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NOTE

from:	General Secretariat
to:	Delegations
Subject:	Outcome of the 16th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) (Bangkok, Thailand 3–14 March 2013)
	- Information from the Presidency and the Commission

Delegations will find in the <u>Annex</u> an information note from <u>the Presidency and the Commission</u> on the above-mentioned subject, which will be dealt with under "other business" at the Council (Environment) meeting on 21 March 2013.

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Outcome of the 16th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) (Bangkok, Thailand 3–14 March 2013)

- Information from the Presidency and the Commission -

The 16th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 16) of CITES, held in Bangkok, was attended by 26 of the 27 EU Member States as well as by Croatia. Cyprus delegated its vote to Ireland in its Presidency role. The European Commission was also represented.

The Council adopted a decision establishing the position of the European Union for COP 16 on 28 February. This position was expressed at the COP meeting by Ireland on behalf of the EU and its Member States. Croatia was associated to the proceedings and to the above-mentioned position.

The EU is not yet a Party to CITES.

The EU came to the Conference with a small number of key proposals (six in total). The proposals in relation to the "uplisting" or "downlisting" of species under the CITES regime all succeeded. Of particular note were the ground breaking proposals to protect a number of shark species under Appendix II of the Convention, which the EU sponsored or co-proposed. The EU had less success in relation to its proposals to introduce greater transparency in relation to the workings of the Convention.

The recommendations developed by a CITES working group to regulate marine species caught in international waters (the so called "introduction from the sea" proposals) were also adopted to the satisfaction of the EU and Member States.

Significant decisions, brokered by the EU, aimed at addressing a rise in illegal trade in ivory and rhinoceros horn were also adopted.

The EU efforts to bring consensus to the divisive polar bear issue, though recognised, were not successful.

Overall, COP 16 from an EU point of view can be considered to be quite successful, particular in relation to the advancement of measures for shark conservation.

Transparency Issues

The EU had submitted two proposals to increase the transparency and accountability of the CITES decision making process.

The EU proposal to address "conflicts of interest" for members of the CITES Animals and Plants Committee had partial success. Important first steps were agreed to avoid such conflicts in the future, in particular an obligation for members to submit a declaration of interests that might impact on their impartiality and objectivity. An intersessional mechanism has been set up to develop these provisions further until the next Conference of the Parties.

The EU had also sought to restrict the use of secret ballots at COP meetings only where a simple majority of Parties voting agreed to that proposal (up from 11 Parties at present). Following a procedural wrangle, and a decision to require a 2/3rds majority to take the vote on this issue, the EU proposal did not succeed. A number of alternative decisions were also discussed, none of which succeeded. However, the voting record shows that an outcome acceptable to the EU would have been carried on a simple majority.

Marine Issues

The EU sought to control the international trade in certain marine species by proposing the inclusion of the porbeagle shark in Appendix II and co-sponsoring or supporting the inclusion of the oceanic white tipped and hammerhead sharks and mant aray in that Appendix. Together with the polar bear, these were the most controversial "listing" proposals considered at COP. It was to the great satisfaction of the EU and its Member States that these proposals obtained the necessary 2/3rds majority required. The porbeagle proposal had failed to obtain support at previous COPs.

The proposals in relation to "introduction from the sea", aimed at regulating the trade in CITES species caught on the high seas, were also adopted, together with the amendments to review the "chartering provision", as proposed by the EU. The issue of regulating catch of CITES species in international waters had been discussed for 20 years and the adoption of the decision at COP 16 marks a strategic move forward in protecting marine species in international waters.

Ivory

The EU expressed its deep concern of the record levels of elephant poaching in recent years. We maintained our position that a decision-making mechanism for future trade in ivory required further discussion and consideration between now and COP 17 in 2016.

The CITES Resolution on control of trade in elephant specimens was successfully amended to include the principle of demand-reduction strategies, in accordance with the EU position. National Ivory Plans were developed during the COP for those Parties that are significantly implicated in the illegal trade in ivory.

<u>Rhinoceros</u>

Updated information showing a significant increase in Rhinoceros poaching and illegal trade in rhino horn in recent years was presented to the COP. Comprehensive decisions were adopted in relation to the Rhinoceros:

(i)   requiring all Parties to take steps to improve domestic enforcement in relation to the illegal rhinoceros horn trade,

(ii)   requiring major consumer States of illegal Rhinoceros horn to develop long term demand reduction and public awareness strategies,

(iii) requiring Viet Nam and Mozambique to progress specific initiatives to address the major demand pressures and enforcement weakness in those States respectively.

The EU played a major role in developing the decisions in relation to ivory and rhinoceros horn at the COP.

<u>Polar Bear</u>

As decided by the Council, the EU worked to obtain consensus on a way forward in relation to the polar bear proposal put forward by the US - both in the weeks preceding the Conference, and at the Conference itself. Two multilateral meetings were held with the range States. However, there was no consensus forthcoming and the EU therefore decided to put forward its own proposal to the Conference. This proposal obtained significant support (with 63 Parties voting for, 43 Parties against and 17 abstentions). However, it did not receive the necessary 2/3rds majority of parties voting to succeed. The US proposal was then put to a vote and was also defeated (with 38 Parties for, 42 against and 46 abstentions). The EU Member States (except Denmark, acting on behalf and in the interest of Greenland) and Croatia abstained.

<u>Timber Producing Trees</u>

The EU Member States successfully supported a number of proposals to include certain threatened timber producing trees within CITES, including 87 species of ebony and 48 species of rosewood from Madagascar. The EU also supported the adoption of proposals submitted by Thailand, Vietnam and Belize to include a number of rosewood species into CITES Appendix II, as well as the East African sandalwood from a number of East-African countries. These decisions were all adopted by consensus and were supported by many countries from Central America, South East Asia and Africa.

<u>Reptiles</u>

The COP adopted a number of proposals to provide stronger protection for a large number of turtles and snakes species from South East Asia and North America with the support of the EU, as well as inclusion within CITES of green geckos from New Zealand.

<u>Funding issues</u>

The COP adopted a budget providing for an increase of 4.15% for the 3 year period 2014 to 2016.

It also adopted a draft decision which provides a basis for the CITES Secretariat to explore the issues around potential assistance from the Global Environment Fund for CITES and enhanced biodiversity support more generally.

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