

65th CITES Standing Committee meeting



CITES is an international agreement that started in 1975 and is currently supported by 180 countries. It aims to ensure international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants is sustainable and does not threaten their survival.

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What is a Conferences of the Parties?

CITES Conferences of the Parties (CoPs) are usually held every three years and are the main decision-making body of the organisation. CITES also has a Standing Committee (SC) that usually meets annually to provide policy guidance to the CITES Secretariat concerning implementation of the Convention and coordinate the work of the various Committees and Working Groups (WGs).

65th CITES Standing Committee meeting

The 65th meeting of the CITES Standing Committee (SC65) was held in Geneva, Switzerland from 7–11 July 2014. The meeting considered rhino reports and recommendations that had been submitted in advance by the CITES Secretariat and the CITES Rhino Working Group. In particular, the SC65 rhino recommendations focused on **Mozambique** and **Vietnam**, which have previously been identified by CITES as significant implicated states.

Mozambique

The Rhino Working Group was critical of Mozambique's limited, late and non-response to its CITES CoP16 (2013) Decisions. Other observers noted that Mozambique needed to respond appropriately and if not, then for CITES to retain credibility appropriate action would be needed. The rhino recommendations approved by SC65 set out specific requirements for Mozambique.

Firstly the country has to submit a detailed national rhino action plan with timeframes and milestones by October 2014. This plan must outline the measures being taken or planned to combat illegal killing of rhinos and trade in rhino horn. Mozambique was invited to urgently implement this plan before the next SC meeting; and to provide an interim report by the end of January 2015. Mozambique also has to provide a comprehensive report on the implementation of its rhino action plan by the end of March 2015. This must include information on arrests, seizures, prosecutions and penalties for offenders.

Importantly, the approved SC65 recommendations contained a clause that allows the Secretariat, in consultation with the Rhino

Working Group, to draw the attention of the SC at any time to any significant issues of non-compliance with SC65 recommendations,

without having to wait for the next SC meeting. Should Mozambique fail to adequately respond again, this would be a step towards possible future CITES actions which ultimately could include some form of sanctions.

Pelly Amendment sanctions

Just prior to CITES SC65, the Environmental Investigation Agency and International Rhino Foundation submitted an application to US authorities calling for Pelly Amendment sanctions to be imposed on Mozambique, given its role in the escalation of rhino poaching and the country's failure to adequately deal with the issue.

Vietnam

Vietnam was requested to provide a further progress report on several issues by the end of March 2015 for consideration at the next SC meeting. Following the international focus on Vietnam at CITES and elsewhere, the involvement of the Prime Minister and his Directive on measures for controlling and protecting endangered wild animals are welcomed.

Czech Republic pseudo-hunters

While the number of white rhino hunts in South Africa has fallen significantly following legislative changes in South Africa, CITES Law Enforcement in the Czech Republic has reported a number of Czech citizens who have been involved in 'proxy hunting' to illegally supply horn to Viet Nam. The Czech Republic, South Africa and Viet Nam were each asked to submit a comprehensive report (by Mar 15) on measures taken to improve cooperation to ensure that rhino trophy hunting is not exploited by criminal groups, nor used to launder horns into illegal trade. South Africa announced it was not issuing any more export permits to Czech and Vietnamese citizens until investigations have been completed.

To find out more about CITES visit www.cites.org

Grants

Since 1 April 2014, Save the Rhino has sent £3,200 from its own core funds, £937 from miscellaneous donations received and \$7,500 (first instalment of two) from US Fish and Wildlife Service for the core activities of the African Rhino Specialist Group.



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