

Summary of the 78th Meeting of the CITES Standing Committee: 3-8 February 2025

Mother Earth is in crisis. From climate change to biodiversity loss to pollution, our planet and all the species who call it home—humans included—face disruption on a scale never before experienced in recorded memory. In this context of accelerating loss and destruction, coupled with a fraught geopolitical landscape, it has never been more urgent to ensure that international trade in wildlife remains sustainable, legal, and traceable. This is the goal of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). The CITES Standing Committee (SC) provides the Convention with policy guidance essential to realizing its mission of a sustainable future for wild fauna and flora—and by extension for the people who rely on them for sustenance and livelihoods, not to mention breathable air, clean water, and a habitable biosphere.

As CITES Secretary-General Ivonne Higuero noted in her opening remarks to the 78th meeting of the SC, there is reason for hope. Half a century of CITES implementation has brought remarkable achievements despite rapidly evolving challenges. Some recent wins include the dramatic recovery of the saiga antelope population in Kazakhstan, and progress made on compliance in the implementation of the Convention for African teak, Malagasy palisanders, and rosewoods for trade in captive-bred specimens. With Turkmenistan recently becoming the 185th party to CITES—proof of the increasingly powerful role of the Central Asian region in wildlife conservation—the Convention continues to grow.

But growth itself is a problem. Despite the unwavering commitment of a small Secretariat dedicated to organizing technical meetings, writing documents, and supporting parties (particularly those facing implementation challenges or capacity limitations), there is a significant and widening disconnect between workloads and resources. Not just the Secretariat is affected; parties also face an explosion of reporting burdens and responsibilities.

At SC78, delegates were tasked with discussing over 127 working documents across 87 agenda items containing more than 200 potential decisions. Even adding an extra day for the working programme—six instead of the usual five for SC meetings—wasn't enough time to complete the agenda. As a result, eight substantial issues were deferred for later consideration through Notifications to the Parties before submission to CoP20, where they are likely to generate significant debate:

- CITES Strategic Vision ([SC78 Doc.14](#));
- Language strategy for the Convention ([SC78 Doc.20](#));
- Capacity-building framework ([SC78 Doc.21](#));

- Implementation of Resolution Conf.19.2 on Capacity-building ([SC78 Doc.22](#));
- Review of Resolutions and Decisions ([SC78 Doc.30](#));
- Products containing specimens of Appendix-II orchids (Orchidaceae spp.) ([SC78 Doc.72 \(Rev.1\)](#));
- Trade in medicinal and aromatic plant species ([SC78 Doc.74](#)); and
- Orchid specimens exempted through Annotation #4 g) ([SC78 Doc.78](#)).

Given limited time and scarce resources, discussions during SC78 focused on actionable and impactful recommendations to CoP20 to shape the future of CITES, including on:

- sharks and rays;
- seahorses;
- eels;

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- an information system for trade in specimens of CITES-listed tree species;
- seizure reporting on big cats;
- monitoring elephant poaching;
- potential cooperation between CITES and the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) on jaguar conservation; and
- potential future interaction between CITES and the new Agreement under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ).

CITES SC78 convened from 3-8 February 2025 in Geneva, Switzerland, with nearly 600 government delegates and other stakeholders participating. It was the final meeting before the 20th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES (CoP20), to be held from 24 November – 5 December 2025 in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, which will commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Convention's entry into force.

A Brief History of CITES

CITES was established as a response to growing concerns that over-exploitation of wildlife through international trade was contributing to the rapid decline of many species of plants and animals around the world. The Convention was signed by representatives from 80 countries in Washington, DC, on 3 March 1973, and entered into force on 1 July 1975. There are currently 185 parties to the Convention.

The aim of CITES is to ensure that international trade of wild animal and plant species does not threaten their survival. CITES parties are expected to regulate the trade of wildlife species listed in three CITES appendices. Appendix I lists species endangered due to international trade, permitting such trade only in exceptional circumstances. Appendix-II species may become endangered if their trade is not regulated, thus they require controls aimed at preventing unsustainable use, maintaining ecosystems, and preventing species from entering Appendix I. Appendix-III species are subject to domestic regulation by a party requesting the cooperation of other parties to control international trade in these species.

In order to list a species in Appendix I or II, a party needs to submit a proposal for approval by the CoP, supported by scientific and biological data on population and trade trends. The proposal must be adopted by a two-thirds majority of parties present and voting. As the trade impact on a species increases or decreases, the CoP decides whether or not the species should be transferred or removed from the appendices.

Over 40,900 species—including roughly 6,610 species of animals and 34,310 species of plants—are listed under CITES. Parties regulate international trade of CITES listed species through a system of permits and certificates that are required before specimens of these species are imported, exported, or introduced from the sea. Each party is required to adopt national legislation and to designate two national authorities, namely, a Management Authority responsible for issuing permits and certificates based on the advice of a Scientific Authority. These two national authorities also assist with CITES enforcement through cooperation with customs, police, and other appropriate agencies. Parties maintain trade records that are forwarded annually to the CITES Secretariat, thus enabling the compilation of statistical information on the global volume of international trade in an appendix-listed species.

The operational bodies of CITES include the Standing Committee (SC) and two scientific committees: the Plants Committee (PC) and the Animals Committee (AC).

The first CoP was held in Bern, Switzerland, in November 1976, and subsequent CoPs have been held every two to three years. The CoP meets to, *inter alia*:

- review progress in the conservation of species included in the appendices;
- discuss and adopt proposals to amend the lists of species in Appendices I and II;
- consider recommendations and proposals from parties, the Secretariat, the SC, and the scientific committees; and
- recommend measures to improve the effectiveness of the Convention and the functioning of the Secretariat.

The CoP also periodically reviews the list of resolutions and decisions, as well as the species listed in its appendices. The Standing Committee provides general policy and operational direction to the Secretariat concerning the implementation of the Convention, drafts resolutions for consideration by the CoP, and performs any other functions entrusted to it by the CoP.

Key Turning Points

In 2010, the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC) was created to further enhance the international cooperation needed to support national efforts to strengthen the enforcement response.

In 2015, the United Nations Group of Friends on Poaching and Illicit Wildlife Trafficking, co-chaired by Gabon and Germany, promoted the first UN General Assembly resolution on tackling illicit trafficking in wildlife. Resolution 69/314 and three follow-up resolutions recognize CITES as the primary legal framework for regulating international trade in species of wild animals and plants and combating illicit trafficking in wildlife.

In 2019, General Assembly resolution 73/343 further underscored the importance of national-level action and commitment to effectively address illegal wildlife trade, urging Member States to “take decisive steps at the national level to prevent, combat, and eradicate the illegal trade in wildlife, on the supply, transit, and demand sides, including by strengthening their legislation and regulations necessary for the prevention, investigation, prosecution, and appropriate punishment of such illegal trade, as well as by strengthening enforcement and criminal justice responses.”

Recent Meetings

CITES CoP19: CoP19 convened from 14-25 November 2022 in Panama City, Panama. CoP19 adopted 46 of the 52 proposals put forward to increase or decrease controls on international trade in wildlife and wildlife products, bringing many species of sharks, lizards, turtles, fish, birds, frogs, and more than a hundred tree species under CITES control to ensure the sustainability of these species in the wild while allowing their international trade. In addition, a record 365 decisions were adopted to advance protection of threatened wildlife species while at the same time allowing international trade.

CITES SC77: SC77 convened in Geneva, Switzerland from 6-10 November 2023. Over 717 participants registered for the meeting, which considered 77 agenda items with over 101 related documents spanning some 2,701 pages. Due to time constraints, 17 agenda items were deferred to SC78. Highlights from SC77 included recommendations on: the establishment of the CITES Global Youth Network; seizure reporting on big cats; monitoring elephant poaching; stockpiling timber; and consideration of possible future interaction between CITES and the new BBNJ Agreement.

SC78 Report

On Monday, 3 February, SC Chair Rosemarie Gnam (US) welcomed delegates to SC78 and noted this year marks the 50th anniversary of the entry into force of CITES. She called for solution-focused discussions to generate strong recommendations to guide the future work of the Convention.

CITES Secretary-General Ivonne Higuero thanked Switzerland for hosting SC78 and welcomed Turkmenistan as the 185th party to the Convention.

Administrative and Financial Matters

Agenda and working programme: On Monday, SC78 adopted the meeting's agenda ([SC78 Doc.1](#)) and working programme ([SC78 Doc.2](#)).

Rules of Procedure: On Monday, SC78 noted [SC78 Doc.3](#). ISRAEL noted they would be speaking on behalf of Georgia as a representative for Europe in Georgia's absence.

Credentials: On Monday, SC78 noted the oral report by the Secretariat that credentials had been received for all SC regional representatives.

Admission of observers: On Monday, SC78 noted the list of invited observers ([SC78 Doc.5](#)).

Financial matters: On Monday, the Secretariat introduced [SC78 Doc.7](#), highlighting USD 1.3 million in outstanding arrears as of 2023. The SC noted the document.

AC and PC Chairs' reports: On Monday, the Chairs of the CITES Plants Committee (PC) and Animals Committee (AC) presented document [SC78 Doc.6](#).

The US inquired whether any alternative ways have been identified to fund periodic review processes in the future. The Secretariat said none were currently available.

Outcome: The SC noted the PC and AC recommendations as contained in the summary records of their most recent meetings ([PC27 SR](#) and [AC33 SR](#)) and agreed to draft decisions and amendments agreed at them.

The SC also:

- requested the Secretariat to revise the text on cooperation with the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation;
- noted the matters raised in SC78 Doc.6 paragraph 46 relating to the term "appropriate and acceptable destinations," specifically on transit and re-exports; and
- considered the outcomes of the technical workshop on aquatic species, held in April 2024 in Geneva, Switzerland ([AC33 Inf.13](#)).

Financial matters: On Monday, the Secretariat introduced [SC78 Doc.7](#) on financial matters; [SC78 Doc.8](#) on proposed budget scenarios for 2026-2028; [SC78 Doc.9.1 \(Rev.1\)](#) on the report of the Secretariat on administrative matters and [SC78 Doc.9.2](#) on the report of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) on administrative matters; and [SC78 Doc.13](#) on arrangements for meetings of the CoP.

On the report on proposed budget scenarios for 2026-2028, the UK, CANADA, BRAZIL, and the US requested further details on specific activities to be undertaken by proposed new staff.

On UNEP's report on administrative matters, BRAZIL said that new Secretariat staff recruitments should correct regional imbalances in Secretariat staff positions. JAPAN stressed the need to ensure no additional administrative burdens would be placed on the Secretariat.

The SC noted SC78 Doc.7 and referred the other documents to the in-session Finance and Budget Subcommittee (FBSC).

On Saturday, New Zealand, as Chair of the FBSC, presented on the committee's work throughout the week, noting the committee had not reached agreement on recommending the approval of an increased budget line.

The US, with JAPAN, KUWAIT, KENYA, and SENEGAL, did not support forwarding the recommendation on an increased budget line to the CoP, and suggested deleting it altogether. NEW ZEALAND and SWITZERLAND supported this specific recommendation and urged moving the matter forward.

Chair Gnam suggested, and the SC agreed, not to include the recommendation on the increased budget line at this point, and to forward this matter to CoP20.

Outcome: The SC noted [SC78 Doc.7](#) and referred further discussions on [SC78 Doc.8](#), [SC78 Doc.9.1 \(Rev.1\)](#), [SC78 Doc.9.2](#), and [SC78 Doc.13](#) to the CoP.

Emerging operational matters of the committees: On Saturday, the Secretariat presented [SC78 Doc.10](#), highlighting a risk matrix for convening CITES meetings.

JAPAN, supported by KUWAIT, noted the challenges of time zone differences and internet connectivity with online or hybrid meetings. Several delegates suggested specifically referring to the COVID-19 pandemic as an example of exceptional circumstances.

Outcome: The SC agreed:

- to request the Secretariat to continue using the risk matrix for convening CITES meetings;
- online Committee meetings would only be organized under exceptional circumstances, such as the COVID-19 pandemic;
- to use the guidance on the application of the Rules of Procedure of the Standing Committee in an online or hybrid meeting as amended when exceptional circumstances warrant the organization of an online or hybrid meeting, and request the Secretariat to publish this guidance on the CITES website;
- to submit to the CoP the amendments to Resolution Conf.18.2 on Establishment of Committees; and
- to consider the proposal for an intersessional decision-making procedure for the organization of intersessional work and request the Secretariat to develop a proposal for amending Rule 20 of the SC Rules of Procedure (procedure for intersessional decision-making), taking into account the comments made at SC78 for its consideration at SC81.

Access to funding: On Monday, the Secretariat introduced [SC78 Doc.11](#) on the development of a resource mobilization strategy. She highlighted the suggestion to incorporate CoP Decisions 18.4 and 19.4-9 into Resolution Conf.19.1 (on financing and the costed programme of work for the Secretariat for the triennium 2023-2025) to ensure the long-term funding of Secretariat activities.

BRAZIL, supported by KUWAIT, KENYA, SENEGAL, ARGENTINA, ECUADOR, CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC (CAR), IRAN, and the DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO (DRC) preferred incorporating the current structure of the past decisions and resolution into a new draft resolution. BRAZIL clarified that the proposed amendment would limit resource mobilization to support the Secretariat.

The US suggested edits to remove legally binding language and make clear that any support should be within existing budgets, and suggested the issue be addressed in the FBSC. CANADA, also on behalf of MEXICO, requested additional information on the practical and financial implications of the proposed resource

mobilization strategy. SUDAN drew attention to the resource needs of several CITES parties, especially relating to capacity building. BELGIUM, with GEORGIA and MALAYSIA, supported the proposed amendments as well as the edits suggested by the US. NEW ZEALAND said it could support either position.

Chair Gnam established a small drafting group to address options, including a new draft decision.

On Saturday, New Zealand, on behalf of the drafting group, introduced [SC78 Com.11](#). The US and BELGIUM expressed support. BRAZIL noted that the agreed language weakens efforts to provide assistance to developing countries.

Outcome: The SC:

- noted the update provided by the Secretariat on access to funding;
- agreed on the revisions of Decisions 19.4 and 19.5 and the renewal of Decision 19.6 in Annex 1 for consideration by CoP20; and
- proposed to incorporate Decisions 18.4, 19.5, 19.6, and 19.7 in Resolution Conf.19.1 on financing and the costed programme of work for the Secretariat for the triennium for consideration by CoP20.

Arrangements for CoP20 (Resolution Conf.19.1): Preparations for CoP20: On Monday, Aziz Abdukhakimov, Minister of Ecology, Environmental Protection, and Climate Change, Uzbekistan, expressed his country's readiness to address the triple planetary crisis, be a hub for CITES capacity building across Central Asia, and host CoP20 in Samarkand. The SC thanked Uzbekistan for his presentation and noted progress in preparing for CoP20.

Draft provisional agenda: On Monday, the Secretariat introduced, and the SC approved [SC78 Doc.12.2](#).

Draft provisional working programme: On Monday, the Secretariat introduced [SC78 Doc.12.3](#), proposing to have six working days before the two-day break, supported by AUSTRALIA and GEORGIA and opposed by ISRAEL.

Outcome: The SC approved the draft provisional working programme for CoP20.

Rules of Procedure of the CoP: On Monday, Rosemarie Gnam, as Chair of the Working Group on Rules of Procedure, introduced [SC78 Doc.12.4](#), highlighting three proposed amendments to Rule 25.6, which states that if two or more proposals relate to the same taxon, but are different in substance, the CoP shall first decide on the proposal that will have the least restrictive effect on the trade and then on the proposal with the next least restrictive effect.

