



# CITES CoP18: Facing the challenges of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework

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**I**n May this year, a landmark new report from the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) provided overwhelming evidence that nature is declining globally at rates unprecedented in human history, eroding the very foundations of our economies, livelihoods, food security, health and quality of life worldwide. The IPBES Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services found that around one million animal and plant species are now threatened with extinction and that the rate of species extinctions is accelerating. The report demonstrated that the second biggest driver of negative impacts on nature, after changes in land use, is the direct exploitation of animal and plant species in terrestrial and freshwater systems, including harvesting, hunting, fishing and logging; in the marine realm, direct exploitation had the largest impact.

It was this grim picture that confronted delegates attending the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES

CoP18) this year, highlighting the vital importance that this Convention and other multilateral environmental agreements must play in catalysing the transformative changes needed: failure to act will risk critical shortfalls in meeting global goals for conserving and sustainably using nature.

This year's CITES CoP also had to build on the largely successful outcomes of the previous 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP17) in Johannesburg in 2016. CoP17 saw stronger trade regulation measures adopted through amendments to the CITES Appendices for many species—from pangolins to marine species and even including a whole genus of trees. Key CITES Resolutions were strengthened and new Resolutions and Decisions adopted that broke new ground for several important issues such as traceability, captive breeding, corruption, demand reduction and cybercrime. The ambition set by CoP17 and the range of new issues and species of concern on the agenda for CITES CoP18 certainly ensured that the next CoP would have a packed and busy agenda.

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▲ American Crocodile *Crocodylus acutus*

Adding to these challenges facing delegates was the fact that the meeting, originally scheduled to take place in May, had to be postponed after the tragic bombings in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in April 2019. The meeting was rescheduled to 17–28 August and held in Geneva, Switzerland, a quick turnaround made possible by the strong commitment of the CITES Parties and the Secretariat to reorganise with minimal delay.

Many positive outcomes from the Geneva meeting have set the scene for the work of CITES in the future. A Resolution on the new CITES Strategic Vision post-2020 was adopted, framing a significant role for the Convention in the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. Development of policy around conservation and livelihoods was also the subject of deep discussion, along with moves to undertake a comprehensive review of the Convention in order to enhance its impact and effectiveness.

New topics of concern were considered, such as the songbird trade, and delegates explored in detail new approaches to control trade in all big cats. New trade regulation measures were also adopted for marine species such as guitarfishes *Glaucostegus* spp., wedgefishes Rhinidae spp. and mako sharks *Isurus oxyrinchus* and *I. paucus*, while actions were outlined to ensure the sustainable use of resources such as medicinal and aromatic plants and wild meat. Agreement was reached on practical measures to enhance the effectiveness of CITES on a range of implementation issues such as legal acquisition findings and stockpiles. However, the CoP also saw divisions deepen among the Parties on a number of key issues, such as trade measures for African Elephant *Loxodonta africana*, local community engagement, the balance between new species listings and solving implementation challenges for those already adopted in the past and on principles related to sustainable use. These will need to be addressed in the coming years if CITES is to remain relevant and effective.

## A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

A key outcome from the meeting was the steps put in place to encourage that wildlife trade issues are reflected when world governments formulate a post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and Strategic Plan to reverse the decline in nature at the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD CoP15), set to take place next year in China. It is essential that there is strengthened co-operation, collaboration and synergies between CITES' Strategic Vision, the CBD's Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as greater engagement with the process currently under way to adopt a post-2020 biodiversity framework. At CoP18, Parties adopted a new Resolution on the CITES Strategic Vision post 2020 that provides a good framework for realising these synergies.

It should be noted that the CBD's current Strategic Plan for Biodiversity does not include a specific wildlife trade target, despite illegal and unsustainable trade being a key driver of biodiversity loss, and sustainable, well-managed legal trade having the scope to provide benefits

to all from biodiversity and ecosystem services. Setting a wildlife trade-focused target within the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework would help to motivate the political commitment and levels of implementation to address this global issue. This is central to the effective implementation of CITES and would ensure connectivity to the Sustainable Development Goals. CITES has demonstrated its role in reducing the pressure of illegal and unsustainable trade in wild flora and fauna on biodiversity and enhancing the benefits to wildlife conservation and human well-being deriving from sustainable, legal wildlife trade. The lead up to the CBD CoP15 is a golden opportunity for Parties to demonstrate the vital contribution CITES can make to the targets being set in 2020.

As the CITES Secretary-General, Ivonne Higuero, noted at CITES CoP18, by adopting the CITES Strategic Vision Post 2020, the Parties have confirmed their collective view that CITES must be a leader in promoting transformative change in wildlife conservation and management.

