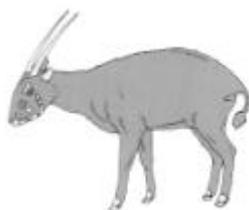


CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA



Seventeenth meeting of the Animals Committee
Hanoi (Viet Nam), 30 July-3 August 2001

Trade in freshwater turtles and tortoises in Southeast Asia

REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP

This document has been prepared by the chairman of the working group on trade in freshwater turtles and tortoises in Asia.

1. During the first meeting of the working group in December 2000 at the 16th meeting of the Animals Committee (AC16) in Shepherdstown, United States of America, the members of the working group decided to carry on their discussion via electronic mail. Concerning the technical workshop on freshwater turtles and tortoises, all members of the working group have actively participated in the discussion on the agenda, participants, funding and a potential list of taxa of freshwater turtles that may qualify for inclusion in the CITES Appendices. The working group has reached several conclusions regarding recommendations to be made on the format of the workshop.

Workshop venue

2. Most members initially wanted have the workshop to take place in China in view of its role as one of the biggest markets for Asian freshwater turtle species. China suggested, however, that the workshop be held in a producer country such as Indonesia or Malaysia. A similar workshop on trade of freshwater turtles was recently held in another consumer State in the Southeast Asian sub-region (in Cambodia in December 1999).
3. TRAFFIC North America proposed that the meeting be held in Hong Kong and was seconded by the representative of the United States of America. The latter also proposed Malaysia as a second option for the meeting. Concurrently, the Secretariat, at the suggestion of the chairman of the working group, also consulted with the Management and Scientific Authorities of Indonesia regarding the possibility of hosting the workshop in Indonesia and possibly in Bali. The Scientific Authority of Indonesia subsequently expressed its willingness to host the workshop to the CITES Secretariat and suggested an alternative venue, namely Bogor (Java). This venue has been accepted by the Secretariat subject to the availability of hotel accommodation and the completion of cost estimates on the basis of information that the Scientific Authority was requested to provide.

Workshop agenda

4. The proposed agenda for the workshop that was developed at AC16 included: a) trade monitoring, implementation and enforcement, b) the need for compatible national policies on trade, illegal trade and transport of live specimens at sub-regional level, c) exchange of information on population and distribution status, d) a list of priority species that could be considered for inclusion in or transfer within the CITES Appendices, and e) research priorities. However, up to this point the group has not decided yet on a final proposal for the agenda for the workshop, with all members preferring to have more discussion on the content and scope of the workshop.
5. Further input was provided by members of the working group. Pro Wildlife provided information on the distribution and habitat of the Indian black turtle (*Melanochelys trijuga*), giant Asian pond turtle (*Heosemys grandis*), and *Elseya novaeguineae*. Chelonian Research Foundation prepared a discussion paper listing the IUCN Red List threatened status for 88 freshwater turtles and tortoises in Asia with a review of trade threats to each species. This listing was accompanied by a recommended prioritization of the ten species most endangered by trade, and the genera of freshwater turtles that should be considered for review for possible inclusion in future CITES Appendices. The working group discussed further listings in the CITES Appendices, particularly the possibility for listings at generic level. The representative of China reported that they conducted a market survey of freshwater turtles in January 2001 and that the report would be available soon.

Participants

6. Discussion on participation at the workshop was productive. TRAFFIC North America provided the list of the 54 participants of the freshwater turtle and tortoise workshop held in Cambodia for consideration. The Chairman of the Animal Committee, in view of budget limitations and the need to keep the workshop efficient, has suggested that participation be limited to 20-25 persons. Participants would therefore have to be restricted to the most important national authorities involved in CITES implementation and to a number of specialist organizations and individuals. The chairman of the working group proposed that the number of participants be expanded to 40-45 persons to allow Scientific Authorities of the relevant Parties, NGOs and traders to attend the workshop. The representative of the United States of America supported this proposal and suggested that a reasonable target of 60-70 persons be adopted in order to accommodate three government representatives from each trading country, NGO representation, members of the Animals Committee working group and the Secretariat's staff. A final decision has not yet been reached in this regard.

Funding

7. At the first meeting of the working group, the representative of the United States of America estimated that USD 75,000 was required for the Cambodia meeting, with an additional USD 30,000 for publication of the proceedings. The following commitments have been made regarding funding for the workshop (in USD), based on information provided by the Secretariat:

Germany	14,250
Netherlands	8,750
United States of America (Fish and Wildlife Service)	22,000
Conservation International	2,000

Chelonian Research Foundation	10,000
Deutsche Gesellschaft für Herpetologie und Terrarienkunde	2,350
HSUS	5,000
TRAFFIC North America	5,000
Total	69,350

In addition, the Conservation Treaty Support Fund, the Van Tienhoven Stichting and the Wildlife Conservation Society have indicated their interest in supporting the workshop, but the extent of their support has not been finalized.

