



NOTIFICATION TO THE PARTIES

No. 2019/005

Geneva, 15 January 2019

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, *inter alia*, 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, in accordance with the provisions of Decision 17.298, paragraphs a), agreed a number of recommendations on *Tortoises and freshwater turtles (Testudines spp.)*. At its 70th meeting (SC70, Sochi, October 2018), the Committee noted the low response rate from Parties with regards to Decision 17.297, paragraph b), and requested Parties, in particular those affected by illegal trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles, to provide reports for consideration by the Committee at its 71st meeting (SC71, Colombo, May 2019).
5. To facilitate the reporting of Parties to SC71, the Secretariat consolidated the relevant recommendations on *Tortoises and freshwater turtles (Testudines spp.)* adopted at SC69 in the Annex to the present Notification.

6. Parties which have not yet submitted 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, are invited to submit their reports to the Secretariat by **15 February 2019**. This will allow for compilation of the reports in a timely manner for consideration of the Standing Committee at SC71. Reports should be submitted by email to: cites.info-cites@un.org.
7. The Secretariat also takes this opportunity to remind Parties about the Closed User Group for the CITES Tortoise and Freshwater Turtles Task Force, established on the World Customs Organization (WCO) CENComm platform. More information on the Closed User Group can be found in document SC70 Doc. 61, paragraphs 22 to 24. Parties are encouraged to, where not yet done, communicate the establishment of the Closed User Group to their relevant national authorities and encourage its use. Requests for access to the CITES Tortoise and Freshwater Turtles Closed User Group should be communicated to the Secretariat.

Annex

**Recommendations adopted by the Standing Committee at its 69th meeting
(SC69, Geneva, November 2017), relevant for reporting in accordance with
the provisions of Decision 17.297, paragraph b)**

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.

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