## COMMUNITIES AND LIVELIHOODS

In order to achieve the goal of environmental, economic and social sustainability, the active engagement and support of indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs) is essential. The CoP saw a range of divergent views expressed on this issue. Parties agreed to direct the Secretariat to issue a Notification inviting Parties to provide information on their experiences and lessons learned in engaging IPLCs in CITES processes, and Parties were asked to collate or conduct new case studies to demonstrate how the involvement of IPLCs contributes to their livelihoods and the conservation of the species in the wild. The CoP amended the resolution on CITES and livelihoods, recognising that empowerment of rural communities should be encouraged through measures that may include engaging rural communities in national processes when preparing and submitting proposals to amend the appendices, and other documents for consideration at CoP meetings.

While it is disappointing that divergent views prevented further meaningful progress on the issue, it is a positive development that steps are being taken to consider the potential impacts of CITES decisions on IPLCs. With these IPLCs bearing the brunt of conflict in connection with wildlife trade and the importance of wildlife to livelihoods, it is important that the engagement of CITES with IPLCs is increased and strengthened, and the vital contribution of sustainable use of wild species to their livelihoods be further recognised. Hopefully, the work of the inter-sessional Working Group will focus on achieving consensus and agreement on issues of common concern that can bridge the current divide.

## MAKING CITES WORK

A number of decisions taken at the CoP drew attention to critical issues relating to strengthening the effective implementation of the Convention. Zimbabwe proposed a series of decisions calling for a comprehensive review

of the Convention in order to enhance its impact and effectiveness. Many Parties balked at the prospect of a fundamental rethink of CITES provisions and did not agree with many of the arguments and justifications in this document, including claims of a contradiction between CITES and World Trade Organization (WTO) trade rules. However, there was general agreement that a review to improve and enhance the effectiveness of CITES could be beneficial and a decision was agreed directing the Standing Committee to consider the need for a targeted review of the implementation of the Convention.

Such a review could help strengthen the Convention. However, it is important that it be conducted in a transparent and impartial manner, with clear objectives and terms of reference. It could provide a crucial opportunity for Parties to consider not only how to maximise the impact of CITES itself but also how the work of the Convention can be aligned with that of other biodiversity, environment and development agreements and conventions to ensure the synergies and integrated approach that is needed to reverse the alarming trends highlighted in the IPBES report. Ambitions, plans and actions of CITES and other relevant biodiversity and environmental agreements must be co-ordinated, coherent and aligned with the objectives that will emerge from discussions on the post-2020 biodiversity framework.

CoP18 also arrived at new decisions dealing with the issuing of **legal acquisition findings** (LAFs)—the mechanism used to prevent trade in animals or plants that were not legally obtained. This included agreement on a new Resolution on LAFs as well as the inclusion of non-binding guidance for making LAFs as an annex to the Resolution. This is a significant point in the evolution of CITES, as to date, this crucial issue has received relatively little attention. By contrast, the means by which countries can assess whether export of a species is sustainable, through the issuing of a non-detriment finding (NDF), has received far more attention within CITES, with a Resolution on the topic adopted by Parties at CoP16 and a range of guidance materials developed to support countries when making NDFs.

Strengthening LAFs would reduce opportunities for international trade in illegally harvested and smuggled specimens or their offspring. A case study on the captive breeding of Caribbean endemic reptiles was released by TRAFFIC recently that clearly illustrated some of the very issues and problems involved (Outhwaite and Vique, 2019). The research found that most reported trade in CITES-listed Caribbean reptile species is between non-range States, and that some of this trade is likely in smuggled specimens—or frequently their offspring—which have subsequently been produced in captivity. For some species, despite no trade from the wild reported in the CITES Trade Database, seizures indicate offtake from the wild continues. Any unregulated trade is of concern as many of these species are highly range-restricted and rare. The document highlights the need for importing and (re-)exporting countries to ensure any international trade in Caribbean endemic reptiles is limited to specimens of legal origin.

The case study also highlighted concerns regarding false claims of **captive-breeding**, another issue that was debated at CoP18. Trade from captive sources is already larger than trade from the wild, and the need for clarity and guidance is urgent. A comprehensive review was undertaken by the Secretariat on this critical issue that highlighted many inconsistencies and ambiguities that Parties face when trying to implement the Convention. The proportion of trade declared as from captive sources is only likely to grow as stakeholders, including governments, encourage captive-breeding, and as more species are protected from wild harvest nationally and internationally. Ensuring there is no fraudulent use of source codes should be fundamental to the Convention and it is important that sustainable funding is provided for work on this issue to continue and have a positive impact.

Another issue that is fundamental to the effective implementation of the Convention, particularly LAFs, is **traceability**—systems for tracking wildlife products through the trade chain to ensure that relevant national and international legislation is being respected. Such systems can also improve transparency to help consumers ensure they are not unwittingly purchasing, and therefore supporting, illegal or unsustainable trade. Progress had been made inter-sessionally and at the CoP, with agreement on a working definition of traceability and decisions to support Parties that may request assistance in planning traceability projects. While the CoP noted that the Standing Committee did not support the need for a CITES resolution on traceability at this time, traceability is such a fundamental component of delivering CITES implementation that eventual development of a resolution on traceability remains a high priority for Parties to tackle this issue in a comprehensive and co-ordinated manner.