Timing of the workshop

8. The working group has initially suggested that the workshop be held in October or November 2001. In view of the limited time for preparations, the representative of the United States of America proposed that the workshop be postponed to January 2002. The Chairman of the Committee has expressed his opposition to a postponement beyond November 2001. Concern regarding timing of the meeting has also been shared by Chelonian Research Foundation and TRAFFIC which both favour the later date.

Comments from the Secretariat

9. The Secretariat, in view of its mandate to convene the technical workshop in Decision 11.150, appreciates the guidance from the Animals Committee regarding the workshop and will take the advice into account in its planning to structure it in as productive a way as possible.
10. The Secretariat is of the opinion that the focus of the workshop should be on freshwater turtles and tortoises from Asia, and particularly from Southeast Asia, because of the region's species diversity, the significant threats to the long-term conservation of these species, the high volumes of regulated and unregulated trade, and the concerns over the non-sustainability of the trade.
11. For further consideration by and comments from the Animals Committee, the Secretariat proposes the following objectives and format for the workshop based on Decision 11.150 and on the conclusions of the workshop on trade in terrestrial and freshwater turtles and tortoises in Asia (Cambodia, December 1999):

Objectives:

- to establish conservation priorities and actions to achieve sustainable trade in freshwater turtles and tortoises in southeast Asia;
- to consider specific actions to follow up on and to implement recommendations elaborated at the workshop on trade in terrestrial and freshwater turtles and tortoises in Asia (Cambodia, December 1999), particularly those related to regulation and management of trade in CITES-listed species, the future role of CITES, trade monitoring and controls, national legislation and regulations, captive breeding and ranching, conservation management and research priorities, enforcement and capacity building;
- to formulate findings and recommendations at the workshop for reporting to the Animals Committee before the 12th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

Format and participation:

- Decision 11.150 instructs the Secretariat to “invite the Chairman of the Animals Committee as well as representatives from range, exporting and consumer States and relevant inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations to participate in the workshop subject to available funds”. Given these constraints and the focus on Asian turtle species, the Secretariat considers inviting a limited number of representatives from national Management Authorities, Scientific Authorities and/or enforcement authorities from Bangladesh, Cambodia, China (and Hong Kong), India, Indonesia, Japan, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam. These countries are all concerned by the trade, and are regarded as particularly important to help achieve sustainable trade in freshwater turtles and tortoises in Southeast Asia.
- The workshop should bring together national representatives who preferably have experience with, or knowledge about, the trade in and conservation of freshwater turtles in their country and in Asia. In addition to the Chairman of the Animals Committee and the chairman of the working group on trade in freshwater turtles and tortoises in Asia, a small number of experts, including representatives of relevant non-governmental organisations, will be invited to provide background information and to assist in the elaboration of recommendations.
- The Secretariat has accepted an offer from Indonesia to host a four-day workshop in Bogor in November 2001. For budgetary and practical reasons, the Secretariat proposes to limit the number of participants in the workshop to a maximum of 40 persons.
- The Secretariat offers the following suggestions regarding the general format and content of the workshop:
 - a) to open the workshop by providing brief reviews and updates of the trade in freshwater turtles and tortoises in Asia, summarizing current trends in legal and illegal trade, the conservation status of the main species in trade, the major conservation challenges, and the relevant conclusions and recommendations of the workshop on trade in terrestrial and freshwater turtles and tortoises in Asia (Cambodia, December 1999). Background documents will be commissioned from TRAFFIC and IUCN;
 - b) to request from each of the participating countries a short update on current or recently-established national measures and policies regarding harvesting and trade for CITES-listed and non-listed species of turtles and tortoises;
 - c) to establish smaller working groups which would be tasked to develop achievable proposals for actions to follow up on recommendations formulated at the workshop in 1999, i.e. identifying what specific measures can be envisaged, who should implement the measures or undertake the action, and what resources are available or required.

Based on the general conclusion and recommendations elaborated at the Cambodia workshop, the issues that need to be addressed can be grouped as follows:

- regulation and monitoring of domestic harvest and trade;
- inclusion of species in the CITES Appendices;
- regulation of trade in CITES-listed species (incl. implementation of Article IV)
- national legislations and controls;

- international trade controls, monitoring and enforcement;
- enforcement and capacity-building needs;
- captive breeding and ranching options;
- research options and priorities;
- conservation management priorities;
- public awareness and education.

d) to discuss the results of the working groups in plenary and to agree on a prioritized set of activities and practical solutions to address the concerns.

12. As required under Decision 11.150, the Secretariat shall report the findings and recommendations of the workshop to the Animals Committee before the 12th meeting of the Conference of the Parties, on the basis of which the Animals Committee may wish to formulate recommendations for consideration at the 12th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.