The UK, NEW ZEALAND, GEORGIA, CANADA, BELGIUM, and others supported the amendments, including introducing a stepwise approach. KENYA supported the stepwise approach with the deletion of the footnote, supported by BELGIUM and ZEALAND, indicating that if the effect of one proposal is to reduce the restrictive effect on the trade and the effect of another proposal is to increase it for the same taxon, then adoption of one necessarily implies rejection of the other. BRAZIL supported the stepwise approach but not the language indicating that if one proposal is adopted to add restrictions for the same taxon, then the last proposal adopted will be the decision of the CoP for the taxon.

BOTSWANA, KUWAIT, SOUTH AFRICA, and others supported China's proposal to retain the current Rule with an amendment that reflects concern for overlapping taxon proposals and prevents decisions on more restrictive proposals if the less restrictive proposal is adopted.

Outcome: The SC agreed to propose to CoP20 amendments to Rule 25.6 as follows:

- if two or more proposals relate to the same taxon, but are different in substance, and the implications of the adoption of one proposal for the other are clear, allow each of the proposals to be introduced prior to submitting either of them for discussion and decision; and
- if, in relation to the same taxon, the adoption of one proposal necessarily implies the rejection of another, the latter shall nevertheless be submitted.

The SC also agreed that the SC Chair would propose a draft decision to CoP20 to continue consideration of the possible inclusion of a stepwise approach in Rule 25.6.

Selection of nominees for Committee Chairs: On Monday, the Secretariat reminded parties to submit their nominations for Committee Chairs and encouraged nominations from women that improve geographical balance. The SC noted the oral report.

Sponsored Delegates Project (SDP) and CoP20 sponsored delegates: On Monday, the Secretariat introduced [SC78 Doc.12.6](#) on the SDP, noting that new funding from Germany would complement existing contributions by the EU and Slovakia.

SENEGAL and the CAR favored mobilizing additional support for developing countries.

Outcome: The SC agreed to:

- note the update provided by the Secretariat on the SDP; and
- propose to CoP20 to incorporate Decision 18.12, paragraph (a) and Decision 19.10, paragraph (a) in Resolution Conf.17.3 (Rev. CoP19) on the SDP.

Arrangements for CoP meetings: On Monday, the Secretariat introduced [SC78 Doc.13](#), highlighting Panama's offer to host CoP21 and the Secretariat's request to include a new budget line in the CITES Core Trust Fund (CTF) in the next triennial budget for 2026-2028 for CoP organization.

The US, supported by BELGIUM, KUWAIT, JAPAN, and SENEGAL, suggested referring consideration of a new budget line in the CITES CTF to the FBSC. NEW ZEALAND and GEORGIA supported including a new budget line for CoP organization in the CITES CTF, with GEORGIA requesting information on how it would affect national contributions. NEW ZEALAND did not support rotating the responsibility for hosting the CoP among CITES regions.

The SC referred discussion on a new budget line in the CTF for the triennium 2026-2028 to the FBSC.

Outcome: The SC acknowledged with appreciation Panama's offer to host CoP21, and agreed to submit to the CoP the draft decisions on arrangements for meetings of the CoP.

Strategic Matters

Role of CITES in reducing the risk of future zoonotic disease emergence associated with international wildlife trade: On Monday, Singapore and Israel, as Co-Chairs of the Working Group, introduced [SC78 Doc.15](#), noting the mandate of considering the need for and development of a resolution on One Health was not completed.

BRAZIL suggested the current draft was "too prescriptive and cumbersome." Several parties agreed there is no need for the establishment of a CITES advisory body to provide guidance.

The World Organisation of Animal Health (WOAH) suggested including reference to the 2024 WOAH Guidelines for Addressing Disease Risks in Wildlife Trade. The Wildlife Conservation

Society (WCS) recommended welcoming such Guidelines and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Global Action Plan on Biodiversity and Health.

The SC Chair proposed, and the SC agreed, to establish an in-session working group.

On Saturday, Singapore, also on behalf of Israel, reported the working group's suggested amendments to SC78 Doc.15 ([SC78 Com.6](#)). The SC agreed to these amendments.

Outcome: The SC:

- welcomed the Guidelines for Addressing Disease Risks in Wildlife Trade released by WOA in May 2024 and the CBD Global Action Plan for Biodiversity and Health;
- agreed there is no need to establish a CITES advisory body to provide guidance to parties on reducing the risk of zoonotic pathogen spillover and transmission from wildlife trade and associated wildlife supply chains, including markets; and
- noted the Working Group had not reached consensus on the matter of a new resolution on One Health.

Cooperation with Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and other international organizations: On Monday, the Secretariat introduced [SC78 Doc.16 \(Rev.1\)](#).

Numerous SC members proposed further intersessional work on the draft Partnership Strategy instead of submitting it to CoP20. POLAND disagreed with proposing to the CoP to incorporate Decision 17.55 (Rev. CoP19) into Resolution Conf.16.4. BRAZIL requested mention of collaboration between CITES and the Inter-American Sea Turtle Convention (IAC). The Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), UNEP, and TRAFFIC each highlighted opportunities for collaboration on CITES implementation.

Chair Gnam suggested, and the SC agreed, to table the agenda item until the SC considers [SC78 Doc.19](#) on CITES and Forests.

On Thursday, the SC Chair introduced the issue of the response to the letter received from the Chair of the 20th session of the UN Forum on Forests (UNFF) ([SC78 Doc.16 Add](#)). The SC agreed to provide a response to UNFF on this matter.

Outcome: The SC requested the Secretariat to finalize a response to the letter received from the Chair of UNFF20 on collaboration on sustainable and legal management of CITES-listed tree species and forests.

The SC also agreed to:

- propose to the CoP the renewal of Decisions 19.20 and 19.21;
- note the update provided by the Secretariat to strengthen cooperation, collaboration, and synergies with other MEAs and international organizations, taking into account Brazil's request for cooperation between CITES and the IAC; and
- propose to incorporate Decision 17.55 into Resolution Conf.16.4.

Cooperation with the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) – IPBES Assessment report on the sustainable use of wild species: On Thursday, Switzerland, as AC Chair, introduced [SC78 Doc.17](#).

IPBES noted that CITES decisions and resolutions are related to key aspects of the IPBES Assessment. ISRAEL proposed narrowing the scale of review. CANADA and MEXICO suggested excluding decisions from review. WCS supported a small pilot review process project. BRAZIL opposed the use of the term “drivers” of sustainable use, citing its “negative connotations,” while CHINA and POLAND proposed keeping this language. The SC Chair proposed compromise language.

Outcome: The SC noted the report and, in the draft decisions, agreed to review resolutions identified by the SC, AC, and PC on the IPBES Assessment report on the sustainable use of wild species relevant to the implementation of the Convention.

World Wildlife Trade Report: On Saturday, the Secretariat introduced [SC78 Doc.18 \(Rev.1\)](#).

POLAND supported preparation of the Overview and Comprehensive World Wildlife Trade Reports, although noting limited resources. The US and NEW ZEALAND only supported the preparation of the Overview report. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION suggested the reports would duplicate existing reporting requirements. The Secretariat offered amended text for the draft decisions. The US objected to the reference to “socio-economic impacts.”

Outcome: The SC noted the document and agreed to draft decisions directing:

- on a voluntary basis, parties that have not yet provided views to explore the feasibility of collating and compiling information at the national level on the conservation of CITES specimens in trade in annual reports;
- the SC to review and provide feedback on the outline of an Overview Report; and
- subject to extrabudgetary resources, the Secretariat to prepare an Overview Report based on parties' feedback and views for consideration by the SC.

CITES and forests: On Thursday, the Secretariat introduced [SC78 Doc.19](#).

BRAZIL, on behalf of ARGENTINA and PERU, and supported by the RUSSIAN FEDERATION, said this item goes beyond the CITES mandate and disagreed with reference to “global forest commitment.” The EU, US, SWITZERLAND, and others acknowledged progress, but noted much remains to be done to complete the interdisciplinary study on CITES and forests.

The SC Chair offered new language for some of the contentious recommendations and CITES Secretary-General Higuero proposed using an alternative term for “global forest commitment” in the report, which was accepted.

Outcome: The SC agreed to:

- consider progress made in the implementation of decisions on CITES and forests;
- provide preliminary feedback on the draft report on the interdisciplinary study on CITES and forests, including concern over the term “global forest commitment”; and
- request the Secretariat to share a second draft of the report in advance of CoP20.

Capacity Building

Compliance Assistance Programme (CAP): On Monday, the Secretariat introduced the CAP ([SC78 Doc.23](#)).

NIGERIA outlined several activities undertaken in the CAP context and described funding constraints.

Outcome: The SC invited parties to continue to provide financial or technical support to parties subject to compliance mechanisms; asked the Secretariat to continue assisting parties through the CAP; and recommended that the SC shall monitor progress in CAP implementation and report to CoP21.

CITES Tree Species Programme: On Thursday, the Secretariat introduced [SC78 Doc.24](#).

The US provided amendments to draft decisions to reference the interdisciplinary study on CITES and forests. Noting the importance

of this programme, BRAZIL asked whether resources were available to make it permanent.

Outcome: The SC's draft decisions directed the Secretariat to:

- report to the PC and SC on the implementation of the CITES Tree Species Programme; and
- taking into account the outcomes of the interdisciplinary study on CITES and forests, seek advice and guidance from the PC and SC on the potential to make the CITES Tree Species Programme permanent.

CITES and People

CITES Global Youth Network (CGYN): On Thursday, Denmark, on behalf of CGYN, introduced [SC78 Doc.25](#).

SINGAPORE highlighted its pledge of SGD 100,000 to the CITES Secretariat in support of the CGYN. BELGIUM stressed the importance of young people understanding and engaging in the work of CITES and suggested minor amendments to the draft resolution.

Outcome: The SC agreed to encourage parties and observers to support the efforts and to nominate youth affiliated with their organization to attend the CITES Global Youth Summit in May 2025, and submit to CoP20 the proposed amendments to Resolution Conf.17.5 (Rev.CoP18) on Youth Engagement, as amended by Belgium.

CITES Gender Action Plan: On Thursday, the Secretariat introduced [SC78 Doc.26](#).

Supporting the draft Gender Action Plan with many others, BELGIUM asked how the recommendation to “share information about gender-based violence in the wild flora and fauna international trade chain” would be operationalized and whether it would place an undue burden on the Secretariat. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION, supported by several others, requested removing reference to people “in all their diversity” and “people of all genders” from the draft Gender Action Plan, preferring reference to “especially women and girls.” Several delegates expressed doubt about reference to “culturally relevant” research, monitoring, and programming. ISRAEL requested language specifying that the Action Plan should be carried out outside of the core budget of the Secretariat.

In the interest of time, Chair Gnam invited delegates to provide further suggestions in writing.

Outcome: The SC agreed to request the Secretariat to take into account the comments made at SC78 on the revised outline of the Action Plan and invited those parties that could not take the floor in plenary (Argentina, Australia, the United Arab Emirates, Zambia, and Zimbabwe) to send their comments to the Secretariat.

Engagement of Indigenous Peoples and local communities: On Thursday, Canada, as chair of the Working Group, presented [SC78 Doc.27](#).

BRAZIL, with INDONESIA and several others, supported non-binding guidance but not the document's use of a comma in the term “Indigenous Peoples, and local communities,” noting CITES is not the appropriate platform to decide on this change of terminology. NEW ZEALAND explained that the comma would be acknowledging Indigenous Peoples' separate status and inherent right to self-determination. CANADA preferred the terminology “Indigenous Peoples, as well as local communities.” Many speakers urged for alignment with language used in other MEAs. AUSTRALIA drew attention to a 2023 letter by the UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples (available as [SC77 Inf.10](#)) asking all UN entities and state parties “to eliminate the use of the term

“local communities” in conjunction with Indigenous Peoples, so that the term “Indigenous Peoples and local communities” would be abolished.” DRC, supported by KENYA, suggested that the matter be referred to CoP20.

A representative of eight Indigenous Peoples from Oceania addressed challenges posed by CITES regulations surrounding the traditional creation and cross-border transport of cultural items, particularly musical instruments, and, supported by HONDURAS, asked for a simplification of procedures for such items. She invited dialogue with Indigenous Peoples and promotion of Indigenous Peoples' rights in international fora.

On the contribution of Indigenous knowledge, ARGENTINA requested explicit reference to “science- and evidence-based approaches.” ISRAEL asked that the development of the draft guidance, including the assessment of Indigenous knowledge, should be carried out outside of the core budget of the Secretariat.

Chair Gnam created a drafting group, chaired by Canada, to discuss the draft SC recommendations as well as the draft guidance. When BRAZIL predicted this group would not reach consensus on the terminology, Chair Gnam suggested, and the SC agreed, to forward the terminology question to the CoP.

On Saturday, Canada reported on the drafting group's deliberations, suggested referring the terminology issue to the CoP, and said no additional changes had been made to the document.

Outcome: The SC agreed to submit the draft decision in SC78 Doc.27 to the CoP, including the “Non-binding guidance on consulting Indigenous Peoples and local communities on proposals to amend the appendices.”

Livelihoods: On Thursday, Zambia, as Chair of the Working Group, introduced [SC78 Doc.28](#).

POLAND opposed the draft amendment to Resolution Conf.16.6 (Rev.CoP18) on CITES and livelihoods, and in the draft decision proposed, supported by the UK and CANADA and opposed by BRAZIL and KUWAIT, replacing reference to “both men and women” with “all genders.” CHINA offered further amendments. Chair Gnam proposed, as a compromise, deleting reference to “men and women” altogether.

To resolve the impasse, Chair Gnam established a working group, chaired by Zambia, to address proposed changes to the resolution and draft decisions. On Saturday, Zambia, on behalf of the working group, presented on its deliberations ([SC78 Com.18](#)). She said the group had not reached agreement on the recommendations nor the draft decisions.

POLAND, supported by the UK and CANADA, suggested sending the original document (SC78 Doc.28) to the CoP. The SC agreed. Chair Gnam noted that SC78 discussions would be reflected in the meeting report.

Outcome: The SC agreed to, *inter alia*:

- note the Secretariat's ongoing work on the compilation of case studies on CITES and livelihoods, in accordance with Decision 18.35 (Rev. CoP19); and
- submit to CoP20 the draft amendments to Resolution Conf.16.6 (Rev.CoP18) on CITES and livelihoods as well as the draft decisions.

Demand reduction to combat illegal trade: On Saturday, the Secretariat presented [SC78 Doc.29](#), drawing attention to the [Guidance](#) for CITES parties to develop and implement demand reduction strategies to combat illegal trade in CITES-listed species.

BRAZIL, supported by many, suggested reference to the implications of international demand in range states. TRAFFIC

underlined the importance of demand reduction. WCS, supported by the US, suggested adding reference to not only the CITES guidance, but also other materials on science-based behavioral change.

Outcome: The SC, among other things, agreed to submit the draft decisions to CoP20.

Compliance

National laws for implementation of the Convention: Report by the Secretariat: On Thursday, the Secretariat presented [SC78 Doc.31.1](#).

The UK urged discussing a process to assess “exceptional circumstances” and how to define *force majeure*. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION, supported by KUWAIT and SWITZERLAND but opposed by ISRAEL and the US, said deciding on exceptional circumstances lay outside the SC’s mandate and suggested referring this matter to the CoP. KENYA congratulated Uganda on its progress, as it is now meeting almost all requirements for Category 1 under the National Legislation Project, and reported on its own national progress.

Expressing concern that the draft guidance on exceptional circumstances would create “unintentional loopholes,” WCS urged parties not to rush into the matter, and suggested addressing it again at SC81.

Chair Gnam suggested, and the SC agreed, to forward the matter on “exceptional circumstances” to the CoP and agreed on the remaining recommendations.