One implementation issue that has been a challenge for CITES Parties has been the control of **stockpiles**. The accumulation of wildlife products, such as elephant ivory, rhinoceros horns and pangolin scales, takes place as a continuous process for government authorities worldwide. The products are derived from a variety of sources, including natural mortalities or as a result of wildlife management interventions or law enforcement actions. Consequently, the development of effective stockpile management systems has become imperative. Numerous instances of the leakage of seized specimens into illegal markets have highlighted the importance of addressing this issue effectively. Parties at CITES CoP17 had adopted Decision 17.170 directing the Standing Committee to review the existing provisions agreed by the Parties concerning controls on stocks of specimens of CITES-listed species and report its conclusions and recommendations at CoP18. An inter-sessional Working Group on the issue was established but while there has been progress in the process to rationalise CITES' approach on the issue of stocks and stockpiles, the Working Group was not able to achieve consensus on a range of subjects. CoP18 agreed to extend the Decision, directing the Standing Committee to report its conclusions and recommendations at CoP19.



▲ MULANJE CLOUD FOREST, MALAWI. MULANJE CEDAR *WIDDINGTONIA WHYTEI* HAS BEEN EXPLOITED TO THE POINT WHERE NO MATURE TREES EXIST IN THE WILD. THE SPECIES WAS LISTED IN CITES APPENDIX II AT CoP18.

CITES Resolutions and Decisions currently address stock and stockpile issues associated with specimens of Asian big cats, elephants, rhinos, Saiga *Saiga* spp. and Tibetan Antelopes *Pantholops hodgsonii*, pangolins *Manis* spp., snakes, Malagasy ebonies *Diospyros* spp., and palisanders and rosewoods *Dalbergia* spp. The issue of re-sale of confiscated specimens has been addressed, but practical guidance on stock and stockpile management and security has not been a major focus.

To assist Parties on this issue, TRAFFIC produced an Information Document for the CoP that provides guidance on how to deal with a recurrent issue facing government authorities (CITES CoP18 Inf. 72). The document sets out the steps needed for adequate management of stockpiles, including designating the appropriate agencies to manage all aspects of stockpile management and their roles and responsibilities, the development and operational roll-out of stockpile management systems.

## ENSURING LEGAL AND SUSTAINABLE TRADE

CITES CoP16 saw the historic listing of five species of shark and two manta ray species in CITES Appendix II in 2013, followed by four other species of shark at CoP17 in 2016. This year's CoP saw Parties continue to recognise the role of CITES in managing commercially-exploited **aquatic species**, with Parties agreeing to the listing of mako sharks, guitarfishes, wedgefishes and three sea cucumber *Holothuria* species in Appendix II. Historical decreases in the population of the Shortfin Mako *Isurus oxyrinchus* have been observed across large parts of its range and, in recent years, populations have been declining in the North Atlantic, Indian Ocean and Mediterranean. It is likely that similar trends have occurred for Longfin Mako *Isurus paucus*. As the fins and meat of the two species are often mixed in the same market category, enforcement officers are unlikely to be able to distinguish between them. Similarly, all six

species of guitarfish have undergone population declines over the past three generations, driven mainly by over-harvest. Trade is known to be contributing to more than 80% declines in the populations of two species of wedgefish over the last three generations.

Antigua and Barbuda had earlier submitted an agenda document urging Parties to refrain from proposing additional marine species listings, arguing that past listings of marine species under CITES have encountered implementation challenges and that some have failed to achieve their desired conservation outcomes. Indeed, there are implementation challenges for some listed marine species and the intended impacts of CITES regulation may not yet be fully realised. However, it should also be recognised that a great deal of commitment and effort to strengthen the effective implementation of these listings have been made over the years and great strides taken, including progress on the development of NDFs; increased investment in capacity building and implementation support tools; better harmonisation with other management and regulation measures; and productive co-operation with relevant international organisations such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Marine species listings can be implemented when the will is there to do so and there is adequate support provided to the range States concerned. In an intervention to the CoP, TRAFFIC noted the parallels with the high volume, high value timber trade where there have been big strides forward with implementation of CITES for tree species: attained by accumulating experience, securing investment to build capacity and through CITES' productive co-operation with other international organisations such as the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO). Following debate on the issue, Antigua and Barbuda subsequently withdrew its document.

Progress was also seen with regard to a number of commercially-exploited **timber** species, including the listing in Appendix II of all cedars (genus *Cedrela*) as

well as a species of African rosewood *Pterocarpus tinctorius*. *Cedrela odorata* has been intensively exploited for its timber, with some populations having been substantially reduced. Other species of cedar are difficult to differentiate from *C. odorata* and were therefore listed as look-alikes. Malawi's proposal to list Mulanje Mountain Cedar *Widdringtonia whytei* was also accepted. This species has been exploited to the point where no mature trees exist in the wild. While this may appear to negate the need for CITES controls, the existence of in-situ plantations of the species that have potential for timber production in the short to medium term may warrant ongoing monitoring and management of trade until such time that Malawi re-establishes the species in the wild and timber extraction is resumed. More significantly, though, the economic extinction of this desirable timber species should serve as a wake-up call for the African continent; several other timber species that still have relatively healthy populations are under similar or greater pressure for timber harvest and are, according to the IUCN Red List, decreasing in the wild. Without vigorous monitoring and management of trade, these species could too face the fate of the Mulanje Mountain Cedar with resulting negative economic consequences for their countries.

