

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)



Background

- The aim of CITES is to ensure that international trade of wild animal and plant species does not threaten their survival.
- CITES three appendices that list internationally-traded wild animal and plant species:
 - **Appendix I:** species endangered due to international trade, permitting such trade only in exceptional circumstances
 - **Appendix II:** species that may become endangered if their trade is not regulated, thus they require controls aimed at preventing unsustainable use, maintaining ecosystems, and preventing species from entering Appendix I
 - **Appendix III:** species subject to domestic regulation by a Party requesting the cooperation of other Parties to control international trade in these species.
- Over 40,900 species—including roughly 6,610 species of animals and 34,310 species of plants—are listed under CITES
- Parties regulate international trade of CITES listed species through a system of permits and certificates that are required before specimens of these species are imported, exported, or introduced from the sea
- Each Party is required to adopt national legislation and to designate two national authorities, namely, a Management Authority responsible for issuing permits and certificates based on the advice of a Scientific Authority
- These two national authorities also assist with CITES enforcement through cooperation with customs, police, and other appropriate agencies
- Parties maintain trade records that are forwarded annually to the CITES Secretariat, thus enabling the compilation of statistical information on the global volume of international trade in an appendix-listed species.

Principles in the Rio Declaration covered by CITES include:

- All species threatened with extinction which are or may be affected by trade must be subject to particularly strict regulation in order not to endanger further their survival and must only be authorized in exceptional circumstances (Principle 2)



Key provisions of the agreement

Article 1: Definitions

- Definitions, including,
 - Species – and species, subspecies, or geographically separate population;
 - Specimen – any animal or plant, whether alive or dead;
 - Trade – export, re-export, import and introduction from the sea;
- Introduction from the sea – transportation into a State of specimens of any species which were taken in the marine environment not under the jurisdiction of any State.

Article III: Regulation of trade in specimens of species included in Appendix I

- The export of any specimen of a species included in Appendix I shall require the prior grant and presentation of an export permit;
- The import of any specimen of a species included in Appendix I shall require the prior grant and presentation of an import permit and either an export permit or a re-export certificate;
- The introduction from the sea of any specimen of a species included in Appendix I shall require the prior grant of a certificate from a Management Authority of the State of introduction.

Article IV: Regulation of trade in specimens of species included in Appendix II

- The export of any specimen of a species included in Appendix II shall require the prior grant and presentation of an export permit;
- A Scientific Authority in each Party shall monitor both the export permits granted by that State for specimens of species included in Appendix II and the actual exports of such specimens;
- The import of any specimen of a species included in Appendix II shall require the prior presentation of either an export permit or a re-export certificate;
- The introduction from the sea of any specimen of a species included in Appendix II shall require the prior grant of a certificate from a Management Authority of the State of introduction.

Article V: Regulation of trade in specimens of species included in Appendix III

- The export of any specimen of a species included in Appendix III from any State which has included that species in Appendix III shall require the prior grant and presentation of an export permit;
- The import of any specimen of a species included in Appendix III shall require, except in the case of re-export, the prior presentation of a certificate of origin and, where the import is from a State which has included that species in Appendix III, an export permit.

Article X: Trade with States not party to the Convention

- Where export or re-export is to, or import is from, a country that is not a Party to CITES, comparable documentation issued by the competent authorities in that country which substantially conforms with the CITES requirements may be accepted in lieu.

Article XV: Amendments to Appendices I and II

- Any Party may propose an amendment to Appendix I or II for consideration at the next meeting. The text of the proposed amendment shall be communicated to the Secretariat at least 150 days before the meeting;
- Amendments shall be adopted by a two-thirds majority of Parties present and voting.



Ratifying CITES: reservations and declarations

CITES is not subject to general reservations; however, specific reservations may be entered in accordance with the provisions of amendments to the Appendices to the Convention, which means that any State may, on depositing its instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession, enter a specific reservation with regard to:

- any species included in Appendix I, II or III; or
- any parts or derivatives specified in relation to a species included in Appendix III.

Until a Party withdraws its reservation, it will be treated as a not a Party to the Convention with respect to trade in the particular species or parts or derivatives specified in such reservation.