Outcome: The SC agreed:

- to commend Andorra, Botswana, Lao People’s Democratic Republic (PDR), Sierra Leone, and Tunisia for efforts leading to their legislation being placed in Category 1 and other parties or territories that have made substantial progress in adopting measures for the effective implementation of the Convention;
- on a recommendation to all parties to suspend trade in all CITES-listed species for commercial purposes with Comoros, Lebanon, and Mongolia; and
- to request the Secretariat to issue first formal warnings to parties that have not reported any legislative progress for more than three years, requesting them to immediately take steps to ensure progress before SC81 and to report such progress to the Secretariat 90 days before SC81. At the time of writing, the parties included Afghanistan, Antigua and Barbuda, Cabo Verde, Chad, Eritrea, Iraq, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Syria.

Request by the Sultanate of Oman to lift the suspension of international trade: On Thursday, Oman introduced [SC78 Doc.31.2](#).

KUWAIT, supported by CHINA, SINGAPORE, the UNITED ARAB EMIRATES, QATAR, SAUDI ARABIA, SUDAN, INDONESIA, and MOROCCO, supported Oman’s request to lift its trade suspension, underscoring its negative economic impacts.

The UK, supported by BELGIUM, the US, ISRAEL, JAPAN, NEW ZEALAND, CANADA, the DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, and SWITZERLAND, recognized progress made in Oman but said it was too early for a decision to lift suspension. THE WORLD WIDE FUND FOR NATURE (WWF) agreed, noting the approach taken with Oman is consistent with past practices.

The Secretariat said “critical elements” were missing in the text of Oman’s law compared to other countries’ legislation and called for Oman to develop regulations to implement the law.

KUWAIT, supported by BRAZIL, requested a vote.

SC members voting in favor of lifting Oman’s trade suspension were KUWAIT, JAPAN, INDONESIA, BRAZIL, and MOROCCO. SC members voting against were ISRAEL, BELGIUM, the UK,

POLAND, NEW ZEALAND, the DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, and KENYA. By simple majority, Oman’s trade suspension remained in effect.

Outcome: The SC agreed to encourage Oman to make more progress on its plan to submit reports every three months to the Secretariat on progress made towards adopting the executive regulations, and adhering to the final deadline of October 2025, as per the timeline for issuing the executive regulations.

National reports: Submission of annual reports: On Thursday, the Secretariat introduced [SC78 Doc.32.1](#), noting it had received missing reports from Cameroon, Papua New Guinea, Tanzania, Malawi, Mali, and Paraguay. NEW ZEALAND noted Samoa had communicated that it would prioritize finalizing the report.

Outcome: The SC agreed to instruct the Secretariat to determine whether Bahamas, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, and Samoa have failed to provide annual reports for three consecutive years, without having provided adequate justification and, if so, issue a Notification recommending against commercial trade in specimens of CITES-listed species with those parties until they have provided the missing reports.

Revised Guidelines for the preparation and submission of CITES annual reports and annual illegal trade reports: On Wednesday, the Secretariat introduced [SC78 Doc.32.2](#).

JAPAN requested more flexibility in source code reporting, including multiple codes. The US suggested wording changes to the Secretariat’s amendment to the explanation text for ivory carvings. The UK asked that dried seahorses be reported by weight.

UNEP - World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC) noted that CITES trade databases currently display one source code and said that multiple codes could affect the processing of data.

Outcome: The SC agreed to approve, with minor changes from the US and UK, the amendments to the “[Guidelines for the preparation and submission of CITES annual reports](#)” and the amendments to the “[Guidelines for the preparation and submission of CITES annual illegal trade reports](#).”

Compliance matters: Implementation of Article XIII and Resolution Conf.14.3 (Rev.CoP19): On Tuesday, the Secretariat introduced [SC78 Doc.33.1](#), highlighting the Secretariat’s fourteen recommendations. She said since Cyprus had reported, as requested to the CITES Management Authority of Guyana, reference to Cyprus could be deleted.

On the implementation of Article VII paragraph 4 (exemptions) of the Convention by the EU, the UK and ISRAEL, supported by the US and CANADA, suggested changing some wording to reflect that parties have an obligation, and not an invitation, to restrict imports for primarily commercial purposes of captive-bred specimens of Appendix-I species to those produced by operations included in the CITES Register and to reject any permit or certificate if the specimens concerned do not originate from a registered facility. In light of the updates on implementation provided by the EU, the UK and the US, supported by CANADA, suggested that these parties do not need to be invited to report to SC81.

On potential compliance matters related to trade in imperial amazon (*Amazona imperialis*), red-necked amazon (*A. arausiaca*) and Spix’s macaw (*Cyanopsitta spixii*), the US requested that the Secretariat continue seeking information from Dominica regarding exports and report to SC79.

On trade in live animals with purpose code Z (zoo) to the facility of the Greens Zoological Rescue & Rehabilitation Center (GZRRC) in India, INDIA reiterated its invitation for the Secretariat to visit

the facility. ISRAEL, NEW ZEALAND, the UK, BRAZIL, and HONDURAS supported a Secretariat mission to the GZRRRC.

On trade in live birds from Suriname, BRAZIL, on behalf of Suriname, invited the Secretariat to conduct a mission in Suriname, and the UK, the US, and SENEGAL expressed support. The US further requested the Secretariat to issue a notification to parties to be “particularly vigilant” with regard to CITES permits issued by Suriname given the party’s lack of compliance with the Convention, and the Secretariat, while noting the US’ concerns, declined, noting the precedent such a notification would set.

On guidance on the scope and application of recommendations to suspend trade, the UK suggested slight amendments to the proposed draft decision. MEXICO, supported by CANADA and the US, suggested two additional draft decisions requesting the Secretariat to prepare, and the SC to consider, more context on suspensions of trade for commercial purposes in CITES-listed species.

On the development and adoption of a compliance action plan template, CANADA suggested minor amendments to clarify that use of the template is optional.

Regarding compliance matters in trade in oceanic whitetip shark (*Carcharhinus longimanus*), NEW ZEALAND highlighted a letter submitted to the Secretariat by the Maldives raising concerns that trade in this species seems to be occurring without CITES permits, or with CITES permits that appear to have been issued without the required legal acquisition findings (LAFs). MALDIVES, ISRAEL, the UK, PANAMA, BELGIUM, ECUADOR, and SENEGAL agreed. A drafting group was formed to request the Secretariat to investigate the issue.

On Saturday, the UK, supported by BELGIUM and NEW ZEALAND, supported the draft decision on scope and application of a recommendation to suspend trade, as amended in [SC78 Com.1](#).

SC members also considered [SC78 Com.2](#) on trade in oceanic whitetip shark. KENYA requested to be removed from the document, citing the measures it had implemented for the conservation of the whitetip shark. NEW ZEALAND, supported by the UK and BELGIUM, suggested a minor amendment, and further suggested that Kenya provide the requested information and report to SC79 with a request for removal.

Outcome: The SC agreed:

- on the implementation of Article VII, paragraph 4 of the Convention by the EU and the UK, to note the progress made in ensuring facilities that are breeding specimens of Appendix-I listed species for commercial purposes be registered with the CITES Secretariat;
- on potential compliance matters related to trade in *A. imperialis*, *A. arausiaca* and *C. spixii*, to note that no further information or response has been provided by Dominica regarding the export of two specimens of *A. imperialis* and ten specimens of *A. arausiaca*;
- on trade in live animals to India, to note the information provided regarding the trade in live animals with purpose code Z and request the Secretariat to keep close communication; on trade in live birds from Suriname, to request the Secretariat to continue its close communication;
- to a draft template of a compliance action plan; and
- with the support of the Secretariat, to prepare draft guidance on the scope and application of a recommendation to suspend all trade in specimens of one or more CITES-listed species with a party subject to a compliance procedure decided consistent with

paragraph 30 of Resolution Conf.14.3 (Rev.CoP19) on CITES compliance procedures and to make recommendations to CoP21.

The SC also agreed to request the Secretariat to request Indonesia, Kenya, Oman, Senegal, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, and Yemen to:

- provide information regarding the catch data on whitetip shark;
- provide detailed information on the making of non-detriment findings (NDFs) and LAFs where export permits were reported to CITES as issued for commercial trade of whitetip shark; and
- review the responses in consultation with the AC Chair and report to SC79.

Expedited application of Article XIII for West African rosewood (*Pterocarpus erinaceus*) for all range states: On Thursday, the Secretariat presented [SC78 Doc.33.2](#).

CAR requested support for capacity building to carry out a national inventory, make NDFs, arrive at quotas, and lift the current trade suspension. CAMEROON and GHANA reported on national progress.

Outcome: The SC agreed to the extensive list of range state-specific recommendations contained in the document.

Application of Article XIII in Bangladesh: On Monday, the Secretariat introduced [SC78 Doc.33.3](#), recalling the SC77 recommendation that parties suspend commercial trade in specimens of CITES-listed birds with Bangladesh until Bangladesh is in a position to adequately regulate and monitor this trade.

BANGLADESH reported on its progress, including in the areas of legislation and law enforcement, but identified financial and political challenges and announced it would report again to SC79.

The EU, CANADA, ISRAEL, and WCS supported the proposed draft recommendations, including on the trade suspension. The EU underlined the importance of timely reporting on compliance and enforcement measures. CANADA noted compliance measures should be closely linked to obligations under the Convention, noting they should be clear and concise. The US preferred referring this decision to a later SC meeting or CoP, but, in the absence of wider support, refrained from taking a position.

Outcome: The SC acknowledged progress made by Bangladesh, and agreed:

- on management of trade in specimens of CITES-listed birds, to recommend that parties continue to suspend trade; and
- to recommend that Bangladesh operationalize and further develop the online permitting system “CITES Permit/Certificate and No-Objection Certificate System” to facilitate the management and issuance of CITES permits and certificates and the verification of the legal acquisition of specimens in trade.

Application of Article XIII in Cameroon: On Thursday, the Secretariat presented [SC78 Doc.33.4](#).

CAMEROON elaborated on progress and remaining challenges, including relating to the transit of CITES-listed tree species. DRC expressed support for Cameroon’s efforts.

BELGIUM, supported by SWITZERLAND, said it was premature to say there are no longer any compliance issues, and suggested that the SC ask Cameroon to continue to report on progress.

BENIN and the International Tropical Timber Technical Association (ATIBT) disagreed, with BENIN urging the SC to make recommendations that encourage parties to make progress.

The SC agreed to maintain the text noting there are no longer any compliance issues, while adding the request to Cameroon to report back on progress to SC81.

Outcome: The SC:

- took note of the progress made by Cameroon;
- determined that there are no longer any compliance matters regarding trade in CITES-listed tree species from Cameroon, including *Pericopsis elata* (African teak);
- encouraged Cameroon to continue strengthening the implementation of the Convention regarding specimens of CITES-listed species in transit through Cameroon; and
- asked Cameroon to report on progress at SC81.

Application of Article XIII in the DRC: On Monday, the Secretariat introduced [SC78 Doc.33.5](#) on implementation of Article XIII with regard to trade in African grey parrot (*Psittacus erithacus*). DRC noted progress on implementation of recommendations due to efforts to strengthen regulatory framework and CITES capacity.

In continuing discussions on Tuesday, BELGIUM acknowledged progress but noted trade is ongoing and no prosecutions have been made. She proposed, supported by NEW ZEALAND, adding text to recommendations inviting DRC to adopt a regulatory act to implement the moratorium. ISRAEL, on behalf of GEORGIA and supported by the UK, called on DRC to withdraw its reservation on the listing of the species in Appendix I. The US asked that the matter be deferred until the new US administration has had the opportunity to acquaint itself with it. The WORLD PARROT TRUST, on behalf of several non-governmental organizations (NGOs), recognized progress but expressed concern for the status of these parrots, given many have been captured for illegal trade.

Chair Gnam moved to take a decision on this matter, with the amendment proposed by Belgium, and with the US noting it was unable to take a position at this time.

Outcome: On management of trade in African grey parrot, the SC agreed that parties maintain the recommendation to suspend trade in specimens of the species from DRC pending compliance with, *inter alia*, recommendations:

- inviting DRC to continue to implement the moratorium and adopt a regulatory act to implement the moratorium;
- on illegal trade and enforcement, that DRC continue its efforts to collect all the relevant data on illegal trade and on the action of the criminal groups operating in the country; and
- that DRC develop and launch a strategy to fight corruption linked to wildlife crime at all levels, including anti-corruption policies, and step up efforts to ensure the full implementation of Resolution Conf.17.6 (Rev.CoP19) on prohibiting, preventing, detecting, and countering corruption.

Application of Article XIII in Ecuador and Peru: On Wednesday, the Secretariat presented [SC78 Doc.33.6](#).

ECUADOR and PERU elaborated on their national implementation activities regarding sharks and rays. NEW ZEALAND noted ongoing concerns, including discrepancies in the trade databases of these countries and bycatch issues. Switzerland, as AC Chair, commended Ecuador and Peru on their efforts and called for regional data sharing. POLAND asked that more detailed information gathered during the Secretariat's mission in 2024 be made available.

The US said additional action is needed in these countries with regard to CITES-listed sharks. WCS said any continued trade must be sustainable and information must be made available.

ECUADOR suggested, and the SC agreed to, an additional recommendation asking parties to share with Ecuador information related to sizes, capture, landings, release, and mortality of specimens of shark coming from the Southeast Pacific.

Outcome: The SC recommended, among other things, that:

- parties maintain the existing trade suspensions with Ecuador;
- Ecuador share the information on the implementation of bycatch limits and other mitigation measures at AC35; and
- Ecuador and Peru continue to develop and use innovative technologies to track and monitor vessels, continue to strengthen the capacities and mandates of their Management Authorities, and report to the Secretariat on progress made.

Application of Article XIII in Guinea: On Tuesday, the Secretariat introduced [SC78 Doc.33.7](#) with regard to the application of Article XIII on African rosewood (*Pterocarpus erinaceus*).

GUINEA supported the recommendations. The US asked that the matter be deferred until the new US administration has had time to acquaint itself with it.

Outcome: The SC agreed that parties continue to suspend all trade in CITES-listed species with Guinea for commercial purposes until the following recommendations have been met to the satisfaction of the SC:

- Guinea should provide to the Secretariat evidence of the transfer of the 40% of the proceeds obtained from the sale of the pre-Convention stockpile of *P. erinaceus* or any income from legal proceedings to a separate subaccount of the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development; and
- Guinea adopt and ensure the application of the revised national legislative measures that meet the minimum requirements of CITES set out in Resolution Conf.8.4 (Rev.CoP15) on national laws for implementation of the Convention and in accordance with the guidance provided under the National Legislation Project.

Application of Article XIII in Lao PDR: On Tuesday, the Secretariat introduced [SC78 Doc.33.8](#).

LAO PDR described recent national improvements, including on legislation, traceability and enforcement. He underlined that the current trade ban has profound implications for livelihoods and asked the SC to reconsider the ban.

CAMBODIA, CHINA, INDONESIA, JAPAN, KAZAKHSTAN, KUWAIT, MALAYSIA, MOROCCO, the RUSSIAN FEDERATION, THAILAND, and VIET NAM commended Lao PDR's efforts and supported its request. ISRAEL, NEW ZEALAND, and the UK pointed to continued compliance issues mentioned in the document and supported the Secretariat's recommendation to maintain the trade ban. The US asked to defer the issue to a future meeting. The EU, supported by CANADA and NEW ZEALAND, said it would be open to discussing a partial lift of the ban, and suggested a small in-session working group elaborate a proposal.

WCS, also on behalf of WWF, reaffirmed their continuing support for the efforts of Lao PDR. BORN FREE, on behalf of a number of NGOs, requested that the recommendation on conservation breeding of Southeast-Asian tigers (*Panthera tigris corbetti*) be amended to reflect the need for independent expert verification of documentation, and expert, non-commercial facilities to carry out the breeding.

