

33rd Animals Committee meeting report

The Animals and Plants Committees are supposed to be scientific meetings between the different scientific authorities (countries), the CITES Secretariat and NGO's.

The work of PC 27 and AC33 largely involved the consideration of intersessional working group reports, leading to recommendations for consideration by SC78 (February 2025) and decisions to be made at CoP20 (end of 2025).

The Animals Committee started on Friday, 12 July, with three joint sessions with the Plants Committee handling 15 agenda items.

There were 49 Agenda items and over 65 documents that were handled over 11 sessions. Two days were set aside for 6 working groups to convene and deliberate certain proposals. SUCo-SA, WRSA and PASA were presented in 5 of these working groups.

Highlights of some relevant and interesting agenda items:

Opening Remarks and Announcements

At the opening of the 33rd meeting of the CITES Animals Committee (AC33), Secretary-General Yvonne Higuero announced that Uzbekistan has offered to host CoP20 next year. The Secretariat is tasked with visiting Uzbekistan after AC33 to assess if their facilities are adequate for a CoP and will likely announce their findings before November this year.

The chair of the Animals Committee (AC), Mathias Lörtscher, announced his retirement from Switzerland's Management Authority but confirmed he will remain chair of the committee until CoP20. Mathias took on the chairmanship of the AC after CoP17 in 2016 and has performed excellently over the years.

AGENDA ITEM REPORTS

26- Implementation of Paragraph 5j of Res 12.10

(This involves contributions to conservation for Switzerland-registered species.)

AC33 decided that the existing strategies for species conservation, including financial contributions, relocation, research, public awareness, capacity building, and reducing pressure on wild populations, are sufficient. Each country's "scientific authority" should evaluate whether an application's proposed strategy is acceptable. Our African Greys remain under scrutiny, as the Standing Committee in February 2025 must still decide how the contributions of registered breeders should be monitored. The World Parrot Trust, represented by HSI, again attempted to criticize us by claiming they haven't seen any fund usage yet.

15- Review of Captive Bred Trade

AC33 instructed the Secretariat, subject to available funds, to develop and maintain a "Captive Breeding Tracking and Management Database" to improve the investigation of "Captive Bred Trade."

AC33 retained 14 countries in the process of responding to inquiries about their trade in captive-bred primates, tortoises, and reptiles. The investigation into Indonesia's trade in captive-bred

Executive Committee: Chair Pieter Swart, (SATTA), Vice-Chair Mr. Stephen Palos (CHASA),
Sec-General Mr. Trevor Oertel (SAFA), Treasurer Mr. Richard York (WRSA)

Additional Members: Mr. Ron Thomson (TGA); Dr. Herman Els (Natshoot),

Umbrella Cockatoos has concluded, and they have been relieved of the investigation. Currently, no parrots are involved in the process.

25- Review of Provisions on Non-Wild Trade

This involves reconsidering all CITES regulations on trade in captive-bred animals and cultivated plants. The findings of the AC/PC working group are referred to the Standing Committee (SC) for their consideration. It is recognized that captive-bred trade presents a lower conservation risk to wild populations and that reduced availability of captive-bred animals poses an increased conservation risk to wild populations. Discussions on this topic will continue between CoP20 next year and CoP21 in 2028. PVSA's involvement remains critically important for our industry for at least the next four years due to its direct influence.

47- Nomenclature

CITES species names are outdated and need to be revised to align with worldwide changes in scientific names. The Handbook of the Birds of the World (HBW) was initially earmarked as the nomenclature reference for birds, which resulted in a substantial number of new parrot species being split from subspecies status. Our main issue with splitting subspecies into full species lies in proving legal origin, where import permits were under a different species than the current export permits. Recently, a number of scientists have started working on a "consolidated checklist" for birds that supports less splitting of subspecies. AC33 decided to put the consideration of HBW on hold until the new "consolidated checklist" is available for comparison. Meanwhile, bird species for CITES remain as they are for at least the next four years, with CoP21 making the final decision on the new "checklist."

