

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

Thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties
Bangkok (Thailand), 2-14 October 2004

Interpretation and implementation of the Convention

Species trade and conservation issues

Sea cucumbers

TRADE IN SEA CUCUMBERS IN THE FAMILIES HOLOTHURIIDAE AND STICHOPODIDAE

1. This document has been prepared by the Animals Committee.
2. Decision 12.61, directed to the Secretariat, states the following:

The Secretariat shall:

- a) *assist in obtaining funds from interested Parties, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, exporters, importers and other stakeholders, to support a technical workshop of relevant experts on the conservation of sea cucumbers in the families Holothuriidae and Stichopodidae;*
- b) *contingent on the availability of external funding, cooperate with other relevant bodies, including the fisheries sector, to convene a technical workshop to consider and review biological and trade information that would assist in establishing conservation priorities and actions to secure the conservation status of sea cucumbers in these families; and*
- c) *contract the preparation of a document for discussion at the technical workshop. This document should contain all relevant available information concerning the status, catches and bycatches of, and trade in specimens of species in the families Holothuriidae and Stichopodidae and on any domestic measures for their conservation and protection, and a review of the adequacy of such measures.*

3. Decision 12.60, directed to the Animals Committee, states:

The Animals Committee shall:

- a) *review, with the assistance of experts as may be needed, the outcomes of the technical workshop convened by the Secretariat and other available information concerning the biology, catch and bycatch of and trade in sea cucumbers in the families Holothuriidae and Stichopodidae and develop appropriate recommendations; and*
- b) *prepare, for consideration at the 13th meeting of the Conference of the Parties, a discussion paper on the biological and trade status of sea cucumbers in the above families to provide scientific guidance on the actions needed to secure their conservation status.*

4. Decision 12.61 had to be implemented by the Secretariat before Decision 12.60 could be addressed by the Animals Committee.

5. The Secretariat consulted the Animals Committee at its 19th meeting (AC19; Geneva, August 2003) concerning the technical workshop's objectives, timing, participation, format and proposed agenda (see documents AC19 Doc. 17 and AC19 WG9 Doc. 1). The recommendations of the Animals Committee were taken into consideration by the Secretariat.
6. The Animals Committee was informed at AC19 by the observer from Japan that the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) was organizing a meeting on sea cucumbers in China in October 2003. The Committee suggested that the Secretariat collaborate with FAO to organize the technical workshop jointly with or back-to-back with the FAO meeting. In August 2003, the Secretariat reported to the Committee that upon consultation with FAO, it had been advised that the FAO meeting was specifically dealing with technical aspects of sea cucumber aquaculture. Trying to link the two events would logistically be complicated and potentially confusing because the aims, audience and required expertise would be very different. The Secretariat informed the Committee that it would therefore organize a separate workshop early in 2004.
7. The technical workshop on the conservation of sea cucumbers in the families Holothuriidae and Stichopodidae took place in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, from 1 to 3 March 2004. It was attended by about 40 experts and representatives from exporting and importing countries, private industry, IGOs (including FAO), NGOs, and one of the regional representatives for Asia of the Animals Committee.
8. The workshop produced findings and recommendations concerning national fisheries management, priorities for international conservation and protection, and potential CITES implementation issues. The participants in the workshop endorsed and built upon the recommendations made at the FAO workshop on Advances in Sea Cucumber Aquaculture and Management (Dalian, China, 14-18 October 2003). The Secretariat communicated the outcomes of the technical workshop to the Animals Committee, and these were examined at its 20th meeting (AC20; Johannesburg, March-April 2004; see documents AC20 Doc. 18 and AC20 Inf. 14).
9. In compliance with Decision 12.60, paragraph a), the Animals Committee reviewed at AC20 the outcomes of the technical workshop convened by the Secretariat, and considered the results of the FAO workshop. However, it was unable to formulate recommendations regarding the biology, catch and bycatch of and trade in sea cucumbers in the families Holothuriidae and Stichopodidae. The reasons for this are outlined in paragraph 10 below. **The Animals Committee proposes the repeal of paragraph a) of Decision 12.60, and the adoption of a new decision allowing the Committee to continue addressing this issue after CoP13 (see the Annex).**
10. At AC20, the Committee also began identifying possible recommendations and conservation actions for sea cucumbers. However the Committee did not feel that it was appropriate to comment on the value of possible CITES listings or other conservation actions because there was insufficient evaluation of the outcomes of the technical workshop and of other relevant information at this stage. The Committee was unable to identify individuals who, within the short time available, would be able to draft the discussion paper called for in paragraph b) of Decision 12.60 and undertake the required detailed review. The Committee recommended that the Secretariat contract this out to an appropriate organization or individual.
11. It was suggested that conservation and sustainable use of sea cucumbers might also be achieved through CITES coordination with FAO and with regional fisheries management bodies. The Committee however agreed that further CITES involvement with certain countries or species should be examined in the future and the effects assessed. **In this regard the Animals Committee proposes the adoption of several decisions that are directed to Parties, the CITES Secretariat and the Animals Committee (see the Annex).**
12. The Animals Committee considers that it has not accomplished the task directed to it in Decision 12.60, paragraph b), since it was not able to produce a discussion paper. It has explained the reasons for this. Since these reasons will remain unaltered in the near future, **the Animals Committee seeks guidance from the Conference of the Parties on how best to proceed in this matter.**