A number of other decisions adopted at CoP18 aimed to ensure sustainable and legal trade in species that not only provides opportunities for increased benefits to conservation from international wildlife trade but also helps secure resources that are important to the food, health and livelihood needs of many rural communities. For example, over 60,000 plant species are used globally for medicinal purposes, and about 3,000 are in international trade, more than 800 of which are listed in Appendix II of the Convention. Given the large number of species of **medicinal and aromatic plants** that are regulated by CITES, it is surprising that it was only at CoP18 that attention has been given to managing the complex trade patterns in this diverse taxonomic group of species. The Secretariat's document on CITES implementation for trade in medicinal plant species outlined the reasons why the global trade in medicinal plants warrants CITES attention, highlighting issues such as the high numbers of mostly wild-sourced species in trade; the economically substantial, growing trade volumes and values; and the crucial role medicinal plants play in meeting health and livelihood needs, especially for rural communities.

A series of decisions were adopted by CoP18 to help address some of the challenges facing effective CITES implementation for trade in medicinal plants, including engaging key players in the medicinal plant trade supply and value chains to raise awareness and understanding of CITES regulations for medicinal plant species; examining case studies involving local and traditional knowledge, and participatory assessments, monitoring and management of CITES-listed medicinal plant species; and reviewing ongoing work on sustainable and traceable supply and value chains for medicinal plant products, focusing on certification schemes, standards and guidelines. TRAFFIC and the IUCN Medicinal Plant Specialist Group (IUCN MPSG) recommended that the scope of work cover aromatic plants too, as

CITES-listed species traditionally traded as “medicinal products” are often also used in aromatherapy, cosmetics, and in food, for example Jatamansi *Nardostachys jatamansi*. The addition of the term “aromatic” allows for acknowledgement of these types of uses, and the engagement of wider stakeholder groups and industry beyond those dealing only with medicinal applications. This suggestion was accepted by Parties. These new CITES Decisions are the first steps in strengthening CITES implementation along the entire trade chain for medicinal and aromatic plant species and will hopefully provide the foundation for a long-term workplan on these taxa by CITES.

Another natural resource that is important to rural communities is **wild meat**—an important food supply and source of income for many of these communities. Amendments were made at CoP18 to the CITES Resolution on Bushmeat urging Parties to, where appropriate, make use of the voluntary guidance for a sustainable wild meat sector that is part of the Annex to Decision XIV/7 on Sustainable wildlife management adopted at the 14th meeting of Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD CoP14) in November 2018. The guidance aims to support the work of governments and other stakeholders to promote, implement and accelerate integrated action and initiatives to ensure that the supply of wild meat is sustainably managed at the source; control the excessive demand for wild meat in towns and cities; and create an enabling environment for the sustainable management of wild meat. Its widespread use will greatly enhance the governance for a sustainable, participatory and inclusive wild meat sector that will allow for the sound management of the species concerned to sustain their populations and habitats, while considering the socioeconomic needs of the local communities involved.

The Resolution also urges all relevant Parties to take advantage of the guidance and other materials provided by the Collaborative Partnership on Sustainable Wildlife Management (CPW) in relation to the sustainable management and use of wildlife. The CPW is a voluntary partnership of 14 international organisations, including the Secretariats of the CBD, the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS) and CITES, as well as NGOs such as TRAFFIC. The CPW was established pursuant to Decision XI/25 taken at CBD CoP11, with the aim of promoting the sustainable management of terrestrial vertebrate wildlife in all biomes and geographic areas, contributing to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and to human food security and livelihoods.

## ILLEGAL AND UNSUSTAINABLE TRADE: BREAKING NEW GROUND

CITES CoP18 also saw the Convention break new ground with attention being given to possibly one of the most critical yet underappreciated wildlife trade issues today: the widespread over-exploitation of songbirds. Trapping of songbirds takes place in large quantities in parts of Latin America, Africa, and in particular—and arguably best-known—in Asia. TRAFFIC's trade studies

for over two decades, particularly in physical markets in South-east Asia, have shed light on the scale of this trade. In recent times, tens of thousands of birds have been recorded in markets of Indonesia, Singapore and Viet Nam at any one point in time. But the picture that is only slowly emerging is of the extent of the trade involved.