The split of the *Loxodonta Africana* (African Elephant) into two. A separate specie, *Loxodonta cyclosis* (African Forest Elephant) has been approved at CoP19 in Panama. It now boils down on how the new specie, *Loxodonta cyclosis* must be listed on the CITES Appendices. There were two proposals on the table: the first one was to list each specie *Loxodonta Africana* and *Loxodonta cyclosis* separately in Appendix I, with the current annotation and listing of *Loxodonta Africana* in Southern African range states, staying in place. The second proposal was to list at a higher genus, *Loxodonta spp* with the annotations also the same. Although there is no difference between the two proposals, the latter will include any new specie of *Loxodonta* that may be discovered. There was a very long discussion on these two proposals. The Southern African range states (SA, ZIM, Namibia) supporting the first proposal while the rest supporting the latter. No decision was taken, and this matter will again be discussed at the Standing Committee meeting early next year as well as the CoP20 later next year.

Watch this space.

45- Periodic Review of the Appendices

AC33 decided to propose a few changes to Resolution 14.8, which outlines the criteria for the process, at CoP 20. New investigations identified include Suriname's exports of wild-caught Scarlet Macaws. Australia has committed to reviewing the CITES I status of the Ground Parrot and the extinct Paradise Parakeet. Mexico has committed to submitting a downlisting proposal for two seal species, the Galapagos Fur Seal from App I to App II, and the Caribbean Monk Seal, listed as extinct, to be removed from the Appendices.

16- Non-Detriment Findings (NDFs)

For a country to trade in any specie listed on the Appendixes, that country must conduct an NDF on that specie (being it dead or alive, stockpiles etc). the NDF must determine the quota of offtake. The NDF's are applicable to all CITES listed species, including fish and flora. We have witnessed a lot of problems specifically with regards to sharks and rays. Quite a few shark species have been listed at CoP19 and countries now struggle to get their NDF's in place for these species. The science of NDF's for fishes is still very restricted for all.

NDFs apply not only to trade in wild-caught animals but also to trade in captive-bred animals. For us, this means that the removal of our founder stock from the wild must not have been detrimental to wild populations, and the import of a CITES I species must not negatively impact the species'

wild populations. The Secretariat is upgrading the recommendations on how to make NDFs for consideration by the next AC and SC meetings.

28- Assessment of Appendix I Listings

AC33 took note of the findings of the intersessional working group. The Hyacinth Macaw was one of the ten species assessed. Interestingly, the wild population has more than doubled over the past decades to an estimated 6500 birds in the wild. However, Brazil, where the largest part of their range is located, is entirely opposed to considering a downlisting to CITES II.

29- Species at Risk of Extinction

This was an attempt by animal rights groups at CoP 19 in Panama to appoint the Secretariat to identify and propose species for uplisting to CITES I or II. Fortunately, there are not enough funds or time for an overworked Secretariat to do this, and the topic is essentially closed. It remains the responsibility of CITES member countries to identify species and then propose them for uplisting at a CoP.

19- Identification Materials for CITES Species

Materials for the accurate identification of species by officers during inspections are consistently lacking. AC recommends creating an intersessional working group for identification materials. PASA can contribute by providing photos of the various species we export, especially showing differences between adult birds, juveniles, mutations, and hybrids, to minimize unnecessary delays at airports and facilitate aviary inspections.

14- Review of Significant Trade

The investigation into significant trade in wild-caught animals did not identify any new parrots for investigation. There is now a strong focus on sharks and macaque monkeys. Mexico is particularly targeted for their catch and trade in sharks despite comprehensive NDFs they conducted to justify their quotas.

Parrot exports from Suriname and Guyana (Blue & Gold and Greenwing Macaws, Blue Cheek, Festive, and Mealy Amazons), Argentina (Blue Fronted Amazons), and DRC (Jardines) are still under scrutiny.

12- Wildlife Trade Reports

South Africa compiled and submitted a World Wildlife Trade report at the previous CoP. A proposal was made that such a report should be compiled on a more regular basis. CITES can be seen as a trade organisation, but the value of trade is not regularly available. The World Wildlife Trade report is supposed to rectify this situation. However, most of the parties support the idea, but not the frequency of such a report.

AC takes note of the report and will report to the Standing Committee. This topic involves expanding annual trade reports to include more detail.

20- Transport of Live Specimens

CITES is attempting to make IATA regulations available to relevant parties, but licensing costs are a limiting factor. Rules for road transport of live animals will be proposed to align with IATA rules for air transport.

8- Zoonotic Diseases

This topic falls outside the mandate of CITES, but animal rights organizations are still trying to limit animal trade by using it.