Chair Gnam established a working group, chaired by Singapore, to discuss a potential partial lifting of the trade suspension.

On Saturday, the SC agreed to the amended text as contained in [SC78 Com.4](#).

Outcome: The SC agreed that parties shall continue to suspend trade with Lao PDR in specimens of all CITES-listed species for commercial purposes, except for CITES-listed flora species for which an export quota has been published on the CITES website,

noting that Lao PDR commits to share with the Secretariat the NDF for CITES-listed plants species prior to the issuance of any export permit.

Application of Article XIII in Nigeria: On Tuesday, the Secretariat introduced [SC78 Doc.33.9](#).

NIGERIA described national efforts towards compliance, particularly in the area of legislation and law enforcement. The EU, KENYA and NIGER supported the draft recommendations. SENEGAL called for increased efforts to curb illegal trade with Indonesia.

Outcome: The SC agreed to recommend that parties continue to suspend commercial trade in *P. erinaceus* with Nigeria until an NDF is made and Nigeria provides evidence of LAFs.

Application of Article XIII in Viet Nam: On Tuesday, the Secretariat introduced [SC78 Doc.33.10](#). He described the Secretariat's mission to Viet Nam in January 2025 to assess the country's efforts towards compliance, summarizing that there is currently no evidence of compliance issues to be addressed.

VIET NAM described its involvement in the mission, expressed gratitude for its conclusions, and agreed with the Secretariat's recommendations. On the recommendation that Viet Nam report to SC81 on any action taken to implement these recommendations, he suggested, and the SC agreed to, a textual amendment to reflect that some relevant issues are covered under other reporting obligations, to avoid duplication of efforts.

Outcome: The SC agreed to the recommendations contained in the document, as amended by Viet Nam. Concerning the management of imports, the SC recommended that Viet Nam, *inter alia*, assess its national procedures concerning imports of CITES-listed species, and continue to build the capacities of the Scientific Authority and law enforcement authorities. Concerning enforcement, the SC recommends that Viet Nam: review its annual illegal trade reports; take additional measures to combat transnational organized wildlife crime; and, *inter alia*, take further action to develop and implement strategies to reduce the demand for ivory, rhino horn, pangolin, and big cats specimens and products.

Malagasy palisanders and rosewoods and ebonies: On Thursday, the Secretariat presented [SC78 Doc.33.11](#).

MADAGASCAR described his country's efforts to fight illegal trade in these species. The US lamented Madagascar's failure in acquiring stockpiles not currently held by the government. BELGIUM commended Madagascar's efforts.

Outcome: The SC took note of the document, progress described, and Madagascar's request to parties and relevant partners to provide technical and financial assistance in support of the implementation of Decision 19.71 on Malagasy palisanders and rosewoods (*Dalbergia* spp.) and ebonies (*Diospyros* spp.).

Totoabas: Reports of the Secretariat and the Trilateral Enforcement Contact Group: On Wednesday, the Secretariat introduced [SC78 33.12.1](#), followed by the report ([SC78 33.12.2](#)) of Mexico, as Chair of the Trilateral Enforcement Group.

The US proposed that Mexico report on three priority milestones in the CAP on totoaba, to which MEXICO agreed. CHINA shared enforcement operations and demand reduction strategies targeting totoaba. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) expressed concern over the lack of comprehensive vessel monitoring in the vaquita refuge. The Natural Resources Defense Council called for a trade suspension against Mexico, citing uncontrolled illegal fishing and trafficking and the failure of Mexico to meet its milestones. The US also asked that some of the recommendations

and draft decisions be directed to all destination countries, not just China, and to all parties affected by illegal fishing and trafficking. MEXICO objected and suggested, supported by BELGIUM, NEW ZEALAND, KUWAIT, and MOROCCO, maintaining the decision directed to the US "and other parties affected by illegal fishing and trafficking."

Outcome: The SC agreed to request Mexico to submit a report to SC79, focusing exclusively on progress with achievement of the milestones of three priority targets in the CAP, and agreed on the proposed draft decisions.

The SC also noted the report of the Trilateral Enforcement Contact Group and urged the continuation of the trilateral efforts of Mexico, China, and the US to combat illegal trade of totoaba, inviting the three parties to report to SC79.

National Ivory Action Plan (NIAP) process: On Wednesday, the Secretariat presented [SC78 Doc.33.13.1](#).

The SC agreed that Malaysia and Cambodia have fulfilled all the criteria to exit the NIAP process, several countries have made good progress, and Congo, Togo and Qatar have not demonstrated sufficient progress.

CAMBODIA expressed its continued commitment to progress.

BELGIUM suggested that if Congo, Togo and Qatar have not demonstrated progress by SC81, the SC consider a trade suspension. Several parties opposed, pointing out that there are other measures available, such as warnings. BELGIUM countered that warnings have already been issued to these three countries, and the suggested consideration of a trade suspension is in accordance with the stepwise approach as outlined in Resolution Conf.14.3 on CITES compliance procedures.

DRC stressed that the NIAP process is quite demanding and suggested the SC find a way to commend parties for their progress. He called for support mechanisms, including funds, for NIAP work.

Chair Gnam suggested language about a warning letter noting "there could be consequences, such as a trade suspension," in line with Resolution Conf.14.3.

Outcome: The SC agreed to, *inter alia*:

- urge all parties in the NIAP process to achieve their NIAP goals by SC79;
- consider application of appropriate measures on parties that fail to achieve their NIAP goals by SC79; and
- issue written cautions to Togo, Gabon, and Qatar, requesting them to step up their efforts and submit a progress report to the Secretariat, with warning of consequences if they fail to achieve progress.

Review of the NIAP process: On Wednesday, the Secretariat introduced [SC78 Doc.33.13.2](#).

KENYA, the US, BELGIUM, and the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA), on behalf of several NGOs, suggested the Secretariat continue working on improving the NIAP process. JAPAN suggested an amendment related to missing descriptions of illegal wildlife trade products. In light of concerns raised, the SC Chair noted the work would continue under a new decision.

Outcome: The SC noted the report and agreed that, with the support of the Secretariat, it shall further consider the long-term considerations in the Review of the NIAP process and submit any recommendations for consideration at CoP21, including, if appropriate, further amendments to the Guidelines to the NIAP process.

Review of Significant Trade (RST) in specimens of Appendix-II species: On Thursday, the Secretariat presented [SC78 Doc.34.1 \(Rev.1\)](#).

Outcome: The SC: noted the report; encouraged parties subject to the RST process to volunteer as case studies to be included in the RST module on the CITES Virtual College; and agreed that Decision 17.110 (Rev. CoP19) can be proposed for deletion at CoP20, pending the launch of the RST module on the CITES Virtual College.

Implementation of AC recommendations: On Thursday, the Secretariat presented [SC78 Doc.34.2](#), clarifying that it concerns the implementation of AC recommendations under Resolution Conf.12.8 (Rev. CoP18) on RST in specimens of Appendix-II species.

SENEGAL expressed frustration with the process by which the trade suspension for the West African seahorse (*Hippocampus algericus*) was imposed, asking for assistance from the Secretariat in addressing the concerns so as to meet the requirements for lifting of the suspension.

POLAND expressed concern regarding the misuse of source code R (ranchered animals) by Togo in relation to royal python (*Python regius*).

BENIN provided an update on reduced quotas set for royal python taken from the wild in his country. POLAND asked how the taking of gravid females and eggs was reflected in Benin and Ghana's quotas for this species. GHANA explained that eggs are collected in the wild and hatched in captivity, after which 10% of hatchlings are released back into the wild. BENIN assured that all ranching operations are in accordance with the provisions under the Convention.

Outcome: The SC agreed to the extensive list of recommendations regarding species-country combinations, with the addition that Benin, Ghana, and Togo are asked to provide information on their use of source code R in relation to royal python.

Implementation of PC recommendations: On Friday, the Secretariat introduced [SC78 Doc.34.3](#).

MOZAMBIQUE, supported by DRC, protested that it had "met all the requirements" to have a conservative quota established for African blackwood (*Dalbergia melanoxylon*). TANZANIA expressed appreciation for being removed from the RST process for African sandalwood (*Osyris lanceolata*). On the agarwood species *Aquilaria malaccensis*, POLAND, noting the quota is based on unpublished sampling data, said that changes in the quota should require a new NDF.

The US noted that the quota for Equatorial Guinea has yet to be published and asked the Secretariat to consider revising the deadline for Nicaragua to implement the recommendations for the rosewood *D. retusa*. The Secretariat said the quota for Equatorial Guinea would be published Friday.

Outcome: The SC agreed to:

- note any update from the Secretariat on *D. melanoxylon*;
- task Mozambique to implement adequate control measures and inspection procedures to detect and intercept illegal shipments; and
- note that parts of recommendations on *A. malaccensis*, *D. retusa*, and *O. lanceolata* have been implemented.

Resolution Conf.17.7 (Rev.CoP19) on review of trade in animal specimens reported as produced in captivity:

Implementation of Resolution Conf. 17.7 (Rev.CoP19): On Tuesday, the Secretariat introduced [SC78 Doc.35.1](#).

Delegates discussed the Secretariat's recommendations on 14 ongoing cases of review. There was a brief discussion on the terminology of "founder" versus "breeding" or "parental" stock. Delegates expressed preference for retaining the original language from Resolution Conf.17.7, which is "founder" stock.

One of the 14 ongoing cases concerned a proposed suspension of trade in crab-eating macaque (*Macaca fascicularis*) with Cambodia. There was significant discussion on this proposed ban. CHINA found the proposal to be premature. CAMBODIA asked that an intersessional working group look into the issue and, supported by CANADA, suggested that a mission be initiated to verify the information provided by Cambodia. The NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH drew attention to genetic tests being available to determine the origin of specimens.

Chair Gnam announced that the Secretariat would draft revised text to reflect these concerns.

Outcome: The SC noted:

- the status of implementation of the cases selected for the two iterations of the review and the list of 14 current ongoing cases provided in SC78 Doc.35; and
- on *M. fascicularis* from Cambodia, the AC will consider the additional information provided by Cambodia and the outcomes of the mission to Cambodia to be undertaken, subject to external funding, through the intersessional consultation process and report back to SC79.

Review of Resolution Conf. 17.7 (Rev. CoP19): On Tuesday, the Secretariat introduced [SC78 Doc.35.2](#) on the AC analysis of whether the objectives and processes outlined in Resolution Conf.17.7 and Resolution Conf.12.8 (on RST in specimens of Appendix II-listed species) could be streamlined and aligned. She said the AC had concluded that these two processes are different in scope, purpose, and methodologies, as detailed in [AC33 Doc.15.3](#).

The US and UK supported the AC recommendations.

Outcome: The SC:

- agreed with the AC that there is no need to continue reviewing whether these resolutions can be streamlined and aligned; and
- noted the proposed amendment to Resolution Conf.17.7 to be submitted by the AC to CoP20.

Possession of specimens of species included in Appendix I: On Saturday, the Secretariat introduced [SC78 Doc.36](#).

POLAND, supported by KUWAIT and CHINA, opposed recommendations on loopholes in national CITES-implementing legislation with regard to the possession of illegally traded specimens of CITES-listed species. The US, ISRAEL, and GEORGIA supported all recommendations.

The SC Chair proposed not to send any recommendation forward. The US, supported by BRAZIL, SENEGAL, and the UK, proposed to take this matter to CoP20.

Outcome: The SC agreed to send the report and recommendations to CoP20.

Illegal Trade and Enforcement

Review of Resolution Conf.11.3 (Rev.CoP19) on Compliance and enforcement: On Friday, New Zealand, as Co-Chair of the Working Group, introduced [SC78 Doc.37](#). The UK, supported by PERU, proposed amendments to preambular text relating to the expertise of professional bodies.

CHINA, supported by the RUSSIAN FEDERATION, objected to the overall six-month time frame for parties involved in compliance measures to respond to a request from the Secretariat. The SC agreed to note this comment.

Outcome: The SC agreed to, *inter alia*, include some changes in Resolution Conf.11.3 (Rev.CoP19), including addition of preambular text reflecting the wide range of professional bodies associated with CITES implementation.

Enforcement matters: Report by the Secretariat: On Friday, the Secretariat presented [SC78 Doc.38.1](#).

PERU drew attention to [Resolution 12.4](#) of the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, which set up an intergovernmental expert group on wildlife crime, and called for a coordinated global effort.

The SC agreed to reference this resolution in its document.

Outcome: The SC agreed, *inter alia*, to submit to CoP20 the proposed amendments listed in SC78 Doc.38.1; welcome the Southern African Development Community (SADC) [Law Enforcement and Anti-Poaching Strategy 2022-2032](#); and note Resolution 12.4 of the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICCWC): On Friday, the Secretariat introduced [SC78 Doc.38.2 \(Rev.1\)](#). The EU announced an upcoming EUR 27 million to combat wildlife crime.

Outcome: The SC, *inter alia*, encouraged parties to actively engage in activities of the ICCWC and to reach out to the Consortium for support, where needed; and welcomed the generous contributions from donor parties towards the [ICCWC Vision 2030](#) and its associated [Strategic Action Plan](#).

Task Force on illegal trade in specimens of CITES-listed tree species: On Thursday, the Secretariat introduced [SC78 Doc.38.3 \(Rev.1\)](#).

Outcome: The SC agreed to:

- note information provided by parties in their responses to [Notification to the Parties No. 2024/079](#);
- submit draft decisions in SC78 Doc.38.3 (Rev.1) to CoP20; and
- propose the renewal of Decision 19.89.

Wildlife crime enforcement support in West and Central Africa: Reports of the intersessional working group and Secretariat: On Friday, Nigeria, as Chair of the Working Group, introduced [SC78 Doc.39.1](#), followed by the report of the Secretariat ([SC78 Doc.39.2](#)).

BENIN supported the recommendations and proposed, supported by GABON, an additional decision requesting parties and organizations to examine if other actions may be necessary to guarantee that the implementation of CITES is financed adequately. The SC did not support Benin's proposal.

Outcome: The SC noted the conclusions reached by the Working Group and agreed to direct the Secretariat to work with its ICCWC partners to continue providing targeted support to combat wildlife crime to parties in West and Central Africa.

Illegal trade in cheetahs: On Friday, the Secretariat introduced [SC78 Doc.40](#) and [SC78 Inf.10](#).

POLAND, supported by KUWAIT, urged parties to step up efforts to decrease demand for cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*), especially live cubs, and asked the Secretariat to avoid duplication of reporting efforts on different big cat species.

NIGER underlined the threats of ongoing poaching, particularly of the northeastern subspecies. The US suggested adding reference to the 2023 [CITES Big Cats Taskforce meeting's outcome document](#). SAUDI ARABIA described national activities to prevent

the illegal trade in big cats. Several African countries underlined the importance of curbing poaching and illegal trade, and supported the document.

The INTERNATIONAL BIG CAT ALLIANCE (IBCA) described its work and announced the IBCA had entered into force in January 2025 as a treaty-based intergovernmental organization, initiated by India.

Outcome: The SC agreed to:

- note the responses to [Notification to the Parties No. 2024/097](#), and that these responses were limited;
- encourage parties, governmental, intergovernmental, non-governmental organizations, and donors to take note of the need for support to Somalia and Yemen and, where possible, to provide assistance; and
- submit the draft decisions in SC78 Doc.40 to CoP20.

Marine turtles: On Wednesday, the US, as chair of the Working Group, introduced [SC78 Doc.41](#).

POLAND supported the proposed amendments to Resolution Conf.19.5 on conservation of and trade in marine turtles, and, supported by the UK, suggested minor textual changes urging parties, *inter alia*, to coordinate efforts at the regional level where relevant.

Outcome: The SC agreed to the proposed amendments, as amended in plenary, to Resolution Conf.19.5 on conservation of and trade in marine turtles for submission to CoP20 for consideration.

