

The CITES Strategic Vision 2008–2013

An IUCN, TRAFFIC and WWF briefing document

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At CoP 13 in 2004, the CITES Standing was mandated to establish a Strategic Plan Working Group tasked with developing a proposal for a Strategic Vision and Action Plan through 2013.

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Introduction

At the 13th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties in 2004, CITES Parties mandated the CITES Standing Committee to establish a Strategic Plan Working Group tasked with developing a proposal for a Strategic Vision and Action Plan through 2013, in particular in order to contribute to the achievement of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) targets of significantly reducing the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010 (Decision 13.1). At the 54th meeting of the Standing Committee in October 2006, a draft of a Strategic Plan for CITES for the period 2008–2013 was presented and subsequently changed to a Strategic Vision. The Strategic Plan Working Group of the Standing Committee has submitted Document 11 to Cop14, which contains the Strategic Vision in Annex 1.

This is perhaps the most ambitious strategic plan developed for CITES since its first Strategic Plan was adopted in 2000. The purpose of the Strategic Vision is not only to improve the working of the Convention but also to ensure that CITES policy developments are aligned with changes in international environmental priorities and take into account new international initiatives. It specifically recognizes that sustainable trade in wild fauna and flora can make a major contribution to achieving the broader objectives of sustainable development and biodiversity conservation.

IUCN, WWF and TRAFFIC welcome the draft CITES Strategic Vision 2008–2013, which maintains the core mission of the Convention while including consideration of CITES' links to sustainable development and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The attention to the broader development agenda should not be viewed as moving away from CITES' primary role in conservation of species in international trade, but as making it more effective and relevant, both because consideration of the impact of trade in those species on human well-being must be included in all decisions made by the Parties, and because it is clear that the conservation of species subject to international trade can and does contribute positively to several of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

However, key elements remain a challenge. There needs to be a recognition of, and attempt to identify and address, the underlying causes of unsustainable/illegal international trade in endangered species. The focus of the Strategic Vision remains on enforcement through traditional mechanisms. While this may be the core of CITES, the time has come to realize this is a critical but not sufficient set of measures. To incorporate seriously the stated aims and goals of (particularly) meeting the MDGs, reducing biodiversity loss, ensuring food security and health, CITES needs to broaden its reach and targets. A broader, and more innovative, range of mutually-reinforcing tools in support of the Convention also needs to be deployed.

Goal 1: Ensure compliance with, and implementation and enforcement of, the Convention

The Strategic Vision's first goal is the largest in scope and proposed investment. It relates to the heart of CITES namely, ensuring the knowledge and capacity are in place to implement the agreed governance mechanisms of the Convention.

One of the objectives (Objective 1.4) concerns the appropriate listing of species in the Appendices, to ensure they correctly reflect the conservation needs of species. It is important this also reflects the conservation status of species in the wild, the conservation status (and trade threats to) similar ("look alike") species, and other aspects of the CITES listing criteria. It is also important this should include a commitment to monitor and evaluate the conservation status of species on the Appendices over time-to ascertain how and whether CITES interventions are really achieving their intended purpose. Without tangible means to judge its performance over time, CITES will struggle to justify greater resource investment.

Objective 1.5 on the use of robust scientific information in the making of non-detriment findings is important. We concur that non-detriment findings must be made on the basis of sound and relevant scientific information and appropriate risk assessment. We suggest that the Parties consider including here as well a more specific indicator as to the issuance of permits by Management Authorities based on scientifically-based findings from their Scientific Authorities (as in many cases, particularly for heavily traded species, this is not necessarily the case).

Objective 1.7 on enforcement to reduce illegal trade should also consider providing incentives for Parties to move to regional and multi-country enforcement mechanisms (such as the ASEAN Wildlife Law Enforcement Network established in 2005). In addition, the Strategic Vision notes that multi-agency co-ordination and co-operation are vital, as are the traditional constituency of wildlife and enforcement officers. However, if we are to address the underlying threats and drivers effectively, we have to recognise the need to target and work with those sectors (and decision-makers) whose policies and actions drive unsustainable/illegal international trade in endangered species. This means involving new actors along the entire supply chain, especially the private sector, in CITES enforcement and compliance processes-from harvesters and traders to processors and retailers.

Goal 2: Secure the financial basis for the Convention

This objective is very clearly focused on harnessing traditional sources of support for implementation-unfortunately not always easy due to non-compliance of some Parties with payments in a timely fashion and the inherent limitations on growth of the CITES Trust Fund budget. More emphasis should be placed on additional options to secure and mobilize new financial resources, especially those needed to help enhance the





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capacity of individual Parties to manage wildlife trade more effectively and meet the conservation and social goals expressed elsewhere in the Vision. The concept of indirect costs, or opportunity costs also needs to be incorporated. These also need to be covered if we are looking at the financial basis for the Convention. They are incurred mainly at the local level, and are intimately tied both to poverty issues, and to drivers of unsustainable/illegal international trade in endangered species.

