

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



Twenty-sixth meeting of the Animals Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 15-20 March 2012 and Dublin (Ireland), 22-24 March 2012

Sturgeons and paddlefish

EVALUATION OF STURGEON STOCK ASSESSMENT AND
TOTAL ALLOWABLE CATCH (TAC) DETERMINATION METHODOLOGY
REPORTS FROM CASPIAN SEA RANGE STATES

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.
2. In Resolution Conf. 12.7 (Rev. CoP14) on *Conservation of and trade in sturgeons and paddlefish*, the Conference of the Parties:

DIRECTS the Animals Committee, in collaboration with the Secretariat, interested Parties, international organizations and relevant experts, to monitor progress on the relevant provisions of this Resolution and to carry out on a three-year cycle starting in 2008, and using information from preceding years, an evaluation of the assessment and the monitoring methodologies used for stocks of Acipenseriformes species subject to the provisions under RECOMMENDS further, paragraph a),

and

DIRECTS the Animals Committee to provide to the Standing Committee its recommendations on actions to be taken based upon the above-mentioned monitoring of progress and three-year cycle evaluation.

The Resolution urges range States to cooperate with the Animals Committee and the Secretariat with a view to implementing the provisions under RECOMMENDS further, paragraph a), and the first paragraph DIRECTS the Animals Committee mentioned above.

3. At its 25th meeting (AC25, Geneva, July 2011) the Animals Committee formulated recommendations for consideration by the Standing Committee based on an expert analysis of stock assessments and the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) of sturgeon species in the Caspian Sea (see document AC25 16.2 and the summary record of AC25).
4. The Chair of the Animals Committee presented these recommendations to the Standing Committee at its 61st meeting (SC61, Geneva, August 2011) (see document SC61 Doc. 48.2).
5. The Standing Committee endorsed all recommendations of the Animals Committee as contained in the Annex to document SC61 Doc. 48.2, and requested the Secretariat to facilitate their implementation. It noted the offer of the United States of America to provide funding if timelines were established for their implementation, and agreed to reconsider this matter at its 62nd meeting in July 2012.
6. One of the recommendations endorsed by the Standing Committee was “to recommend to Caspian Sea range States to provide progress reports on an annual basis starting with the 26th Animals Committee meeting”. The Secretariat issued Notification to the Parties No. 2011/049 on 10 November 2011, reminding that Caspian range States should report on progress made in improving the existing sturgeon stock assessment and TAC determination methodology. It requested that these reports be submitted by

6 January 2012. At the time of writing (mid-January 2012), the range States concerned had not responded to this Notification.

7. The Animals Committee has now completed its evaluation of the assessment and the monitoring methodologies used for stocks of *Acipenseriformes* species in the Caspian Sea in compliance with the relevant parts of Resolution Conf. 12.7 (Rev. CoP14). In accordance with the Resolution, the Animals Committee should undertake such evaluations on a three-year cycle, and therefore conduct a second one for Caspian Sea sturgeon stocks by 2014. While the implementation of the recommendations mentioned above could help to improve the status of sturgeons in the Caspian Sea and restore sturgeon fisheries, undertaking such a new evaluation in two years' time may be challenging or difficult to justify considering the poor response rates of Caspian littoral States to the recent evaluation; the lack of communication on export quotas in compliance with Resolution Conf. 12.7 (Rev. CoP14), resulting in recent years in zero export quotas for caviar and meat from sturgeons of wild origin from Caspian littoral States; the greatly reduced legal sturgeon fisheries in the Caspian Sea; and the long-term fishing moratoria that seem to be in place.

Action required from the Animals Committee

8. The Animals Committee is invited to take note of this document.
9. Taking account of its experience in implementing the assignments quoted in paragraph 2 above (i.e. monitoring of progress, three-year cycle evaluations and reporting to the Standing Committee), and given the findings and comments mentioned in paragraphs 6 and 7 above, the Animals Committee is invited to consider the usefulness of these instructions and the possible need to amend the Resolution.