CITES Big Cats Taskforce: On Friday, the Secretariat introduced [SC78 Doc.42](#).

POLAND, PERU, SENEGAL, and TRAFFIC, on behalf of several NGOs, supported the document. INDIA invited big cat range states, interested parties, and others to join the IBCA.

Outcome: The SC agreed:

- not to pursue, at this time, the development of a resolution on illegal trade in big cats;
- not to consider revising Resolution Conf.12.5 (Rev.CoP19) on Conservation of and trade in tigers and other Appendix-I Asian big cat species to extend its applicability to all big cat species; and
- to submit the draft decisions in SC78 Doc.42 to CoP20.

Asian big cats: Report of the Secretariat: On Friday, the Secretariat presented [SC78 Doc.43.1](#).

POLAND and INDIA supported the document.

Noting the low response rates and outdated reports on Asian leopards, WWF said there is little evidence that Decision 18.105 has been fully implemented and called for it to be maintained.

Outcome: The SC:

- noted the information provided by Parties in response to [Notification 2024/086](#); and
- recommended to the CoP the deletion of several decisions, including 18.105.

Asian big cats in captivity: On Friday, the Secretariat presented [SC78 Doc.43.2 \(Rev.1\)](#).

POLAND suggested adding reference to the prevention of inbreeding. The UK, supported by POLAND and the US, requested language asking parties to report progress.

In a paragraph urging parties with large captive tiger breeding facilities to consider the described approach "to improve their conservation and educational value, as well as to put an end to the activities of facilities that do not have conservation or educational value," CHINA, supported by many, asked to replace "are urged" with "are encouraged," and to add "in accordance with domestic

legislation,” to recognize countries’ national sovereignty. They also requested deleting the word “fully” in language asking these facilities to “fully transform into facilities with educational value.”

The SC agreed to the textual suggestions made by POLAND, the UK, and CHINA.

The EIA, on behalf of several organizations, said the focus should be on all tiger facilities, not only the larger ones. He further: pointed to discrepancies in tiger numbers reported; asked why China is holding significant stockpiles of skins and bones collected from deceased tigers; and offered assistance with regard to the inspection of facilities.

Outcome: The SC agreed, *inter alia*, to:

- note the AC recommendation that the [IUCN SSC Guidelines](#) on the use of *ex situ* management for species conservation provide guidance to parties on how to evaluate the conservation aspects of tiger captive-breeding facilities;
- submit the draft decisions in SC43.2 Rev.1 to the CoP; and
- encourage China and the US to take specific measures as outlined in the document.

Jaguars: Reports of the intersessional Working Group and Secretariat: On Saturday, Brazil, as Chair of the Working Group, introduced [SC78 Doc.44.1](#), followed by the Secretariat introducing [SC78 Doc.44.2](#).

BRAZIL explained they had a consultation process during SC78 with the Secretariat, CMS, and jaguar range states and produced a new information document ([SC78 Inf.48](#)) that contains a compromise. MEXICO offered to host the second meeting of the jaguar range states. UZBEKISTAN emphasized that the CMS Central Asian Mammals Initiative is an excellent model for cooperation for jaguar range states. CMS and WCS expressed support for the initiative. WCS expressed support for a unified jaguar initiative.

Outcome: The SC agreed to:

- request the Secretariat to issue a notification, with the CMS Secretariat, to request comments from jaguar range states and other partners, including the CBD and the Coordination Committee for the [2030 Jaguar Conservation Roadmap for the Americas](#), on the draft situational analysis and elements for a possible resolution on jaguar;
- invite the Secretariat, in collaboration with the CMS Secretariat, to propose a schedule of activities in preparation for CoP20 and CMS COP15;
- support the organization of a virtual meeting between the jaguar range states and other partners; and
- invite the Secretariats of CITES, CMS, and other partners to seek financial resources to organize the second in-person meeting of the jaguar range states in September or October 2025.

Rhinoceroses: On Friday, the Secretariat introduced [SC78 Doc.45](#).

POLAND, supported by KENYA and the US, lamented the limited reporting by some states and requested adding language to address this. KENYA commended efforts undertaken to reduce demand, and, supported by the US, CONGO, SENEGAL, NIGER, and EIA on behalf of several NGOs, suggested language on renewing Resolution Conf.18.116 on reducing the demand for rhino horn. NAMIBIA drew attention to [SC78 Inf.44](#), which illustrates the effectiveness of measures aimed at reducing poaching in Namibia. CHINA outlined national efforts to reduce illegal trade and noted a significant drop in seizures. CONGO highlighted the importance of

monitoring systems, capacity building, solidarity and cooperation. ZIMBABWE noted a growing rhino population and a decline in poaching in her country.

EIA, on behalf of several NGOs, called on the Secretariat to find alternative funding for its activities to replace the US contributions, given the new priorities of the US administration.

Outcome: The SC agreed to:

- request Namibia to continue reviewing trends associated with the illegal killing of and trade in rhinoceros;
- request parties to actively scale up efforts to collect samples from rhinoceros horn seized within their territories for forensic analysis and to fully implement Decision 19.115;
- request the Secretariat to take into consideration the outcomes of the CITES Rhinoceros Enforcement Task Force; and
- recommend the renewal of Decision 18.116 on reducing the demand for rhinoceros.

Tortoises and freshwater turtles: On Friday, the Secretariat introduced [SC78 Doc.46](#).

MADAGASCAR updated the SC on efforts to reduce the pressures on turtles and tortoises and underscored its zero-tolerance policy for illegal trafficking. The US suggested that the SC transfer the tasks outlined in the draft decisions to CITES’ CAP, provided Madagascar is willing and the Secretariat has the capacity to provide support. The UK expressed disappointment in “the lack of real progress” in ensuring the conservation of these critically endangered species in Madagascar. POLAND proposed an additional draft decision directing parties affected by illegal trade from Madagascar to take measures to prevent illegal imports and provide support to Madagascar. CONGO encouraged African parties to work together to implement strategies to protect tortoises and turtles through improved monitoring, habitat enhancement, and programmes to help local communities.

WCS said consumer states need to do “far more” to prevent “rampant” illegal trade and change consumer behaviors.

Outcome: The SC agreed to draft decisions directing:

- the Secretariat to review the reports from Madagascar in accordance and make them available to the AC and the SC along with any recommendations the Secretariat may have;
- the AC to review the report from Madagascar and any recommendations from the Secretariat and submit its recommendations to the SC; and
- the SC to agree to recommendations directed to Madagascar and report to CoP21.

Regulation of Trade

Legal acquisition findings (LAFs): On Tuesday, the Secretariat introduced [SC78 Doc.47](#).

The UK shared positive experiences with the “Rapid guide for making LAFs.” NEW ZEALAND preferred referring to “original founding stock” instead of “parental breeding stock.” FAO drew attention to [CITES-LEX](#), an online information system that provides national catalogues and comprehensive search capabilities of legislation and policies relevant to CITES implementation.

Chair Gnam invited delegates to provide comments on the draft to the Secretariat in writing.

On Saturday, the Secretariat introduced [SC78 Com.12](#), including amendments to the draft non-binding guidance on the chain of custody required for demonstrating the legal acquisition of the parental/breeding stock. NEW ZEALAND supported the proposed amendments. BRAZIL, supported by KUWAIT, DRC, and INDONESIA, noted the way in which changes were made

compromises the spirit in which the original document was developed and proposed discussing this at CoP20. The US and BELGIUM supported the document.

Outcome: The SC agreed on four draft decisions, to be forwarded to CoP20 for adoption, which, *inter alia*, request:

- parties to provide observations and feedback to the Secretariat following their tested use of the “Rapid guide for making LAFs”; and
- the Secretariat to further develop digital solutions to automate relevant parts of the guide, continue to organize workshops and other capacity-building activities related to LAFs, and monitor progress on LAFs and report back to CoP21.

The SC also agreed to some of the changes to the draft non-binding guidance and proposed to issue a notification to discuss further changes at CoP20.

NDFs for specimens of Appendix-II species taken from areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ): On Wednesday, Switzerland, as AC Chair, introduced [SC78 Doc.48](#). MOZAMBIQUE supported having an NDF for specimens taken from ABNJ. The EU called for greater guidance.

Outcome: The SC noted the report and agreed that draft decisions on introduction from the sea (IFS) in [SC78 Doc.49](#) will allow the SC to address the relevant implementation matters raised at the technical workshop on NDFs for specimens of Appendix-II species taken from ABNJ.

Introduction from the sea: On Wednesday, the Secretariat introduced [SC78 Doc.49](#).

NEW ZEALAND, supported by the UK, proposed that the first draft decision refer to consideration of the 11 recommendations contained in SC78 Doc.48. ISRAEL, supported by the RUSSIAN FEDERATION and the EU, objected to preparing a revision of Resolution Conf.14.6 (Rev.CoP16) on IFS, and instead prepare a revision to guidelines on IFS. NEW ZEALAND, supported by the UK, noted the recommendation refers to the intersessional period after CoP20. Chair Gnam proposed compromise language.

Outcome: The SC noted the report and the updated status and detailed analysis of the synergies between CITES and the BBNJ Agreement, noting that the BBNJ Agreement has not yet entered into force and that not all CITES parties are parties to BBNJ.

In its draft decisions, the SC agreed to, *inter alia*, consider: a revision of Resolution Conf.14.6 (Rev.CoP16) on IFS with the aim to provide clarifications where required, as well as to integrate reflection of the BBNJ Agreement, noting that the Agreement has not entered into force and that not all CITES parties are BBNJ parties; and the Guidelines on IFS.

Purpose-of-transaction codes: On Saturday, Canada, as Chair of the Working Group on Purpose-of-transaction codes, introduced [SC78 Doc.50](#).

BRAZIL, BELGIUM, the US, PERU, NEW ZEALAND, and SWITZERLAND supported the draft decision with minor amendments, and suggested prioritizing the definition of source code B for breeding in captivity or artificial propagation.

NEW ZEALAND noted that while discussing code B, the wording for code Z, for zoo, might need to change.

Noting that a working group had “exhaustively considered” the definition of code Z for over two decades, the ASSOCIATION OF ZOOS AND AQUARIUMS (AZA), on behalf of several NGOs, suggested focusing on purpose codes that still need defining, such as code B.

Outcome: The SC agreed to:

- offer its comments and suggestions on the draft definition for purpose-of-transaction code P (personal) and on the interpretation that the default purpose-of-transaction code is T (commercial), unless another purpose-of-transaction code clearly predominates; therefore, a definition for purpose-of-transaction code T may not be required once all other purpose-of-transaction codes are defined;
- that further work on purpose-of-transaction codes should focus on defining, removing, or replacing codes Q (circus), B, G (botanical garden), S (scientific), with B as a priority, and with possible amendments to Z required, depending on the definition of B; and
- that the draft decision in the annex to document SC78 Doc.50 be brought forward to CoP20.

Electronic systems and information technology: On Saturday, the Secretariat presented [SC78 Doc.51 \(Rev.1\)](#). DRC, supported by CAR, said these systems require significant operational resources and called for support.

Outcome: The SC:

- agreed to the draft decisions in SC78 Doc.51;
- agreed on the Guidelines on the use of two-dimensional (2D) barcodes on CITES permits/certificates contained in SC78 Doc.51; and
- noted the comments made during SC78 on mobilization of resources.

Risk assessment and analysis for border control of CITES-

listed species: On Saturday, the Secretariat introduced [SC78 Doc.52](#). In the interest of time, Chair Gnam proposed to simply note this document. The SC noted the document.

Stocks and stockpiles: On Friday, the Secretariat presented [SC78 Doc.53](#).

POLAND, supported by the US, noted “stockpiles” should not include confiscated specimens still subject to enforcement procedures, and suggested replacing the adjective “accumulated” by “stored,” noting that a stockpile may consist of only one specimen, or result from only one seizure.

Several delegates drew attention to the need to develop a consistent approach regarding commercially held stockpiles, such as of giant clam shells and dried shark fins.

BRAZIL asked to specify that stockpiles under this definition are “legally” accumulated. The UK wished to exempt specimens held by private individuals as personal or household effects from the definition. KENYA emphasized that disposal should occur only in non-commercial ways. The US inquired whether guidance on timber tree species is needed.

BENIN highlighted its documents [SC78 Inf.46](#) and [Inf.47](#), which, *inter alia*, suggest removing museums from the exemption, and underline the need to dispose of stockpiles non-commercially. ISRAEL, NIGER, NIGERIA, and the CENTER FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY for several NGOs supported this.

The RUSSIAN FEDERATION recalled [SC77 Inf.16](#), and noted that collections exempted from the definition should be able to specify their purpose and source of origin. POLAND opposed removing museums from the exemption.

Chair Gnam clarified that most museums are in fact scientific institutions, and keeping museums as exemptions in the definition would open the possibility of purely commercial museums, with no scientific or educational purpose, possessing stockpiles.

In the absence of agreement, Chair Gnam suggested the Secretariat further review the draft definition and ask the CoP to consider it. She confirmed that all concerns will be reflected in the SC78 report.

Outcome: The SC did not agree on a definition of “stockpiles” and forwarded the matter to the CoP for consideration.

Stocks and stockpiles (elephant ivory): On Friday, the Secretariat introduced [SC78 Doc.54 \(Rev.1\)](#).

BELGIUM, the UK, and the US suggested minor amendments. DRC requested more technical and material assistance for African parties. BENIN, supported by CAR, NIGER, NIGERIA, and SENEGAL, requested textual amendments detailed in [SC78 Inf.47](#) to, *inter alia*, specify that stockpiles be disposed of “non-commercially” instead of “properly.” The Chair, supported by ZIMBABWE and ZAMBIA, suggested that parties submit major amendments to CoP20 considering the information document was not properly translated. KENYA, supported by the UK, requested retaining two decisions proposed for deletion.

Outcome: As amended in plenary, the SC agreed to:

- encourage parties, in particular African elephant range states, to step up their efforts to implement paragraph 7(e) of Resolution Conf.10.10 (Rev.CoP19), which encourages parties with a legal or illegal markets in ivory, or with ivory stockpiles, to ensure the implementation of comprehensive internal legislative, regulatory, enforcement, and other measures and submit information on this to the Secretariat every year;
- submit amendments and draft decisions to Resolution Conf.10.10 (Rev.CoP19) on Trade in elephant specimens in SC78 Doc.51.1 (Rev.1) to CoP20;
- invite the Secretariat to include the Elephant Protection Initiative’s [Gold Standards Assessments](#); [Procedures for the Transfer of Wildlife Products](#); and [Storeroom Management Procedures for Wildlife Products](#) in the “[Practical guidance on ivory stockpile management](#)” and publish it on the Elephants page of the CITES Website; and
- request the Secretariat to continue to engage with Burundi on the status of its ivory stockpile and, if invited, conduct a technical mission to verify the current status of the Burundi stockpile and to report to the Committee on its findings.

Transport of live specimens: On Friday, the Secretariat introduced [SC78 Doc.55](#).

The US proposed two new draft decisions: the first encouraging the Secretariat to work with the International Air Transport Association (IATA) to make available on an annual basis to authorized representatives IATA regulations relevant for management authorities to meet CITES obligations; and the second encouraging parties and others to provide financial assistance to the Secretariat in support.

AZA, on behalf of several NGOs, encouraged the development of CITES live animal transport regulations that are transparent and accessible to all.

Outcome: The SC agreed to replace the draft decisions with the two new draft decisions proposed by the US.

Rapid movement of wildlife diagnostic samples and musical instruments: On Saturday, Australia, as Chair of the Working Group, presented [SC78 Doc.56](#), including draft decisions on the development of simplified guidance materials. CITES Secretary-General Higuero emphasized that Secretariat involvement in this process is subject to the availability of extra-budgetary resources.