Milestones in the implementation of the agreement

1973: CITES was adopted

1975: CITES entered into force (there are currently 184 Parties to the Convention)

2010: the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICCWC) was created to further enhance the international cooperation needed to support national efforts to strengthen the enforcement response

2015: the United Nations Group of Friends on Poaching and Illicit Wildlife Trafficking, co-chaired by Gabon and Germany, promoted the first UN General Assembly resolution on tackling illicit trafficking in wildlife

2019: the General Assembly further underscored the importance of national-level action and commitment to effectively address illegal wildlife trade

2023: CITES celebrates its 50th anniversary

Parties to the agreement and stakeholder interests

- 184 Parties
- 29 SIDS, 7 PSIDS (Fiji, Palau, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu)
- Parties are allocated to each of the six major geographical regions (Africa, Asia, Europe, North America, Central and South America and the Caribbean, and Oceania)

Rules of procedure

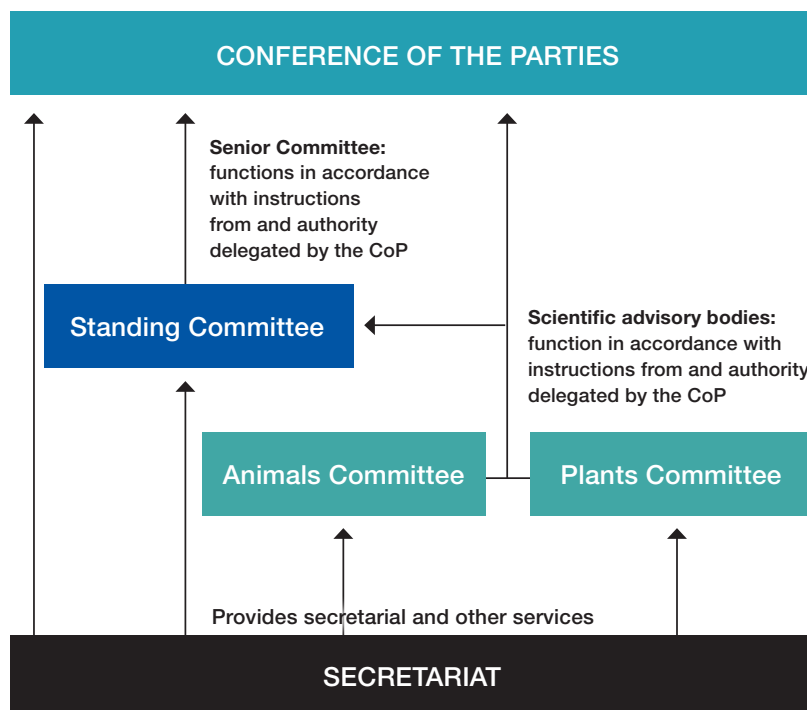
The [rules of procedure](#) for CITES apply to any meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention convened in accordance with Articles XI and XVII of the Convention.

Topics covered in the rules of procedure include:

- Arrangements of the meeting (Rules 7 – 15)
- Officers (Rules 16 – 17)
- Rules of order and debate (18 – 21)
- Voting (Rules 26 – 29)
- The Conference shall as far as possible decide on draft resolutions, draft decisions and other documents by consensus
- All votes on procedural matters relating to the conduct of the business of the meeting shall be decided by a simple majority of the Representatives present and voting
- All other decisions shall be taken by a two-thirds majority of Representatives present and voting

Institutional structure(s) supporting the agreement

CITES Governing bodies *Organigramme*



The Parties to CITES are collectively referred to as the Conference of the Parties. Every two to three years, the Conference of the Parties meets to review the implementation of the Convention. These meetings last for about two weeks and are usually hosted by one of the Parties. The meetings are often referred to as ‘CoPs’.

The Standing Committee provides policy guidance to the Secretariat concerning the implementation of the Convention and oversees the management of the Secretariat’s budget. Beyond these key roles, it coordinates and oversees, where required, the work of other committees and working groups; carries out tasks given to it by the Conference of the Parties; and drafts resolutions for consideration by the Conference of the Parties.

The Animal and Plants Committees of experts were established at COP 6 (Ottawa, 1987) to fill gaps in biological and other specialized knowledge regarding species of animals and plants that are (or might become) subject to CITES trade controls. Their role is to provide technical support to decision-making about these species. These two Committees have similar terms of reference, which include:

- providing scientific advice and guidance to the Conference of the Parties, the other committees, working groups and the Secretariat;
- dealing with nomenclatural issues;
- undertaking periodic reviews of species, in order to ensure appropriate categorization in the CITES Appendices;
- advising when certain species are subject to unsustainable trade and recommending remedial action (through a process known as the ‘Review of Significant Trade’); and
- drafting resolutions on animal and plant matters for consideration by the Conference of the Parties.

This factsheet on **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)** features on pages 18–21 of the compilation report on *Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs)*.

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