The Strategic Vision also needs to be accompanied by a realistic implementation strategy that identifies partnerships and resourcing opportunities for implementation. The Parties should consider the merits of establishing funding packages for key aspects of CITES development - for example a Capacity Building Fund and a Compliance Monitoring Fund-to which individual governments, NGOs, and the private sector can make voluntary contributions over and above the payments made to the CITES Trust Fund. The Strategic Vision Working Group should continue its work, with a mandate to provide regular reports to the Standing Committee on progress towards implementing this strategy.

Goal 3: Ensure that CITES and other multilateral instruments and processes are coherent and mutually supportive.

Goal 3 has become a mixed bag of objectives relating to CITES' relevance to the broader sustainable development agenda as well as the two basic mechanisms required to implement the Convention fully-awareness raising and partnerships.

With respect to the former, consideration should be given to incorporating much more thoughtfully and explicitly the fact that there is a need to investigate and provide a clear economic and development justification for CITES in today's world. Returning a portion of funds generated from wildlife trade to local communities will not necessarily demonstrate the value of that trade. Benefit sharing is necessary and desirable, but what are needed are concrete and tangible economic and financial incentives which generate direct local benefits from sustainable use and legal trade, while creating disincentives for poaching and illegal trade. In addition, means to reduce the costs of international wildlife trade to sustainability and a means for accountability of both costs and benefits would be important.

Under Objective 3.1 (Funding and common implementation of CITES-related conservation projects by international financial mechanisms and other relevant institutions is significantly increased), we suggest an indicator or recommendation that developed countries include wildlife trade, CITES, and the CITES Strategic Vision, and the needs of developing country range States, in their development assistance programmes.

Measuring success

The incorporation of goals, objectives and indicators in the Strategic Vision is an encouraging recognition of the importance of measuring success. In several cases, the indicators suggest that all Parties will have achieved the noted results/indicators by 2013, which some may consider too ambitious. For example, Objective 1.1 identifies as an indicator ALL Parties having legislation to implement the Convention. The 54th meeting of the Standing Committee noted that 73 Parties and territories had sufficient and 100 had insufficient legislation. With only 42% having "sufficient" implementing legislation, a massive mobilization of effort will be needed to achieve this first objective alone. We agree this is critical, and is a treaty requirement, but perhaps the Parties would consider articulating more realistic targets and milestones for themselves for the next 5 years.

In addition, as objectives and indicators are now available, the stage is set for Parties to be able to monitor and assess progress in implementation of the Convention. Parties should seize this opportunity and ensure that a mechanism is in place to inform them of the efficiency and effectiveness of actions delivered under the Plan.

Parties should also support continuation of the Strategic Vision Working Group as the monitoring agent for the Vision, with a mandate to provide regular reports to the Standing Committee on progress towards achieving the Convention's objectives.

Prioritising needs

The Strategic Vision is a very ambitious plan that will rely heavily on partnerships and collaboration with governments and civil society to be achieved. IUCN, WWF and TRAFFIC welcome the costed programme of work for the Secretariat for the triennium 2009-2011 (CoP14 Doc. 7.3 (Rev.1)), even if we have specific recommendations that might differ for some budget elements. The various aspects of the costed programme very strongly reflect the new elements in the Strategic Vision, particularly in the areas of capacity building; assessing social and economic impacts of CITES implementation, promoting wildlife use or production operations which involve and benefit local communities; livelihoods; and enhancing the practical use and acceptance of the Addis Ababa principles. However, the ambition of the Vision is much larger than the current CITES Trust Fund would be able to resource. With a total budget of US\$ 32 million, Parties will be faced with making decisions about which particular aspects of the Plan to implement unless additional funding options are identified. Approaches to development agencies and the private sector will be facilitated by the Convention's new vision that incorporates sustainable development, and we encourage such approaches as a high priority; however, it is unlikely that the total vision can be fulfilled and Parties will be faced with the need to prioritise actions and objectives for implementation.

It is therefore critical that Parties identify and support the elements of the costed work programme that would best assist Parties (particularly developing country Parties) in meeting the challenges of implementing the new Strategic Vision and Action Plan. Parties also need to respond to the new Strategic Vision by developing technical assistance plans that would directly provide assistance to producer countries in effectively meeting the demands of the Vision.