The US suggested replacing “rapid” with “efficient.”

The LEAGUE OF AMERICAN ORCHESTRAS underlined the need for this guidance and encouraged all parties to “rapidly participate” in its development process. WOAHA suggested textual amendments to ensure cooperation with WOAHA and other animal health organizations regarding the movement of wildlife diagnostics samples.

Outcome: The SC, *inter alia*, agreed to submit the draft decisions in SC78 Doc.56 to CoP20 for consideration.

Specimens produced through biotechnology: On Saturday, the Secretariat presented [SC78 Doc.57](#).

Outcome: The SC agreed to propose the renewal of Decisions 19.161 to 19.163 to CoP20.

Disposal of confiscated specimens: On Saturday, the Secretariat presented [SC78 Doc.58](#).

BELGIUM asked whether “irregular” is needed in the term “illegal or irregular” trade or transactions. BRAZIL and the US preferred, and the SC agreed, to maintain the word “irregular.”

SENEGAL drew attention to stockpiles’ use for scientific purposes. AZA, on behalf of several NGOs, described the usefulness of building networks for care of confiscated animals. BORN FREE, on behalf of several NGOs, lamented the low response rate and opposed placing confiscated live animals in commercial facilities.

Outcome: The SC agreed, among other things, to: submit to the CoP the two amendments of Annex 1 to Resolution Conf.17.8 (Rev. CoP19) on disposal of illegally traded and confiscated specimens of CITES-listed species; and encourage countries to develop national action plans using the guidance provided.

Labelling system for trade in caviar: On Saturday, Georgia, as Chair of the Working Group, presented [SC78 Doc.59](#). Several delegates expressed support for this work.

Outcome: The SC agreed to note the report and encouraged parties to use the QR codes to carry out a pilot project to test the use of QR codes for caviar labelling and to present the information on the results to SC81.

Trade in stony corals: On Wednesday, Switzerland, as AC Chair, introduced [SC78 Doc.60](#).

NEW ZEALAND, supported by the UK and the US, proposed that further work on annual reporting guidelines be directed to the SC, and that reference to “coral reef nations and experts” be retained in both draft decisions. The US proposed two additional draft decisions and an amendment to the definition of live coral to improve consistency in interpretation.

The EUROPEAN PET ORGANIZATION said further intersessional work was required for amendments to reflect the current reality of the live coral trade.

A drafting group was established to compile amendments for further consideration by the SC.

On Saturday, POLAND was unable to accept the definition of live coral suggested by the drafting group in [SC78 Com.3](#). NEW ZEALAND, supported by the US and UK, suggested amending the proposed draft decisions on trade in stony corals to take POLAND’s concern into account.

Outcome: The SC agreed to the draft amendments to Resolution Conf.11.10 (Rev.CoP15) and to draft decisions:

- directing the AC to consider the information in the annex to [AC33 Doc.24](#) and in consultation with coral reef nations and coral reef experts, provide advice on the conversion factors used to analyze trade in corals for the CITES RST process and report to CoP21; and

- directing the SC to make further recommendations to CoP21 on possible amendments to the definition of live coral and guidelines in the Annex to Resolution Conf.11.10 (Rev. CoP15), and on revising the [Guidelines for the preparation and submission of CITES annual reports](#) and [Guidelines for the preparation and submission of the CITES annual illegal trade report](#), to ensure that they provide sufficient clarity on the use of appropriate terms and units for trade in stony corals.

Exemption and Special Trade Provisions

Resolution Conf.12.10 (Rev.CoP15) on Registration of operations that breed Appendix-I animal species in captivity for commercial purposes: Review of the Resolution: On Tuesday, the US introduced [SC78 Doc.61.1](#).

ISRAEL supported the amended text. The UK and DRC supported the text with minor additional amendments. The EU, supported by BELGIUM, and opposed by ISRAEL, objected to the inclusion of “amendment to exclude products from the registration for that operation.” MEXICO opposed many of the amendments in the text.

The SC Chair established a small drafting group.

On Saturday, the US, on behalf of the drafting group, introduced [SC78 Com.10](#) with amendments to Resolution Conf.12.10 (Rev. CoP15). MEXICO noted that its proposed amendment was not considered.

Outcome: In Resolution Conf.12.10, the SC agreed that:

- the Management Authority, in collaboration with the Scientific Authority, shall monitor the management of each registered captive-breeding operation under its jurisdiction and advise the Secretariat in the event of any significant major change in the nature of an operation or in the type(s) of products being produced for export; and
- any party believing, based on documented, evidence-based concerns, that a registered operation does not comply with the provisions of Resolution Conf.10.16 (Rev.CoP19) or the original conditions for registration of the operation may, after consultation with the Secretariat and the registering party concerned, propose to the SC that this operation be deleted from the Register.

The SC also agreed that it would invite Mexico to submit the proposed amendment to CoP20.

Implementation of paragraph 5(j) of Resolution Conf.12.10 (Rev.CoP15): On Tuesday, the Secretariat introduced [SC78 Doc.61.2](#).

Delegates discussed the seven conservation strategies the Secretariat had identified to assist Management Authorities in making findings about the continuing meaningful contribution.

The US suggested adding text to the related draft recommendation referring to documentation of direct linkages to the conservation of wild populations, including on whether progress is measurable by suitable indicators. INDIA requested reference to the importance of *in situ* conservation efforts. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION suggested language ensuring financial contributions “to a conservation fund” will benefit the species concerned.

TRAFFIC, also on behalf of WWF, expressed doubt about the ability of three of the strategies to make a continuing real contribution to conservation: contribution to the genetic diversity of the captive-bred population; potential reintroduction into the wild; and contribution to research on the species. They also called for reference to supporting evidence.

Chair Gnam established a drafting group to revise the related draft recommendation.

On Saturday, Belgium, on behalf of the drafting group, reported that the group had agreed on specific guidance ([SC78 Com.5](#)) to parties on how to implement the requirement that the Management Authority shall satisfy itself that the captive-breeding operation will make a continuing meaningful contribution according to the conservation needs of the species concerned. The SC agreed to these amendments and to the document as a whole.

Outcome: The SC agreed that the following provide guidance to parties to implement the requirement stated in paragraph 5(j) of Resolution Conf.12.10 (Rev.CoP15): that the Management Authority shall satisfy itself that the captive-breeding operation will make a continuing meaningful contribution according to the conservation needs of the species concerned.

Review of CITES provisions related to trade in specimens of animals and plants not of wild source: On Tuesday, Belgium, as Co-Chair of the Working Group, introduced [SC78 Doc.62](#). Noting that key issues and questions in the working group remain unresolved, she highlighted new draft decisions proposed by the AC for submission to the CoP, which request, *inter alia*, to convene a workshop to build on work done to date.

The UK, supported by POLAND, supported the AC recommendations and suggested adding text to the draft decision to give parties a chance to provide feedback on the draft terms of reference and *modus operandi* for the proposed workshop.

The EUROPEAN PET ORGANIZATION urged parties to consider input from captive-breeding stakeholders. Citing the lack of agreement in the Working Group, PRO WILDLIFE stated it was unlikely a workshop would lead to a solution, and recommended the SC bring this discussion to a close.

Outcome: The SC:

- noted the analysis and conclusions from the AC and PC, including those referenced in [SC78 Doc.62](#); and
- in consideration of outstanding issues and questions, agree to submit to CoP20 the new draft decisions in [SC78 Doc.62](#), which request, *inter alia*, to convene a workshop building on the work done to date on reviewing the application of the Convention for trade in non-wild specimens and forming recommendations.

Identifying information on species at risk of extinction

affected by international trade: On Friday, the UK, as Working Group Chair, introduced [SC78 Doc.63](#), including a new recommendation inviting parties to update the CITES website. JAPAN, BELGIUM, CHINA, KUWAIT, PERU, and others opposed it. BELGIUM suggested, supported by ISRAEL, speaking also on behalf of GEORGIA, that the Secretariat, in updating its page, makes the page open to both parties and NGOs to upload data.

On Saturday, the Secretariat reported on amendments to [SC78 Doc.63](#), as reflected in [SC78 Com.15](#), noting that this was based on comments received from parties. The SC agreed to the document.

Outcome: The SC agreed that:

- parties upload information for inclusion on the dedicated page relating to methodologies, information or analyses on species or other taxonomic groups at risk of extinction that are or may be threatened by international trade, plus their look-alikes; and
- intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and other experts to work with parties to identify, develop or submit such information.

Species Conservation and Trade: Fauna

Spix's macaw: On Tuesday, Brazil introduced [SC78 Doc.64](#) on Spix's macaw (*Cyanopsitta spixii*), including a new recommendation on captive breeding for reintroduction purposes.

BELGIUM, JAPAN, NEW ZEALAND, the US, ARGENTINA, and others supported the recommendations. WCS expressed concern, noting much more needs to be done to ensure trade in captive bred species benefits conservation of the species in the wild.

Outcome: The SC noted the document and invited Brazil, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, India, Switzerland and other relevant parties to continue dialogue to enhance exchange of information with regard to *C. spixii* held in captivity in support of the Population Management Programme and to report back to SC79.

Elephants: Report on the implementation of Resolution Conf.10.10 (Rev. CoP19): On Tuesday, the Secretariat introduced [SC78 Doc.65.1](#), highlighting a downward trend in the proportion of illegally killed elephants (PIKE) and an increase in seizures.

DRC congratulated the Secretariat and partners for the analysis and called for mobilization of resources to address human-elephant conflict. KENYA expressed alarm for the number of large-scale ivory seizures, noting there could be leakage from stockpiles. SINGAPORE, supported by KUWAIT and CHINA, and opposed by BELGIUM, proposed amendment to the Elephant Trade Information System (ETIS) data collection form question to the effect of adding reference to "verified trade route information available for the seizure." NIGER, supported by SENEGAL, called for improvement of stockpile management to ensure there are no leaks. ZIMBABWE noted the importance of the Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE) Programme.

TRAFFIC called for meeting the financial needs of MIKE. IUCN encouraged cooperation to prioritize data collection in sites that have not been surveyed. The US suggested that "unverified" data should still be collected and recommended that Singapore's proposal should go to the MIKE-ETIS Subgroup for consideration. BELGIUM noted that in light of Singapore's clarification of the proposed amendment, she now supported it. Chair Gnam proposed a compromise, which was accepted.

Outcome: The SC:

- noted the downward PIKE trend in Africa and commended the efforts of African elephant range states and others in supporting actions to maintain this positive trend;
- noted the increase in the number and total weight of ivory seizures reported compared to 2022 and urged parties to maintain enforcement efforts as well as anti-poaching measures to sustain the downward trend;
- reviewed and agreed to proposed changes to the ETIS data collection form in the Annex; and
- noted the funding needs for ETIS as indicated by TRAFFIC and the reduced budget allocated to the MIKE component under the new EU project, which will limit the MIKE Programme ability to maintain the same level of support to MIKE sites as in previous years.

Implementation of the priority recommendations from the review of the ETIS programme: On Tuesday, the SC introduced [SC78 Doc.65.2 \(Rev.1\)](#).

BELGIUM, echoed by JAPAN and the US, highlighted the proposed network models as useful. BENIN, supported by SINGAPORE, supported the protocol for ETIS data validation.

WWF opposed the view of the Secretariat that the network models should not be used and that only the trend and cluster analyses should be used to prepare the report for CoP20.

On Saturday, Belgium, as Chair of the MIKE-ETIS Subgroup, reported on the revised document ([SC78. Com.9](#)), which was agreed without amendment.

Outcome: The SC agreed that no data validation will occur in relation to the additional data fields included in the ETIS data collection form for data submitted prior to SC78, as the data validation process will not be applied retroactively to new data elements. The SC also agreed to direct:

- the Secretariat, in consultation with TRAFFIC and the MIKE-ETIS Technical Advisory Group, to revise the draft protocol in SC78 Doc.65.2, taking into consideration the different scenarios associated with the status of records subject to inquiry and their implications for the ETIS analysis; and
- the SC to submit the draft criteria for the categorization of parties in SC78 Doc.65.3 for consideration by CoP20.

ETIS categorization of parties: On Tuesday, the Secretariat introduced [SC78 Doc.65.3](#), noting that it includes draft criteria for the categorization of parties in the ETIS context. Several delegates expressed support for maintaining reference to the contextual information used by TRAFFIC to inform the categorization of parties, including the Corruption Perception Index, the Organized Crime Index, and published literature, CITES reports, and peer-reviewed literature.

Outcome: The SC agreed: to recommend the adoption of the draft criteria for the categorization of parties to CoP20; and that the contextual information in [SC78 Doc.65.3](#) be used by TRAFFIC as part of the categorization process.

Domestic ivory markets: On Wednesday, the Secretariat introduced [SC78 Doc.65.4](#).

KENYA, supported by ISRAEL, the UK, SENEGAL, BENIN, NIGER, and SUDAN, suggested renewing, instead of deleting, Decisions 18.117-119 on closure of domestic ivory markets. BELGIUM stressed the need to avoid renewing decisions, where possible, to reduce the reporting burden of parties and the workload of the Secretariat and supported deleting Decisions 19.99-19.101 on ivory seizures and domestic ivory markets. The US suggested that discussions continue in the MIKE-ETIS Subgroup, and KENYA opposed, underscoring this subgroup's already heavy workload.

Outcome: The SC agreed:

- with the advice provided by the MIKE-ETIS Technical Advisory Group and the MIKE-ETIS Subgroup relating to the feasibility of the analysis proposed in Decision 19.99; and
- to propose to CoP20 renewal of Decisions 18.117 (Rev. CoP19), 18.118, and 18.119 (Rev. CoP19) on closure of domestic ivory markets.

Exchange of information between the annual illegal trade report and ETIS: On Wednesday, Belgium, as chair of the MIKE-ETIS Subgroup, introduced [SC78 Doc.65.5](#), highlighting proposed amendments to resolutions on trade in elephant specimens and on national reports. She described matters that went beyond the subgroup's mandate, but could benefit from further discussion, including: reporting deadlines, double reporting to ETIS and the CITES Illegal Trade Database, exchange of historical data, data validation, cost-efficiency, data duplication, and near real-time data updates.

JAPAN said it was not cost-efficient to maintain two separate databases and reporting deadlines. Noting that both ETIS and the CITES Illegal Trade databases are key tools in monitoring and addressing illegal wildlife trade, the EU stressed that streamlining these systems should remain a priority. On the matter of double reporting, KENYA, supported by many parties, suggested prioritizing submission of ivory seizure data to ETIS, then copying this over to Annual Illegal Trade (AIT) reports on ivory seizures. Noting that reporting deadlines were discussed at length at CoP19, where it was decided different deadlines should be maintained, NIGER, supported by the US, suggested this matter requires no further discussion.

BELGIUM suggested a draft decision for submission to CoP20 directing the SC to consider the outstanding matters on the exchange of information between ETIS and the AIT, and make recommendations as necessary to CoP21. The US suggested an amendment to this new proposed draft decision to exclude further discussion on reporting deadlines, as proposed by NIGER.

Outcome: The SC:

- agreed to the proposed amendments to paragraph 27(g) in Resolution Conf.10.10 (Rev.CoP19) on trade in elephant specimens and paragraph 4 in Resolution Conf.11.17 (Rev. CoP19) on national reports, for submission to CoP20;
- took note of the matters on the exchange of information between ETIS and the AIT; and
- agreed to submit a draft decision to CoP20 directing the SC to consider the matters in paragraph 6 of SC78 Doc.65.5 on exchange of information between AIT reports and the ETIS, and make recommendations to CoP21.

Trade in Asian elephants: On Wednesday, the Secretariat introduced [SC78 Doc.65.6](#), including the list of key elements to be considered regarding registering, marking, and tracing systems for captive Asian elephants (*Elephas maximus*).