Previously, the songbird trade has largely been considered a domestic trade issue—and thus outside the remit of CITES. However, the international dimensions of this trade are increasingly apparent. TRAFFIC's survey in Singapore in 2015, for example, noted that 80%—or more than 11,000 birds—recorded in the bird markets were species not native to Singapore; 97% of the birds traded were also not listed in CITES. TRAFFIC bird market surveys in Singapore—historically the epicentre of the bird trade markets in Asia—found numbers of Abyssinian White-eyes *Zosterops abyssinicus* for sale. Their origin can only be from Africa and their appearance in Asia appears to be linked to their close similarity to the white-eye species of Asia. Hugely popular as cagebirds, there is gathering evidence of the near total extirpation of what were formerly common white-eye species, like the Javan White-eye *Z. flavus*, from large parts of their former ranges in Asia, doubtless because of relentless trapping pressure. Ahead of the debate on this topic at the CoP, TRAFFIC also released a report into the trade in one of the most popular songsters—the White-rumped Shama *Copsychus malabaricus*—which illustrated the nature of this trade, with some two-thirds of the individuals seized in South-east Asia between 2008 and 2018 destined for international trade (Leupen *et al.*, 2019).

The first Asian Songbird Trade Crisis Summit was held in 2015, identifying 28 songbirds most threatened by trade and the critical actions needed to protect them. Sixteen more species were subsequently added to the list of species threatened by trade, emphasising the quick changes in trends and the need for more information about the true extent of the trade in global songbird species. While Parties expressed concern over the sheer number of songbird species potentially involved, a way forward was established with a series of Decisions adopted at the CoP. These call for a preliminary study to be conducted on the scale and scope of the international songbird trade and the convening of a technical workshop to consider the findings of the study, which will be considered by the CITES Animals and Standing Committees.

The trade in Helmeted Hornbill *Rhinoplax vigil* parts and products also received attention from Parties at the meeting, following up from Resolution Conf. 17.11 on conservation of and trade in this species adopted at the previous CoP. Recent TRAFFIC analysis found that at least 2,878 Helmeted Hornbill casques, skulls and products were seized from at least 59 known confiscations between 2010 and 2017 and evidence of high poaching levels in Indonesian Borneo, while many Helmeted Hornbill parts were openly for sale in markets in the Special Economic Zones in Lao PDR, and online in many countries in Asia. TRAFFIC released a new study to coincide with the CoP which found hundreds of parts and products from Helmeted and other hornbill species offered for sale through Thai social media (Phassaraudomsak *et al.*, 2019). The online survey found

a minimum of 236 online posts offering a minimum of 546 hornbill parts and products in 32 of the 40 groups surveyed on Facebook, looking at a historical period from June 2014 through to April 2019.

In May 2017, a Helmeted Hornbill Conservation Strategy and Action Planning Workshop, held in Sarawak, Malaysia, developed a 10-year Conservation Strategy and Action Plan calling for unprecedented levels of international collaboration and more financial resources to scale up conservation attention aimed at targeted population recovery across the species' range. Parties at CoP18 adopted a series of Decisions that would significantly assist in these efforts. This includes a call urging Parties, especially range, transit and consumer States, to provide information to the Secretariat on their implementation of Resolution Conf. 17.11; as well as calling for assistance to range States in their implementation of the Resolution and the Conservation Strategy and Action Plan.

CITES also broke new ground with the adoption of Decisions calling for the establishment and convening of a CITES Big Cats Task Force. This Task Force would develop strategies and make recommendations to improve international co-operation regarding CITES enforcement and implementation issues related to illegal trade in all big cat species from Africa, Asia and Latin America. A TRAFFIC report for the CITES Standing Committee had earlier found possible links between markets for Lion *Panthera leo* and other large cat parts, such as the lion bone trade and the farming of Tigers *Panthera tigris* (CITES SC70 Doc. 54.1 Annex, 2018). A Task Force would enhance greater co-operation among countries in addressing any such connections. However, the clarity and focus of any Task Force would need to be well-defined given the complexity of issues surrounding trade in big cats, including complications where a legal trade regime exists. It is hoped that the work of the Task Force, as well as relevant future research, will help illuminate the dynamics of the legal trade in lion parts with the illegal trade in Asian big cats so that any contradictions in existing policies governing the two issues can be resolved.

On Asian big cats specifically, the CoP also adopted Decisions calling for improved oversight of the tiger trade, including specific attention to monitoring captive tiger facilities and their relationship to overall dynamics of supply and demand. During the meeting TRAFFIC released *Skin and Bones: Unresolved*, a report which found that there has been no respite for the heavily hunted tiger, with an estimated minimum of 2,359 tigers seized between 2000 and 2018 across 32 countries and territories globally, resulting from 1,142 seizure incidents (Wong and Krishnasamy, 2019). A significant number of tigers from captive sources were seized during this period which illustrates the recurrent threat regarding the leakage of captive tigers into the illegal market. The study found over half (58%) of the tigers seized in Thailand and 30% in Viet Nam were identified as originating from captive breeding facilities. The continuing seizures of tigers from captive facilities serve as a stark reminder that such facilities seriously undermine CITES efforts to control illegal trade, which will ultimately have an

impact on populations in the wild. The CoP18 Decisions urge Parties in whose territory there are facilities keeping Asian big cats in captivity to review national management practices and controls that are in place for such facilities; ensure strict application of all management practices and controls implemented; and report to the Secretariat on progress.

