

CITES

Sustainable use now a convention goal

The Hague played host to a major international meeting in June 2007 that put in place new measures to combat illegal trade in wildlife and associated products. It was the first time the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) has held its Conference of Parties in Europe. Delegates agreed on a new strategic vision for CITES and heard that the European Commission has adopted a new action plan to help the EU tackle illegal trade in wild animals and plants.




CITES is an international agreement between governments that aims to ensure that trade in wild plants and animals does not threaten their survival. The Convention can ban – or impose severe restrictions on – the trade of rare species and products derived from flora and fauna. It also provides a framework for sustainable trade in species that are not regarded as endangered.

Historic agreement

The conference, which ran from 3 to 15 June, forged a historic agreement on ivory sales and elephant conservation. African nations agreed a nine-year freeze on ivory trading to come into force after a one-off sale of government-owned stock. "The emphasis is on making sure that the international community has a coherent approach to sustainable trade in all species, including those that are commercially exploitable such as timber and fish." The countries involved also agreed to develop and fund an action plan to support elephant conservation work.

Delegates also agreed on a strategic vision for CITES that will drive activities over the next six years. The emphasis is on making sure that the international community has a coherent approach to sustainable trade in all species, including those that are commercially exploitable such as timber and fish. The strategic vision should make it easier for CITES to act well before a plant or animal becomes critically endangered.

EU action plan

In 2006, a [European Union study](#)  concluded that more needed to be done to combat illegal trade in plants and animals. The Commission responded and, on 13 June 2007, it adopted an [action plan](#) to improve enforcement actions, which it is now recommending to EU member states.

The action plan reflects international commitments to strengthen the enforcement of CITES and sets out a series of measures including:

- the adoption of national action plans to boost EU enforcement activities;
- the imposition of high penalties for trading offences;
- greater use of risk and intelligence assessments to detect illegal and

- smuggled wildlife and associated products;
- a commitment to improve cooperation between member states, third countries and relevant international organisations.

The CITES conference also considered an EU proposal to improve the trade regulation of three tree species – Cedrela and two Dalbergia species. While this was rejected, the delegates did commit to collecting more information as a prelude to considering similar measures at the next CITES conference, which will be held in Qatar in 2010.

MIKE – A CITES success story

- MIKE: Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants
- A key CITES monitoring tool that measures levels and trends in elephant poaching
- Helps countries with elephant populations to make better management and enforcement decisions
- Provides CITES with valuable information for the framing of policy relating to elephant conservation

Find out more

[DG Environment and CITES](#)

[CITES website](#)

[CITES MIKE project](#)



Events

- [12-16 May 2008 - Fourth Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety](#)
- [19-30 May 2008 - Ninth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity](#)

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