KENYA, the UK, SENEGAL, ISRAEL, and others, supported by EIA, favored maintaining Decision 18.226 (Rev.CoP19) on trade in Asian elephants. On the list of key elements, the US proposed adding that parties consult with the Secretariat to ensure their party profiles are updated and reference to the “[Guide to the application of CITES source codes](#)” is included.

On Saturday, the Secretariat introduced [SC78 Com.13](#) on amendments to the draft decisions. KUWAIT supported it.

Outcome: The SC agreed in its draft decisions that the Secretariat develop a factsheet to facilitate consistent interpretation of what constitutes a “captive bred” Asian elephant in accordance with the provisions of the Convention and relevant resolutions and make the factsheet available to parties to draw upon and use as needed.

Trade in mammoth ivory: On Wednesday, the Secretariat introduced [SC78 Doc.65.7](#).

ISRAEL, supported by KENYA and BENIN, proposed adding reference to the benefits of listing extinct species when such a listing could help CITES-listed species. HONDURAS, echoed by BELGIUM, NEW ZEALAND, CANADA, SWITZERLAND, ZIMBABWE, CHINA, KUWAIT, and others, objected to the validity of listing an extinct species. BELGIUM, opposed by BENIN, also proposed deletion of the recommendation encouraging parties where domestic ivory markets exist to closely monitor these markets to identify, prevent, and address any attempts to launder or mislabel elephant ivory as mammoth ivory. The

RUSSIAN FEDERATION highlighted the document’s “misleading” information on mammoth ivory in his country and recommended deletion. ISRAEL withdrew its proposal.

The SC noted the Russian Federation’s statement and agreed to Belgium’s proposal to delete the recommendation cited.

Outcome: The SC:

- noted information and research results compiled regarding the trade in mammoth ivory; and
- encouraged parties exporting and importing mammoth ivory to strictly apply the domestic regulatory measures they have in place for trade in these specimens.

CITES Dialogue Meeting for African elephant range states: On Wednesday, Rosemarie Gnam, as chair of the Dialogue Meeting, presented [SC78 Doc.65.8](#).

BOTSWANA reported on the meeting, underlining the constructive cooperation between the range states. BENIN, supported by KENYA, suggested edits to the draft decisions to underline that the Secretariat consult with the entire SC, not just its Chair, and African range states on a technical workshop on mechanisms for the sustainable management of elephants and ivory stockpiles. KENYA believed such mechanisms should be decided on by range states, not by the Secretariat.

The US suggested adding language on sustainable finance for elephant conservation to reflect previous progress on the topic, and that this may be an appropriate time to invite relevant donors to the process.

SOUTH AFRICA opposed opening discussions on the draft decision, pointing to the substantive work that had gone into the present document, a consensus document agreed by African range states.

Chair Gnam proposed to amend the recommendation to the effect that the African range states, rather than SC78, discuss the draft decisions and submit recommendations to CoP20.

Outcome: The SC:

- welcomed the outcomes of the Dialogue Meeting; and
- invited African range states to consider the draft decisions as well as the discussions at SC78, continue their discussion, and provide their recommendations to CoP20.

Great Apes: Report on the implementation of Resolution

Conf.13.4 (Rev.CoP18): On Friday, the Secretariat introduced [SC78 Doc.66](#). The UK, POLAND, the US, UGANDA, and the PAN AFRICAN SANCTUARY ALLIANCE, on behalf of several NGOs, expressed support for the recommendations. POLAND provided some additional text.

Outcome: The SC noted the report and agreed to encourage all parties to identify seized great ape specimens at species level and report these seizures in their annual illegal trade reports in a timely manner following the [Guidelines for the preparation and submission of the CITES annual illegal trade report](#).

Pangolins: On Friday, Switzerland, as AC Chair, introduced the report of the AC ([SC78 Doc.67.1](#)) and the Secretariat introduced its report ([SC78 Doc.67.2](#)).

KENYA, supported by NEW ZEALAND, proposed an amendment to specify that the Secretariat develop “timebound and measurable” recommendations in its ongoing preparation of a comprehensive report on pangolins for CoP20. CHINA stressed that stockpile management is a domestic issue.

EIA UK, on behalf of nine other NGOs, called for the closure of legal domestic pangolin markets due to their impacts on illegal trade.

Outcome: The SC agreed to:

- support the AC recommendation to use the conversion parameters in Annex 2 to document [AC33 Doc.35](#) for *M. gigantea*, *M. javanica*, *M. pentadactyla*, *M. tetradactyla* and *M. tricusps* by parties in cases where national legislation demands that such information be provided for law enforcement and court purposes;
- encourage parties to use TRAFFIC's publication "[Identification of commonly traded wildlife in Southeast Asia](#)" and [USAID's pangolin species identification and reference materials](#) to support the identification of seized pangolin specimens at species level;
- submit the draft decisions in SC78 Doc.67.1 for consideration at CoP20;
- note the responses to [Notification to the Parties No. 2024/096](#); and
- request the Secretariat to develop timebound and measurable recommendations based on the most updated information available, for consideration at CoP20.

Saiga antelopes: Reports by Kazakhstan and the Secretariat:

On Friday, Kazakhstan introduced [SC78 Doc.68.1](#) and the Secretariat presented its report ([SC78 Doc.68.2](#)), both emphasizing the forthcoming Fifth Meeting of the Signatories to the CMS Saiga Memorandum of Understanding (Saiga MOS5) in March 2025.

KAZAKHSTAN said it would review CITES decisions with the intention to inform a long-term vision for range states in the conservation and sustainable use of saiga antelope (*Saiga* spp.) for the benefit of conservation and local communities. CHINA welcomed success in conserving the saiga population. The US applauded Kazakhstan's efforts but expressed concern over management of existing stockpiles of saiga. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION noted it does not have legal domestic markets and expressed concern over the use of source code U (unknown) in saiga trade. CMS acknowledged Kazakhstan's challenges and supported the recommendations, highlighting the importance of using relevant CMS guidelines.

FAUNA AND FLORA INTERNATIONAL, on behalf of WWF, TRAFFIC, and EIA, supported the establishment of an intersessional working group and emphasized greater collaboration between CMS and CITES. KAZAKHSTAN recommended suspension of trade in saiga marked with source codes U and O (pre-convention). The US also asked to issue a notification to the parties in relation to stockpiles.

Outcome: The SC noted the reports and on the basis of the outcome of CMS Saiga MOS5 and the status of implementation of Decisions 19.213 to 19.217 on saiga, and invited the Secretariat to revise or draft new decisions for consideration by CoP20. The SC also noted concerns over use of source codes U and O and agreed to issue a notification to the parties in relation to stockpiles.

Species Conservation and Trade: Aquatic Species

Eels: On Wednesday, the UK, as chair of the Working Group, introduced [SC78 Doc.69.1](#). The Secretariat introduced [SC78 Doc.69.2](#).

POLAND, the US, and NEW ZEALAND expressed support for a genus-wide resolution on eels (*Anguilla* spp.), with POLAND suggesting amendments to, *inter alia*, strengthen the resolution's language to adequately address illegal trade in and harvesting of eels. NEW ZEALAND, supported by KUWAIT, suggested inviting parties to submit information through a Notification to the Parties, rather than directing them to self-report. INDONESIA, supported by KUWAIT and JAPAN, supported the genus-wide resolution

but requested more time for Asian countries to provide feedback. JAPAN said the source code R, for "ranching," was not appropriate for all eel species from aquaculture production systems.

A drafting group was formed.

On Saturday, the UK, as chair of the drafting group, reported back on its deliberations ([SC78 Com.18](#)). He said there was support for a clear distinction between European eels and other eel species in the proposed resolution, but as there was no agreement, they agreed to revert to the structure of the draft resolution as proposed by the Eel Working Group.

POLAND, supported by the US, the UK and CANADA, asked to replace the word "farmed" by "raised in aquaculture," to reflect the biology of the species.

CHINA, INDONESIA, INDIA, BRAZIL, LAO PDR, CAMBODIA, KUWAIT, and the REPUBLIC of KOREA questioned the feasibility of regulating trade in all mentioned eel species, favored limiting the draft decisions and resolution to European eel, and suggested forwarding the matter to the CoP, with BRAZIL underlining the varying national circumstances.

IUCN and the ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY LONDON acknowledged that regulation of all species is complex, but strongly supported the draft resolution.

Chair Gnam suggested leaving the matter to CoP20, and agreeing on the textual amendment suggested by Poland. The SC agreed.

Outcome: The SC agreed to submit to CoP20 the draft decisions and draft resolution contained in SC78 Doc.69.1. The SC also noted the updates in SC78 Doc.69.2 and encouraged parties affected by illegal trade in eels to actively engage in any operations and targeted activities aimed at addressing this issue.

Sharks and rays: On Wednesday, the US, as Chair of the Working Group, introduced [SC78 Doc.70.1](#); Switzerland, as AC Chair, presented [SC78 Doc.70.2](#); and the Secretariat summarized [SC78 Doc.70.3](#).

In the interest of time, Chair Gnam established an in-session working group to review the draft recommendations and decisions. The working group was co-chaired by the US and New Zealand, on behalf of their regions, and further comprised 25 parties and 19 observer organizations.

On Saturday, New Zealand, as Co-Chair of the Working Group, reported on the group's in-session work. The SC agreed to the recommendations contained in SC78 Doc.70 and as amended in [SC78 Com.14](#).

Outcome: The SC agreed to propose option 1 in the Annex to document SC78 Doc.70.1 as the preferred amendment to Annex 3 of Resolution Conf.18.7 (Rev.CoP19) to CoP20; and propose the draft decisions contained in SC78 Doc.70.1, as amended in SC78 Com.14, to CoP20.

The SC also agreed to:

- note the AC33 recommendations contained in SC78 Doc.70.2, and propose the draft decisions contained in SC78 Doc.70.2, as amended in SC78 Com.14, to CoP20; and
- consider the two situations relating to reporting by a party with specimens caught in the exclusive economic zones of another party described in SC78 Doc.70.3 and provide guidance on reporting requirements; and submit the first draft decision in SC78 Doc.70.3 to include provisions to address discrepancies and lack of reporting based on the recommendations of AC33 for consideration at CoP20.

Seahorses: On Thursday, the AC Chair introduced the AC report on seahorses (*Hippocampus* spp.) ([SC78 Doc.71.1](#)) and the Secretariat introduced its report ([SC78 Doc.71.2](#)).

The US, AUSTRALIA, and IUCN supported the recommendations, with AUSTRALIA suggesting minor textual amendments.

Outcome: On seahorses, the SC agreed to review and submit to CoP revised Decisions 19.229 (Rev.CoP19) and 19.230 (Rev.CoP19), as well as new draft decisions.

Species Conservation and Trade: Flora

Brazilwood: On Thursday, the Secretariat introduced [SC78 Doc.73](#).

POLAND asked how information in the Secretariat's report was verified and supported the proposed draft decisions with a small amendment. BRAZIL said no commercially planted brazilwood (*Paubrasilia echinata*) stocks were sufficient to meet current market demand. The US requested more information about the cost and enforceability of traceability options; suggested edits to the draft decisions; and suggested a new draft decision directing the PC to consider the finalized report and provide recommendations to the SC. CANADA, supported by POLAND and GERMANY, corrected minor errors in the text.

The INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY OF VIOLIN AND BOW MAKERS, speaking on behalf of multiple musical stakeholders, drew attention to [SC78 Inf.26](#), which offers comments and recommendations from the sector, and a report on actions taken by it relating to the development and implementation of a traceability system for brazilwood specimens.

A drafting group was formed to consider proposed new decisions and revisions to draft decisions, including one directing Brazil to assess information on plantation-grown brazilwood stocks to meet current and future market demand for musical instruments.

On Saturday, Brazil, as chair of the drafting group, reported on the revised document ([SC78 Com.8](#)), which was agreed with a minor amendment.

Outcome: The SC agreed:

- to note feedback to the draft report in SC78 Doc.73 and for the Secretariat to finalize its report responding to comments in plenary and submit to CoP20; and
- to invite Brazil to share via a Notification to the Parties any relevant information on *P. echinata*; and
- to invite Brazil to share with the Secretariat any comments received from the Notification, so that they can be considered as part of the revisions to the draft report on "*P. echinata* bows: Fine Tuning Traceability Solutions."

Species Conservation and Trade: Fungi

An assessment of the practicalities of the CoP12 decision that the Convention should apply to fungi: On Friday, the UK, as proponent of the document, presented [SC78 Doc.75](#).

NEW ZEALAND supported developing a resolution on fungi under CITES. POLAND supported soliciting *ad hoc* expert advice. KUWAIT, HONDURAS, and MEXICO believed fungi exceed the mandate of CITES and expanding CITES would pose unnecessary financial and practical challenges. CHINA favored a cautious and science-based approach rather than regulatory intervention. Several delegates noted the matter is not relevant until any listing proposal has been brought forward.

Chair Gnam recalled that CoP12 decided the Convention did cover fungi. She invited delegates to engage with the UK bilaterally to discuss the matter further.

Outcome: The SC noted the document.

Appendices of the Convention

Annotations: On Friday, the UK, as proponent of the document, presented [SC78 Doc.76](#) and [SC78 Doc.78 Add.](#)

CANADA, supported by the US, said the draft decision in SC78 Doc.76 Add. was immature and would place an undue burden on parties and the Secretariat. The US reported it had struggled to obtain feedback from range states of Brazilian rosewood (*Aniba rosaeodora*) and *Bulnesia sarmientoi* and suggested the SC request assistance from the regional representatives to collect this feedback.

Chair Gnam clarified the Secretariat will contact these range states to collect the feedback, and ARGENTINA offered assistance in this regard.

Outcome: The SC agreed to, *inter alia*, request the SC to obtain, if possible, feedback from the range states of these two species on whether they can support the revisions to annotations #11 and #12 described in SC78 Doc.76.

Annotation #15: On Thursday, the Secretariat introduced [SC78 Doc.77](#). She recalled that at PC27, the Secretariat provided an update on the study to assess the effect of the exemptions contained in Annotation #15 for finished musical instruments, parts, and accessories on *Dalbergia/Guibourtia* species in international trade, and the conservation implications thereof.

INDIA pointed out that the listing of the entire genus of *Dalbergia/Guibourtia* has had a significant impact on tree growers. TANZANIA called for technical and financial support for monitoring and identification technologies.

The LEAGUE OF AMERICAN ORCHESTRAS expressed its continued willingness to cooperate with the Secretariat and parties to achieve sustainable trade.

INTEGRATING WILDLIFE, MARKETS, AND CONSERVATION – WORLD CONSERVATION TRUST (IWMC) suggested linking this document to other species that are used in the musical instrument industry.

Outcome: The SC agreed to request the Secretariat to revise the second draft of the report, taking into consideration the comments made at SC78 and submit a final report for consideration at CoP20.

Implications of the transfer of a species from one Appendix to another: On Friday, the Secretariat presented [SC78 Doc.79 \(Rev.1\)](#).

Outcome: The SC agreed to:

- submit for consideration to CoP20 updated draft guidance and best practices related to periods of transition and possible transitory measures provided in the Annex to SC78 Doc.79 Rev.1; and
- request the SC Chair, in consultation with the Secretariat, to review this draft guidance based on the discussions at SC78 and CoP20, for further consideration at SC81.

Information system for trade in specimens of CITES-listed tree species: On Thursday, the Secretariat introduced [SC78 Doc.80](#).

The US, supported by BELGIUM, CANADA, JAPAN, and MEXICO supported taking note of the updated report provided by the Secretariat on the implementation of Decision 19.265, but expressed concern that its scope had expanded to include information beyond CITES' mandate, and suggested focusing on higher-priority issues such as implementation and tree-identifying materials for front-line inspection officers.