On **rhinoceroses**, while it was noted that the annual number of rhinos poached in Africa has been declining since 2015, and that the decline appears to have continued into 2018, the reported decrease in detected carcasses of illegally killed rhinos across Africa is mitigated by the fact that there are fewer animals to poach in many accessible locations, as many as 20% of the poached carcasses are never detected in places like South Africa’s Kruger National Park (KNP), and the reported losses still indicate that three rhinos have been lost every day from 2013 to 2017 inclusive. TRAFFIC warned that the demand remains high as the percentage of horns seized in Africa has almost doubled since CoP17, from 4.5% to 8.9%, while the percentage of horns seized outside Africa has remained at similar levels: 5.8% and 5.5%, respectively. TRAFFIC is particularly concerned that South Africa’s White Rhinoceros *Ceratotherium simum* populations are now suffering declines that are reversing decades of uninterrupted growth for the first time. According to the IUCN/TRAFFIC report tabled at the CoP (CITES CoP18 Doc. 83.1 Annex 2), the KNP White Rhinoceros population—the largest in the world but continually facing the most serious poaching threat—has now decreased to 2004 numbers.

The CoP agreed to a number of decisions to address this challenge, urging Parties to review trends associated with the illegal killing of and trade in rhinos and rhino parts, and the measures and activities they are implementing to address these crimes. In addition, a number of countries, including China, Mozambique, South Africa, and Viet Nam—priority countries of concern identified by the IUCN/TRAFFIC report—were encouraged to strengthen their implementation of Resolution Conf. 9.14 (Rev. CoP17) on Conservation of and Trade in African and Asian rhinoceroses, including by pursuing the initiation of joint investigations and operations aimed at addressing members of organised crime networks across the entire illegal trade chain, and to report to the Secretariat.

Kenya proposed to amend Resolution Conf. 9.14 to mandate the closure of domestic rhino horn markets. While this proposal did not gain full support among Parties, a Decision was adopted directing Parties where illegal markets for rhino horn exist to develop demand reduction programmes targeted at key identified audiences, taking advantage of the experience and expertise developed in other jurisdictions and by other organisations.

### THE AFRICA DIVIDE

One of the most significant issues of grave concern that emerged from CoP18 is the apparently deepening divide that exists between some countries on the African continent. While divergent views have existed for decades on the issue of the trade in African Elephant ivory, CoP18 saw the chasm between some southern African countries and other African countries grow even wider on that issue, as well as in the debates surrounding other species such as giraffes, rhinos and lions, as well as on strategic issues such as the role of rural communities, use versus non-use and how to pay for work on anti-poaching and conservation.

On **African Elephants**, a proposal to transfer the population of Zambia from Appendix I to Appendix II and another to allow for exports of registered raw ivory from Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe were both rejected by Parties. As in previous CoPs, southern African countries argued that these exports would benefit communities and conservation efforts, while other African countries warned that they would lead to increases in poaching of elephants for ivory. Opponents to the proposals also expressed concern over where the ivory would be sold, since there were no market destinations identified. The divide was also evident when Kenya tabled its proposed amendments to Resolution Conf. 10.10 (Rev. CoP17) on closing all remaining legal domestic ivory markets, with Gabon, Burkina Faso, and other member States of the African Elephant Coalition fully supporting the proposal and Namibia, eSwatini, and other southern African countries strongly opposed.

While TRAFFIC’s Elephant Trade Information System (ETIS) analysis for CoP18 indicates that

### SPECIES SUBJECT TO LISTING PROPOSALS AT CoP18

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**Tokay Gecko *Gekko gecko*; Cedar *Cedrela odorata*; Star Tortoises *Geochelone elegans*; Vicuña *Vicugna vicugna*.**

illegal ivory trade activity appears to be exhibiting some measure of reduction, it is unclear if this is being sustained based on incidents in 2018–19, which were not available for the analysis prior to the CoP (CITES CoP18 Doc. 69.3 (Rev. 1), 2019). The raw data for 2017 indicate “a major drop in large-scale ivory seizures, resulting in an equally large decline in quantities of ivory by weight in global commerce ... [though] this trend may be partially influenced by a shift in ivory processing from Asia to Africa and will need to be carefully monitored”. However, exceptionally large ivory seizures in China, Viet Nam and possibly other countries in 2019 (approximately 34 t including 8.8 t seized in Singapore in July 2019) could presage resurgent large-scale movements of ivory from Africa to Asian destinations. Parties will need to respond quickly to these dynamic market changes and shifts in global source-to-market trade patterns and some good examples of multi-country law enforcement collaborations have illustrated how intelligence-led interventions can be made at various points along ivory trafficking chains. However, while the ivory trafficking networks in Asia need increased scrutiny as policy changes in China, Thailand and other locations are implemented and enforced, the concerted, continent-wide co-operation needed in Africa to respond effectively will be a major challenge if this “Africa divide” continues.