COMMENTS FROM THE SECRETARIAT

- A. In order to make full use of the outputs of the technical workshop on sea cucumber fisheries that was held in March 2003, and in support of FAO's activities in this regard, the Secretariat agrees that the Animals Committee should continue addressing this matter after CoP13. The Secretariat recommends that the Committee establish a working group to finalize the work already started and report its findings well before the deadlines for the submission of documents and proposals to the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.
- B. In this document the Animals Committee proposes that the Secretariat be directed to assist in compiling information on the biology, catch and bycatch of and trade in sea cucumbers, in consultation with FAO, which would subsequently be reviewed by the Animals Committee for reporting to CoP14. The Secretariat notes that document CoP13 Doc. 37.2, submitted by Ecuador, contains a proposal along similar lines, and that the relevant draft decisions in that document and this one would need to be reconciled and, if appropriate, merged. However, the proposals by the Animals Committee and Ecuador imply that the Secretariat would need to secure significant external funding before any further action takes place. As the Secretariat gives priority to issues concerning CITES-listed species, it should be noted that this might not be achieved.
- C. Currently, only one species of sea cucumber is covered by the Convention by its inclusion in Appendix III by Ecuador. The Conference of the Parties has not yet had the opportunity to discuss the actions needed to secure the biological and trade status of sea cucumbers more generally. The Secretariat therefore considers most of the draft decisions in the Annex to this document as premature or outside the scope of CITES and the capacity of the Secretariat. This applies particularly to those directing the Secretariat: to collate information on voluntary sea cucumber fisheries measures and to make recommendations to meeting of FAO or COFI; to collaborate with WCO to develop harmonized customs codes for sea cucumbers in trade; to consider in consultation with FAO and stakeholders the need for a follow-up technical workshop on sea cucumber biology, fisheries management and conservation before CoP14; and to seek financial support for these and other proposed actions. Furthermore, it seems unrealistic to expect that the three draft decisions that the Animals Committee directs to the Parties can be effectively implemented or monitored.

DRAFT DECISIONS OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

Decisions proposed by the Animals Committee to the Conference of the Parties
regarding conservation and sustainable use of sea cucumbers

Directed to the Secretariat

- 13.xx In coordination with the Animals Committee, the CITES Secretariat shall encourage and support the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to continue and, as far as possible, increase its efforts to address the challenges of managing sea cucumber fisheries for sustainability, as identified in the FAO workshop on Advances in Sea Cucumber Aquaculture and Management (ASCAM, Dalian, 2003) and the CITES technical workshop on the conservation of sea cucumbers in the families Holothuriidae and Stichopodidae (Kuala Lumpur, March 2004).
- 13.xx The CITES Secretariat shall, in consultation with FAO, collate information on and evaluate voluntary measures taken by countries to monitor sea cucumber trade and, where appropriate, to control sea cucumber exports, and make recommendations as appropriate, for instance at meetings of the FAO Subcommittee on Fish Trade or the FAO Committee on Fisheries.
- 13.xx Pending the availability of external funding, the CITES Secretariat shall, in consultation with the FAO Secretariat, compile and analyse the information available at the CITES technical workshop on the conservation of sea cucumbers in the families Holothuriidae and Stichopodidae and collect additional information as appropriate on the status of sea cucumber biology, fisheries, trade, management and conservation actions.
- 13.xx In consultation with FAO, and in evaluating actions taken by the Parties to manage and conserve sea cucumber populations, the CITES Secretariat shall consider the necessity of a follow-up workshop on sea cucumber biology, fisheries, trade, management and conservation before the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties, and take action accordingly.
- 13.xx The CITES Secretariat shall, in consultation with the FAO Secretariat where appropriate, work with the World Customs Organization (WCO) to develop harmonized codes useful for international sea cucumber trade monitoring and management.
- 13.xx The CITES Secretariat shall seek financial support to undertake the activities relating to trade in and conservation of sea cucumbers that are outlined in the above decisions.

Directed to the Animals Committee

- 13.xx The Animals Committee shall, in consultation with FAO and the CITES Secretariat, review the recommendations of the FAO workshop on Advances in Sea Cucumber Aquaculture and Management (ASCAM, Dalian, 2003) and of the CITES technical workshop on the conservation of sea cucumbers in the families Holothuriidae and Stichopodidae (Kuala Lumpur, 2004), formulate advice on the proposed recommendations, and communicate its findings to FAO and the CITES Secretariat for follow-up as appropriate. The findings should also be considered at a further CITES workshop on sea cucumbers in the event that such a workshop is organized before the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.
- 13.xx The Animals Committee may monitor the implementation of the Decisions relating to the conservation of and trade in sea cucumbers, and report on progress at the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties as appropriate.

Directed to the Parties

- 13.xx Parties should endorse the recommendations formulated at the FAO workshop on Advances in Sea Cucumber Aquaculture and Management (ASCAM, Dalian, 2003) and urge their Fisheries Agencies to act accordingly, with actions including:
- a) research on sea cucumber biology, fisheries and trade;
 - b) research to resolve taxonomy and identification difficulties concerning sea cucumbers;
 - c) monitoring the status and trends of sea cucumber stocks;
 - d) consultation with the fishing industry and other stakeholders in the development and adoption of voluntary conservation guidelines for sea cucumbers;
 - e) establishment of national management plans for sea cucumbers; and
 - f) regional cooperation in management and conservation of sea cucumbers, particularly for acquisition and sharing of fishery and trade data.
- 13.xx Parties should urge their CITES Scientific and Management Authorities to improve coordination with their fishery management agencies on monitoring, assessment, and management of sea cucumber fisheries and trade.
- 13.xx Parties should explore the benefits of trade certification for sea cucumbers through appropriate organizations.