Outcome: The SC agreed to take note of the report provided by the Secretariat on the implementation of Decision 19.265.

Informal review mechanism for existing and proposed annotations: On Friday, the Secretariat presented [SC78 Doc.81](#).

Outcome: The SC agreed: to the approaches to review and amend annotations as described in SC78 Doc.81; to test the approach at CoP20; and request the Secretariat to report back to SC81 on the experience and any results as well as any recommendations.

Nomenclature Matters

Nomenclature of Appendix-III listings: On Saturday, the AC and PC Nomenclature Specialist introduced [SC78 Doc.82](#). NEW ZEALAND and the US proposed additional minor amendments, which were accepted.

Outcome: The SC agreed to the proposed amendments to Resolution Conf.9.25 (Rev.CoP18) on Implementation of the Convention for species in Appendix III and Resolution Conf.12.11 (Rev.CoP19) on Standard nomenclature.

Higher taxon listings in the Appendices: On Saturday, the AC and PC Specialist on Nomenclature introduced [SC78 Doc.83 \(Rev.1\)](#). KENYA supported the proposed amendments.

Outcome: The SC agreed to the amendments to Resolution Conf.12.11 (Rev.CoP19) on Standard nomenclature in SC78 Doc.83 to be considered at CoP20.

Taxonomy and nomenclature of African elephants: On Wednesday, the Secretariat reported, after legal consultation, that the proposed nomenclature amendment ([SC78 Doc.84](#)) would have few legal implications in the CITES context.

Chair Gnam suggested, and the SC agreed, that SC78 refrain from making a recommendation on a preferred option of how to reflect African elephant species in the CITES appendices and forward all three suggested options to the CoP.

Outcome: The SC agreed to:

- note the change to the standard nomenclature reference recommended by the AC; and
- forward all three options contained in SC78 Doc.84 to the CoP, along with the draft decision and proposed amendment to Resolution Conf.10.10 (Rev.CoP19).

Closing Remarks

On Saturday afternoon, the Secretariat announced that SC79 will take place on 23 November 2025 in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, the day before CoP20, and SC80 on 5 December 2025, the last day of CoP20.

In closing the meeting, Secretary-General Higuero commended SC78 Chair Gnam for her leadership through a “complex and demanding agenda,” praising her knowledge, impartiality, and firm hand in guiding debates. She also thanked Switzerland for its generous financial support in hosting the meeting, and Uzbekistan and Panama for offering to host CoP20 and CoP21, respectively, and commended the delegates, the interpreters, translators, and the Secretariat staff for their endurance and dedication.

Chair Gnam thanked delegates for their cooperation and spirit of compromise over the past six days, “working tirelessly on behalf of plants and animals who cannot speak for themselves.” She received a standing ovation as she closed the meeting at 5:09 pm.

A Brief Analysis of SC78

The world is grappling with a deepening triple planetary crisis: climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. At the same time, the global geopolitical landscape is increasingly marked by instability. These are some of the challenges facing the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in the 50th anniversary year of its entry into force.

The 78th meeting of the Standing Committee (SC) marked the final regular SC gathering before the next Conference of the Parties (CoP20), prompting reflection on how this Convention started, how far it has come, and how far it still has to go to ensure that international trade in wildlife legal, traceable, and sustainable.

Through the lens of SC78, this brief analysis takes a closer look at recent successes of the Convention, as well as the challenges facing CITES in light of not just political turmoil in Washington, DC, where the agreement was originally adopted, but also in terms of workload. With the longest agenda in SC history, and an extra day added to the proceedings, SC78 highlighted both the increasing significance of CITES and the challenges this brings in terms of burdening parties, and especially the Secretariat, with ever more documents, decisions, and responsibilities. Meanwhile limited resources for the Secretariat threaten to impact even the most basic of CITES’ activities, such as supporting parties towards improved legislation and enforcement, capacity building, and efforts to combat illegal wildlife trade. Can CITES resolve these growing pains in the lead-up to CoP20, or is it facing a mid-life crisis?

Small but Significant Successes

Not all the news is bad. As CITES Secretary-General Ivonne Higuero noted in her opening remarks to SC78, there is reason for hope. Half a century of CITES implementation has brought remarkable achievements. Some recent wins include the dramatic recovery of the saiga antelope population in Kazakhstan. A 2024 survey showed that numbers may now exceed 4 million individuals, having recovered from the historical low of 21,000 individuals recorded in 2003 and the large-scale die-offs from disease that occurred in 2010 and 2015. Progress was also made on compliance in the implementation of the Convention for CITES-listed tree species. The SC, for instance, commended Cameroon for resolving all compliance issues related to its trade in African teak, and Madagascar for its progress on the appropriate handling of stockpiles of its ebonyes, palisanders, and rosewoods.

CITES is also boldly venturing further into uncertain waters. One delegate, reflecting back on the initial hesitation of parties for CITES to venture into the oceans, let alone areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ), rejoiced in the fact that CITES now has several marine items featuring prominently on the agenda. These concern species-specific actions for sharks and rays, for instance, with the oceanic whitetip shark as a charismatic example, but also wider work on how to deal with catches brought in from ABNJ.

Another reason for hope is the successful journey that some countries are taking towards CITES compliance and effective protection of their endangered species. Two shining examples at SC78 were Malaysia and Cambodia, who have fulfilled all the criteria to exit the National Ivory Action Plan process—a framework of scrutiny that was developed to address the poaching of elephants in Africa.

With Turkmenistan recently becoming the 185th party to CITES—proof of the increasingly important role of the Central Asian region in wildlife conservation—the Convention continues to grow. But growth in itself is sometimes a problem.

Turning 50: A Midlife Crisis?

CITES, which was signed in 1973 and came into force in 1975, faces a paradox. Over time, the Convention's budget has steadily shrunk, failing to keep pace with the rising number of decisions adopted. A graph shown on opening day highlighted this somber reality: in the last 15 years, the number of decisions taken through CITES has grown more than 200%, while over this same time frame, Secretariat capacity has only increased 18%. Several delegates also confessed that the capacity of their countries to implement CITES had similarly flatlined, and in some cases even shrunk.

One reason for the proliferation of decisions is the introduction of broader cultural issues related to gender, livelihoods, and Indigenous Peoples and local communities into CITES. One delegate summed this situation up as “the UN-ification of CITES,” noting CITES was not a product of UN negotiations. This tension with the original mandate of the Convention—to protect wildlife from threats related to international trade and illegal trafficking—was palpable at SC78. Even parties who supported the draft Gender Action Plan asked exactly how a recommendation to “share information about gender-based violence in the wild flora and fauna international trade chain” would be operationalized, and whether it would place an undue burden on the Secretariat.

Still others said these matters were beyond the original scope of Convention and called for them to be discussed in other forums, such as under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Whether CITES decides to embrace what one delegate called “mission creep” into interconnected but somewhat tangential issues, or to hone in on its original, more technical mandate to prevent trade impacts on endangered species of wildlife, remains to be seen. What is certain is that more discussions on these matters will happen at CoP20, and that “everything comes down to finances.” “If parties want more issues on the table,” as one delegate mused, “they’d better be willing to provide the resources for the Secretariat to address them.”

Sharpening Fangs

While certain countries have made great strides towards compliance with CITES, progress elsewhere remains painstakingly minimal, or even nonexistent, with species' conservation status reminding dire in places like Oman. This country has been subject to a recommendation to suspend all trade in CITES-listed species for commercial purposes since 10 January 2024 for failure to adopt adequate national legislation. Although Oman notified the SC about updating its legislation, the Secretariat noted that “critical elements” in terms of regulations for implementation were still missing.

Despite this, several parties called for Oman's trade suspension to be lifted, pointing to its detrimental economic impacts. But economic pain is precisely the point: CITES was designed to have “sharp teeth,” as one delegate put it; arguably this Convention has the sharpest teeth of any multilateral environmental agreement. Economic pressure is the intended outcome of trade suspensions. Calls from certain countries to lift those bans, despite the conditions for lifting them not being met, show “a heartening solidarity among regions,” as one delegate noted, “but also threaten to undermine the whole process.” At SC78, the trade suspension for Oman came to a vote, but there was not enough support among SC members to lift it.

Article XIII (non-compliance) and companion enforcement mechanisms remain a cornerstone of CITES' work, ensuring that its fangs remain sharp. In March 2023, for instance, CITES used Article XIII to suspend trade with Mexico in all CITES-listed species, arguing that this country did not have an adequate plan to combat illegal fishing of totoaba, which also harms the vaquita as bycatch. As a result, the vaquita population has plummeted to fewer than 20 individuals. With totoaba's numbers in a similarly critical state, both species face extinction. However, after a heated national and international debate, in April 2023, CITES lifted the sanctions on Mexico. Fast forward to SC78, and Mexico still does not have adequate systems for preventing fishing in vaquita habitats, which prompted renewed calls to re-suspend trade.

Similarly, the use by CITES of non-detriment findings (NDFs) and Legal Acquisition Findings (LAFs) is actively keeping countries in check and ensuring that the international trade of endangered species is not harmful. During the meeting, the Maldives raised concerns over trade in oceanic whitetip shark, expressing concerns that trade in this species was happening without CITES permits, or with CITES permits that appear to have been issued without the required LAFs. The SC agreed to request Indonesia, Kenya, Oman, Senegal, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, and Yemen to provide detailed information on NDFs and LAFs.

Looking Ahead to CITES' 90th Birthday—and Beyond

Reflecting on the legacy of Jaques Berney, the first Executive Secretary of CITES, who celebrated his 90th birthday at SC78, the looming question is whether the Convention will remain effective into the future. Some delegates asked what lessons can be drawn from the past to ensure that CITES remains focused on its core mission while adapting to new challenges.

The proposal tabled at CoP19 in Panama that the Secretariat prepare the first World Wildlife Trade Report seemed to serve this aim. At the time, the proposal was welcomed by several parties. It was seen as an opportunity to highlight the importance of well-structured information on the routes, scale, and patterns of international trade in CITES-listed species, the monetary value of the trade, conservation impacts, and socioeconomic impacts of such trade. However, at SC78, some worried preparing such a report would stretch the already strained resources, both financial and human, of CITES parties and the Secretariat. Ultimately, the SC recommended that the Secretariat prepare a shorter overview report, omitting the socioeconomic impacts of wildlife trade.

Many delegates spoke to the importance of partnerships with complementary conventions, especially with the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS). They reported that the partnership with CMS is key to enhancing CITES' effectiveness, particularly in the context of migratory species that are protected under both Conventions, from jaguars to African carnivores and Central Asian mammals. However, some delegates have expressed concern over tensions between these Conventions. One delegate pointed to a notable example: the absence of the CITES Secretary-General at the CMS COP in Uzbekistan, despite the presence of other key environmental leaders, including the heads of the UN Environment Programme, the Global Environment Facility, and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance.

This absence has sparked concerns about the lack of unified commitment and collaboration between the Conventions, highlighting a potential gap in the coordinated efforts required to address global conservation challenges. A unified approach to jaguar conservation efforts and preparation of the forthcoming

Fifth Meeting of the Signatories to the CMS Saiga Memorandum of Understanding (Saiga MOS5) in March 2025 might have put those concerns to rest for now. Later in 2025, Uzbekistan is slated to host CoP20, and with that offer another opportunity to solidify that cooperation.

All Roads Lead to Samarkand

Hosting a CITES CoP in Central Asia signals a pivotal moment for the region, long underrepresented in global conservation platforms. With Turkmenistan's recent accession to the Convention, Kazakhstan's remarkable work on improving its saiga populations, and Uzbekistan's upcoming role as host of another major event, delegates commented that Central Asia seems poised to have a more prominent voice in shaping the future of wildlife trade and conservation efforts. Such engagement will be crucial for a number of Central Asian species listed in the CITES appendices, including saiga, big cats, sturgeon, markhor, urial and argali, peregrine falcon and tortoises. Meanwhile, parties are already deciding what species they will propose for protection under the CITES Appendices at CoP20. Turtles, rattlesnakes, sharks, sea cucumbers, goitered gazelles, and striped hyenas are among those being considered—species likely to challenge the future direction and implementation of CITES in an increasingly complex world.

Upcoming Meetings

Saiga MOS5: The Fifth Meeting of the Signatories to the Memorandum of Understanding concerning Conservation, Restoration and Sustainable Use of the Saiga Antelope (*Saiga spp.*) (Saiga MOS5) will be hosted by the Government of Kazakhstan and is being organized by the CMS Secretariat. **dates:** 12-14 March 2025 **location:** Astana, Kazakhstan **www:** cms.int/en/meeting/fifth-meeting-signatories-memorandum-understanding-concerning-conservation-restoration-and

BBNJ Agreement Preparatory Commission: The Preparatory Commission will meet to ensure the Agreement under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement) is operational upon its entry into force. **dates:** 14-25 April 2025 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **www:** un.org/bbnjagreement

UNFF20: The UN Forum on Forests will review progress in implementation of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030, progress in implementing mid-term review outcomes, and other international forest-related developments. **dates:** 5-9 May 2025 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **www:** un.org/esa/forests

CITES Global Youth Summit: Hosted in Singapore, this summit aims to: empower young leaders with the knowledge, skills, and networks on CITES necessary to address wildlife trade challenges; foster collaboration among young professionals from diverse backgrounds and learn from experts on emerging issues and understanding various topics discussed at CITES; and develop practical solutions to wildlife trade challenges, encourage participants to share their success stories, discuss regional action plans, identify regional leaders, and contribute to addressing illegal wildlife trade. **dates:** 17-21 May 2025 **location:** Singapore **www:** cites.org/sites/default/files/notifications/E-Notif-2024-115_0.pdf

Third UN Ocean Conference (UNOC-3): Co-chaired by France and Costa Rica, the Conference aims to generate transformative action and provide solutions the Ocean needs, supported by ocean

science and funding for SDG 14 (life below water). **dates:** 9-13 June 2025 **location:** Nice, France **www:** sdgs.un.org/conferences/ocean2025

Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (COP15): The 15th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (COP15) will convene to review the Convention's implementation. **dates:** 23-31 July 2025 **location:** Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe **www:** ramsar.org/meeting/15th-meeting-conference-contracting-parties

IUCN World Conservation Congress: Held once every four years, the World Conservation Congress brings together leaders and decision-makers from government, civil society, Indigenous Peoples, business, and academia, to harness the solutions nature offers to global challenges. **dates:** 9-15 October 2025 **location:** Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates **www:** iucncongress2025.org

CITES COP20: The 20th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES COP 20) will convene to review the implementation of the Convention. **dates:** 24 November – 5 December 2025 **location:** Samarkand, Uzbekistan **www:** cites.org/eng/cop/20

For additional upcoming events, see sdg.iisd.org.

Glossary

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| AC | CITES Animals Committee |
| AZA | Association of Zoos and Aquariums |
| BBNJ | Biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction |
| CAP | Compliance Assistance Programme |
| CAR | Central African Republic |
| CBD | Convention on Biological Diversity |
| CITES | Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora |
| CMS | Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals |
| CoP | Conference of the Parties |
| DRC | Democratic Republic of the Congo |
| EIA | Environmental Investigation Agency |
| FAO | Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN |
| FBSC | Finance and Budget Subcommittee |
| ICCWC | International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime |
| IUCN | International Union for Conservation of Nature |
| LAFs | Legal acquisition findings |
| Lao PDR | Lao People's Democratic Republic |
| MEA | Multilateral environmental agreement |
| NDF | Non-detriment finding |
| NGO | Non-governmental organization |
| PC | CITES Plants Committee |
| RST | Review of Significant Trade |
| SC | CITES Standing Committee |
| UNEP | UN Environment Programme |
| WCS | Wildlife Conservation Society |
| WOAH | World Organisation for Animal Health |
| WWF | World Wide Fund for Nature |