Beyond elephants, the successful proposal to list the **Giraffe** *Giraffa camelopardalis* in Appendix II showed the same deep divisions between those supporting the southern African countries where giraffe populations are stable or increasing and trophy hunting takes place, and those backing the Appendix II listing. There was little evidence to show that where declines in populations are taking place that international trade is responsible, rather than that it is poaching for domestic use and habitat loss. Range States supporting the listing will therefore need to take concerted efforts to address the local threats rather than depend on an Appendix II listing to safeguard these populations. Countries also disagreed on the document calling for a review of the Convention, with southern African countries supporting its proposals, calling for balance of equity and sustainable use to be higher on the CITES agenda, while other African States opposed the review and discounted the claims made by its proponents.

Ministers from the countries of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) have even threatened to leave the Convention, accusing CITES of bowing to animal rights groups and unreasonably prohibiting the trade of African wildlife and products rather than regulating it fairly.

Africa is home to a rich and diverse animal, plant, and marine biodiversity, much of it driving the continent's economy. It is also experiencing a dramatic loss of this biodiversity, affecting the livelihoods and food security of some of its most vulnerable rural communities, not to mention the potential revenue contributing to national economies. If African nations are to address the multiple threats facing their biodiversity and natural resources, it is important that they work together and speak with one voice to the world community on international platforms such as CITES. Efforts must be found to

close the chasm that now exists between the relevant countries well before CITES CoP19, which will take place in 2022. This will require mutual understanding (particularly on issues such as those related to the principle of sustainable use); consensus on shared areas of concern; a spirit of compromise; and a commitment to bridge-building from all Parties concerned as the CITES decisions taken in Geneva last August are implemented in the coming years. The need for all countries to work together to address the grave scenarios outlined in the IPBES report and to prepare for the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework may well provide a platform for this challenge to be successfully met.

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OUTCOME OF LISTING PROPOSALS SUBMITTED TO CoP18.

Species	English common name	Proposal	Result
<i>Capra falconeri heptneri</i>	Heptner's Markhor	Transfer pop. of Tajikistan from App I to App II	WITHDRAWN
<i>Saiga tatarica</i>	Saiga Antelope	Transfer from App II to App I	ACCEPTED as amended to incl. <i>S. borealis</i> , with zero export quotas
<i>Vicugna vicugna</i>	Vicuña	Transfer pop. of Prov. of Salta (Argentina) from App I to App II with annotation.	ACCEPTED as amended
<i>Vicugna vicugna</i>	Vicuña	Amend name of pop. of Chile from "population of the Primera Región" to "populations of the region of Tarapacá and of the region of Arica and Parinacota"	ACCEPTED
<i>Giraffa camelopardalis</i>	Giraffe	Include in App II	ACCEPTED
<i>Aonyx cinereus</i>	Small-clawed Otter	Transfer App II to App I	ACCEPTED
<i>Lutrogale perspicillata</i>	Smooth-coated Otter	Transfer App II to App I	ACCEPTED
<i>Ceratotherium simum simum</i>	Southern White Rhinoceros	Remove existing annotation for pop. of eSwatini	REJECTED
<i>Ceratotherium simum simum</i>	Southern White Rhinoceros	Transfer pop. of Namibia from App I to App II	REJECTED
<i>Loxodonta africana</i>	African Elephant	Transfer pop. of Zambia from Appendix I to Appendix II	REJECTED
<i>Loxodonta africana</i>	African Elephant	Amend annot. for pops of Botswana Namibia, South Africa, Zimbabwe	REJECTED
<i>Loxodonta africana</i>	African Elephant	Transfer pops of Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, Zimbabwe from App II to App I	REJECTED
<i>Mammuthus primigenius</i>	Woolly Mammoth	Include in App II	WITHDRAWN
<i>Leporillus conditor</i>	Greater Stick-nest Rat	Transfer from App I to App II	ACCEPTED
<i>Pseudomys fieldi praeconis</i>	Shark Bay Mouse	Transfer App I to App II	ACCEPTED
<i>Xeromys myoides</i>	False Swamp Rat	Transfer App I to App II	ACCEPTED
<i>Zyzomys pedunculatus</i>	Central Rock Rat	Transfer App I to App II	ACCEPTED
<i>Syrnaticus reevesii</i>	Reeves's Pheasant	Include in App II	ACCEPTED
<i>Balearica pavonina</i>	Black Crowned-crane	Transfer App II to App I	ACCEPTED
<i>Dasyornis broadbenti litoralis</i>	Lesser Rufous Bristlebird	Transfer App I to App II	ACCEPTED