23- Appropriate and Acceptable Destinations for CITES I Species

This topic is part of the regulations for trade in CITES I species, requiring the importing country to ensure that the importer can properly care for the animals. Currently, there is a strong focus on elephants and rhinos, which have been referred to the SC.

21- Microchips

AC has decided to investigate the use and reliability of microchips and also to review the resolution to identify other methods of identification for animals and plants that might be more suitable than microchips.

10. Joint CITES-CMS African Carnivores Initiative

Relevant range States of African carnivores are urged to work through the Joint CITES-CMS African Carnivores Initiative to implement CITES Resolutions and Decisions relating to the species covered by this Initiative.

Share trade resource kits for African lion (*Panthera leo*) and leopard (*Panthera pardus*) with the Secretariat

36. African lions (*Panthera leo*)

Subject to external funding, the Secretariat shall, in collaboration with African lion range States, the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and, as appropriate, taking into consideration the joint CITES-CMS African Carnivores Initiative and the Guidelines for the Conservation of Lions in Africa in information document CoP18 Inf. 10:

- a) support the implementation of activities in joint African lion conservation plans and strategies that relate to trade in African lion specimens and the implementation of CITES and as needed, the review of such plans and strategies;
- b) jointly with the CMS Secretariat, undertake a comparative study of African lion population trends and conservation and management practices, such as lion hunting, within and between countries, including the role, if any, of international trade;
- c) support capacity-building in African lion conservation and management including where appropriate, in the making of non-detriment findings by range States according to Resolution Conf. 16.7 (Rev. CoP17) on Non-detriment findings and the implementation of Resolution Conf. 17.9 on Trade in hunting trophies of species listed in Appendix I or II, taking into consideration the available guidance on the making of non-detriment findings

18. Guidance on non-detriment findings for trade in leopard (*Panthera pardus*) hunting trophies

Parties which have quotas for leopard hunting trophies to consolidate existing information relating to the management and monitoring of leopard and hunting quotas that assist Parties in the making of non-detriment findings for trade in leopard hunting trophies and to share this with leopard range States through the African Carnivore Initiative.

General Feedback

The three of us attending AC33 actively participated in 5 out of the 6 in-session working groups. During the plenary sessions, Richard made two interventions, and Pieter made one, all of which were well-received.

Plenary Sessions and Interventions

In the plenary sessions, Richard and Pieter contributed significantly:

- Richard made two well-received interventions on different topics.
- Pieter made one intervention, which was also well-received.

Side Events

Various side events took place, with a noteworthy one hosted by the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (CIC), the African Wildlife Economy Institute (AWEI), and Conservation Visions. Key speakers included:

- Yvonne Higuero, Secretary General of CITES

- Prof. Francis Forhies, AWEI
- Dr. Michael Sas'Rolfes, IUCN
- Shane Mahoney, Conservation Visions
- Carolina Caceres, Canadian Management Authority

The event focused on "Building a Wildlife Economy." The SG of CITES emphasized that legal, sustainable use is the cornerstone of wildlife conservation. The other speakers introduced various global models of sustainable use of wild meat and other products.

Social Events

Springboks vs. Ireland Final Test:

The SUCo-SA team and Mpho Tjiane proudly wore the Springbok jersey all day, including during the AC/PC meeting. South African and some Irish fans watched the game together in an Irish pub in Geneva, fostering social interaction with CITES officials and our own representatives.

Cocktail Event Hosted by FACE and CIC:

This event was held at one of Geneva's most prestigious private clubs. The audience included delegations from various countries (SA, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Germany, China, Cambodia) and numerous NGOs supporting sustainable use. The social interactions were valuable and informative.

CITES Global Youth Network

SUCo-SA arranged a meeting with the CITES Secretariat, who also invited officials from DFFE (Mpho Tjiane and Olga Khomalu). The meeting was highly successful, with the Secretariat agreeing to send the necessary invitation to the SA Government in due course.

SUCo International

International collaboration and coordination are improving with each CITES meeting. The Brazilian Breeders and Traders Association has joined SUCo International. In preparation for CoP 20, more regular Zoom meetings are necessary. The South African model of SUCo is widely applauded.

Overall, AC33 was a productive and engaging event, with significant contributions from our team in both formal and informal settings. The progress in international collaboration and the positive reception of our interventions underscore the importance of our continued active involvement in these meetings.

End of Report

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