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## **JOINT NATURE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE**

### **OUTCOME OF THE 13<sup>TH</sup> CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES (CITES)**

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#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The 13<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) was held in Bangkok on 2-14 October 2004. The UK delegation was led by Defra, and contained representatives of the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, HM Customs & Excise, Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, the JNCC (Vin Fleming and Alison Littlewood) and NGOs (Wildlife Link and the Sustainable Users Network). Elliot Morley, Minister for Environment, was present to lead the delegation for most of the second week.
- 1.2 The Conference was notable for the level of consensus obtained and, to a large extent, the absence of much of the traditional acrimony in some debates. This was due, in large part, to two good Chairs of the respective Committees: Holly Dublin in Committee I and Martin Brasher (Head Global Wildlife Division, Defra) in Committee II.
- 1.3 The influence of the European Community (EC), not only as a significant voting block but as a mediator between Parties, was much more prominent than in previous Conferences. The Dutch Presidency did an excellent job in EC co-ordination. The influence of the UK delegation was often pivotal in EC decisions and the breadth of expertise within the delegation enabled us to support the Presidency on a number of key issues.

#### **2. Synergy with the Convention on Biological Diversity**

- 2.1 The influence of, and links to, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) were more notable in this Conference than any other hitherto. There was a draft resolution on synergy between conventions, and the adoption, with caveats, of the Addis Ababa Principles on Sustainable Use.
- 2.2 Other CBD-related issues that increasingly raise their heads in CITES are linked to provisions on access and benefit sharing (especially in relation to captive breeding of species in the developed world that have been derived from the developing world). Proposals (from the UK and Switzerland) to exempt some biological specimens from the Convention (e.g. cell lines, vaccines, faeces, urine and fossils) were defeated. Although stiff opposition to exemption of genetic resources, such as cell lines, was to be expected, because

of perceptions by South American countries that such exemptions would infringe biological property rights, opposition to exempting fossils, faeces and urine is much harder to understand.

### **3. Listing of commercially exploited aquatic species**

- 3.1 Issues concerning fish and other marine species were prominent at the Conference. Humphead wrasse was listed on Appendix II by consensus, a significant majority voted in favour of great white shark (despite opposition from fishing nations), and European date mussel also passed by consensus. Decisions to continue CITES scrutiny of trade in sharks were adopted (after a vote). A proposal to down-list minke whales was defeated with Japan failing even to secure a simple majority.
- 3.2 A key take-home message from this Conference, regarding the listing of marine species, was the influence of the newly constituted independent advisory panel established by the United Nations Food & Agriculture Organisation (FAO). This panel aims to provide an independent assessment of proposals to amend the CITES appendices with respect to commercially exploited aquatic species (of fish and invertebrates in large water bodies). As major fishing nations have long promoted the primacy of the FAO on fisheries issues, when the FAO panel came out in favour of some fish listings (they unequivocally supported humphead wrasse and were neutral on great white shark), such Parties could no longer use reference to FAO as grounds for objection to CITES involvement. Accordingly, they either overtly or tacitly supported proposals that hitherto may have provoked heated debate.

### **4. Trophy hunting**

- 4.1 Trophy hunting issues raised a lot of NGO concern but the Parties were happy to accept, by consensus or by significant majorities, the proposals for down-listing Swaziland's population of white rhinos and for new or increased export quotas for hunting trophies of leopard and black rhino from Namibia and South Africa. The Kenyan proposal to up-list African lion to Appendix I was opposed by other African range states. The EC, supported by the UK, spent significant time trying to broker a compromise between the two groups. Ultimately, Kenya withdrew the proposal in the knowledge that, through a separate initiative, a number of regional, and one continental, workshops are planned to address issues of lion conservation and management in Africa. The outcome of these will be available to CITES Parties; the UK will offer funding in support of one such workshop.

### **5. Elephant issues**

- 5.1 Elephant issues created the usual tensions, and there was significant debate on Kenya's proposed modification of conditions on future ivory sales and Namibia's proposal for annual ivory quotas and sale of ekipas (traditional jewellery inlaid with ivory) for commercial purposes. Apart from the sale of hides and hair (agreed for Namibia and South Africa) Namibia's ivory proposals were put to a vote and were defeated in Committee (as was Kenya's

draft resolution). However, Namibia re-opened debate in final plenary, modifying their proposal to the export of ekipas for non-commercial purposes. When put to a secret ballot the proposal was carried.

- 5.2 More significantly perhaps, the Conference agreed to the adoption of an action plan for the control of trade in elephant ivory designed to address the significant unregulated ivory markets in parts of Africa. These unregulated markets are the main driver for much of the illegal killing of elephants which takes place and which has recently been estimated to be in the order of 4000 elephants a year.

## **6. Other proposals**

- 6.1 Other notable listings agreed at the Conference included ramin, a commercial timber species that is subject to illegal harvest and trade from Indonesia; there are important orangutan populations in the forests from which ramin is derived. This is further evidence of greater CITES involvement in more 'commercial' fish and timber species.

## **7. The next Conference**

- 7.1 The 14<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties will be held in the Netherlands in spring 2007.