## OUTCOME OF LISTING PROPOSALS SUBMITTED TO CoP18 ctd.

Species	English common name	Proposal	Result
<i>Dasyornis longirostris</i>	Long-billed Bristlebird	Transfer App I to App II	ACCEPTED
<i>Crocodylus acutus</i>	American Crocodile	Transfer pop. of Mexico App I to App II	ACCEPTED as amended, with zero export quota
<i>Calotes nigrilabris</i> and <i>C. pethiyagodai</i>	Garden lizards	Inclusion in App I	WITHDRAWN
<i>Ceratophora</i> spp.	Horned lizards	Inclusion in App I	ACCEPTED as amended, exc. <i>C. aspera</i> and <i>C. stoddartii</i> listed in App II with zero quota
<i>Cophotis ceylanica</i> / <i>C. dumbara</i>	Pygmy lizards	Inclusion in App I	ACCEPTED
<i>Lyricephalus scutatus</i>	Hump-nosed Lizard	Inclusion in App I	ACCEPTED as amended, listed in App II with zero quota
<i>Goniurosaurus</i> spp.	Leopard geckos	Inclusion of pops of China and Viet Nam in App II	ACCEPTED (as amended to excl. spp native to Japan)
<i>Gekko gekko</i>	Tokay Gecko	Inclusion in App II	ACCEPTED
<i>Gonatodes daudini</i>	Grenadines Clawed Gecko	Inclusion in App I	ACCEPTED
<i>Paroedura androyensis</i>	Grandidier's Madagascar Ground Gecko	Inclusion in App II	ACCEPTED
<i>Ctenosaura</i> spp.	Spiny-tailed iguanas	Inclusion in App II	ACCEPTED
<i>Pseudocerastes urarachnoides</i>	Spider-tailed Horned Viper	Inclusion in App II	ACCEPTED
<i>Cuora bourreti</i>	Bourret's Box Turtle	Transfer from App II to App I	ACCEPTED
<i>Cuora picturata</i>	Vietnamese Box Turtle	Transfer from App II to App I	ACCEPTED
<i>Mauremys annamensis</i>	Annam Leaf Turtle	Transfer from App II to in App I	ACCEPTED
<i>Geochelone elegans</i>	Star Tortoise	Transfer from App II to App I	ACCEPTED
<i>Malacochersus tornieri</i>	Pancake Tortoise	Transfer from App II to App I	ACCEPTED
<i>Hyalinobatrachium</i> spp., <i>Centrolene</i> spp., <i>Cochranella</i> spp., and <i>Sachatamia</i> spp.	Glass frogs	Include in App II	REJECTED

OUTCOME OF LISTING PROPOSALS SUBMITTED TO CoP18 ctd.

Species	English common name	Proposal	Result
<i>Echinotriton chinhaiensis</i> and <i>Echinotriton maxiquadratus</i>	Spiny newts	Inclusion in App II	ACCEPTED
<i>Paramesotriton</i> spp.	Asian warty newts	Inclusion in App II	ACCEPTED
<i>Tylototriton</i> spp.	Crocodile newts	Inclusion in App II	ACCEPTED
<i>Isurus oxyrinchus</i> and <i>I. paucus</i>	Mako sharks	Inclusion in App II	ACCEPTED
<i>Glaucostegus</i> spp.	Guitarfishes	Inclusion in App II	ACCEPTED
Rhinidae spp.	Wedgefishes	Inclusion in App II	ACCEPTED
<i>Holothuria (Microthele) fuscogilva</i> , <i>H. (Microthele) nobilis</i> , <i>H. (Microthele) whitmaei</i>	Sea cucumbers	Inclusion in App II	ACCEPTED (entry into force delayed by 12 months)
<i>Poecilotheria</i> spp.	Ornamental spiders	Inclusion in App II	ACCEPTED
<i>Achillides chikae hermeli</i>	Mindoro Peacock Swallowtail	Inclusion in App I	ACCEPTED
<i>Parides burchellanus</i>	Riverside Swallowtail	Inclusion in App I	ACCEPTED
<i>Handroanthus</i> spp., <i>Tabebuia</i> spp. and <i>Roseodendron</i> spp.	Trumpet trees	Inclusion in App II with annotation	WITHDRAWN
<i>Widdringtonia whytei</i>	Mulanje Cedar	Include in App II	ACCEPTED
<i>Dalbergia sissoo</i>	North Indian Rosewood	Delete from App II	REJECTED
<i>Dalbergia</i> spp., <i>Guibourtia demeusei</i> , <i>G. pellegriniana</i> , <i>G. tessmannii</i>	Rosewoods, palisanders and bubingas	Amend annotation	ACCEPTED as amended
<i>Pericopsis elata</i>	African Rosewood	Expand scope of annotation	ACCEPTED
<i>Pterocarpus tinctorius</i>	African Padauk	Inclusion in App II	ACCEPTED
<i>Aloe ferox</i>	Bitter Aloe	Amend annotation	ACCEPTED as amended
<i>Adansonia grandidieri</i>	Grandidier's Baobab	Amend annotation	ACCEPTED
<i>Cedrela</i> spp.	Cedars	Inclusion in App II	ACCEPTED amended to cover pop. of Neotropics (entry into force delayed by 12 months)