, and nationalities of offenders involved, to be updated on a rotational basis in accordance with a timeframe identified by Task Force members; and
- b) Each aim to, where possible, issue at least one INTERPOL Red Notice on known high priority offenders involved in illegal trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles, and consider the use of other INTERPOL Notices as appropriate.³

² NB: Text proposed to be deleted is crossed out. Proposed new text is underlined.

³ <https://www.interpol.int/INTERPOL-expertise/Notices>

6. The CITES Secretariat should:**Targeting illegal trade**

- a) Request the World Customs Organization (WCO) to develop a set of risk profiles and indicators focusing on illegal trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles;
- b) Request UNODC to use enforcement alerts on tortoises and freshwater turtles, and any risk indicators for these species developed by WCO, in its capacity-building activities on container profiling;

Information and intelligence sharing

- c) Encourage Parties to consult the CITES permit samples as available on the CITES Management Authorities Forum and in WCO's ENVIRONET,⁴ if needed;

Seizures and disposal

- d) Post a list of tortoise and freshwater turtle rescue facilities on the CITES website;

Species identification

- e) Request the IUCN/SSC Tortoise and Freshwater Turtles Specialist Group to develop guidance on how to photograph tortoise and freshwater turtle specimens for identification.

⁴ <https://cites.org/sites/default/files/notif/E-Notif-2015-039.pdf>