

EU Action Plan against Wildlife Trafficking



Gerben-Jan GERBRANDY, Member of the European Parliament



@Gerbrandy



facebook.com/gjgerbrandy

www.gerbrandy.eu

+32 2 28 45 616



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Press invitation

In 2012 every 15 minutes an elephant was killed by poachers. With the current rate of killings within one decade, wild elephants will be something of the past. The situation of rhino's and tigers is even more threatening, because so few are left in the wild.

International crime, rebel groups and terrorists have made wildlife crime the fourth most lucrative crime in the world. It's an extremely profitably business worth €14 billion.

A rhino horn is worth half a million euros. Museums have to lock these rhino horns away to avoid being robbed.

Profits are huge and used to finance weapons, among other things. Chances of getting caught are small and sanctions ridiculously low. It is an unfair fight between heavily armed criminal gangs and a few brave rangers.

Urgent action is needed to save not only the most iconic species on our planet, but also to fight rebel groups and terrorist activities.

The EU does not tackle the problem of wildlife crime sufficiently. Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton put the issue high on the agenda of the USA. It's high time for the EU to also develop an action plan to fight wildlife crime.

Dutch liberal MEP Gerben-Jan Gerbrandy (ALDE/D66), who initiated the ENVI workshop on wildlife crime, will present his ideas for such a European action plan.

Program Wednesday 27 February

14:00 Presentation and brief explanation by MEP Gerben-Jan Gerbrandy (ALDE/D66)

14:15 Q & A

15:00 Workshop Wildlife Crime, Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI)

18:30 End

Venue: European Parliament, Altiero Spinelli, A5E-2, Rue Wiertz 60, Brussels

Background:

From 3 - 14 March the 16th CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) Conference takes place in Bangkok. Its aim is to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival. However, no matter how many animals are included on the annex of endangered animals, there is a real risk that it will only benefit the last tiger, elephant or rhino alive due to the explosive increase of poaching.

For more information:

Press officer Anna Sophia Posthumus +32 484 201 518



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The black market in wildlife is estimated to be only second in size to illegal arms and drugs trafficking. The latest Europol Organised Crime Threat Assessment (OCTA) stated that wildlife trafficking is estimated at 18 to 26 billion euro per year, with the EU the foremost destination market in the world¹.

The vast sums of money involved (rhino horn is more valuable than gold!) and relatively low penalties, attracts organised crime and terrorist groups. Europol, Interpol, the UNODC, and US State Department have all stated that the trafficking has strong links to organised crime and terrorism and poses a serious threat to regional stability and security, human health, and has a devastating effect to endangered species and biodiversity around the world². Groups specialising in money laundering, financial crime, thefts and drug trafficking in Member States are now engaged in environmental crime as well. Modern poachers use high tech weapons for their activities and the Internet to facilitate trade.

The groups range from those who have now begun to specialise in this activity to poly-criminal organised crime groups. The OCTA report highlights that those involved in high-level drugs trafficking in Brazil, Colombia and Mexico have established a notable role in the illegal supply of endangered species.

In Africa and Asia, terrorist groups such as Al Shabab, other Al Qaeda affiliates and warlords across Africa have become engaged in this crime to fund their wars and atrocities. Items such as ivory are fast becoming a 21st century blood diamond, directly supporting rogue military gangs.

The growing middle class in Asia is pushing demand rapidly. The growing demand for ivory has sparked a yet unseen hunt for elephants in Africa. In 2011 alone poachers killed approximately between 25,000 and 40,000 elephants, more than the total of the preceding decade. With this level of killings the current wild elephant population will be gone in 10-15 years.

The poaching of rhinos has exploded in the last few years. In South-Africa alone, the killings grew from 13 in 2007 to 668 in 2012. Late last year the Western Black Rhino was declared extinct.

The world's tiger population has plummeted from 100,000 at the start of the 20th Century to below 4,000 today. Poaching accounts to 78% of the deaths of Sumatran tigers.³

The EU is used as both a market and a transit route for the illegal wildlife trade; for example, according to the Elephant Trade Information System (ETIS) Europe accounts for around a third of all ivory seizures worldwide, with Belgium, France,

¹ Europol Organised Crime Threat Assessment (2011), pg 40,

<https://www.europol.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/octa2011.pdf>

² Hilary Clinton remarks at the Partnership Meeting on wildlife Crime 2011

³ http://wwf.panda.org/what_we_do/endangered_species/tigers/about_tigers/sumatran_tiger/threats/poaching/



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Portugal and the UK acting as key transit routes. These countries along with the Netherlands, Italy and Spain are noted for their frequent, small scale seizures of ivory

Despite many efforts from CITES, INTERPOL, EUROPOL, national authorities and NGO's, we are losing the war against wildlife crime. We should give the highest priority to this growing problem. To save our nature, to save many of our most iconic species, but also to provide security and prosperity for millions of people.

The world needs an action plan. This action plan highlights clear deliverables for the EU to implement which can directly impact upon those that traffic in endangered species.

Specific EU-action:

1. Improving enforcement effectiveness through training of enforcement agencies responsible for tackling wildlife crime (customs, inspectorates and police) and sensitisation of the judiciary (public prosecutors and judges). The European Commission should also facilitate the development and implementation of a European Enforcement Strategy, driven by enforcers, to enable Member States' enforcers to identify, investigate and prosecute criminals illegally selling wildlife and wildlife products.

2. Establishment of a Europol Wildlife Crime Unit for centralised intelligence gathering and analysis as well as coordination of joint investigations, leading to a more strategic approach to wildlife trafficking in the EU. Our national police services and other relevant agencies could cooperate more effectively when it comes to wildlife crime. A special unit in Europol would help build capacity in Member States and track down criminal activity relating to wildlife crime.

3. The internet is fast becoming a major source for purchasing illegal wildlife products. Therefore **Member States must update their legislation.** The EU CITES COM should be tasked with establishing guidelines for member states to improve their legislation regarding online trade so it can be regarded 'fit for purpose'. The Czech Republic has led the way in Europe by enacting stricter legislation. This legislation should be promoted and expanded across the EU.

4. Higher punishments. Member States should impose criminal sanctions and higher fines. As it stands now the relation between risk and return on investment is completely lost. This makes it very attractive for international crime syndicates to expand their activities from e.g. drugs to wildlife products.

EU external action:

5. Recognise that wildlife crime is a national and global security threat, as highlighted by former US Secretary of State Hilary Clinton and include its eradication



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as a priority within the EU's security strategy for the regions where it is most prevalent. Intelligence agencies, both civil and military, should work closely together.

6. As demand is largely driven by Asia, the EU needs to **raise the issue of wildlife trafficking on the highest political level in the EU - Asia dialogue** and should therefore put it on the agenda of the Asia–Europe Meeting (ASEM) and other relevant fora. Citizens should be informed of the problem in order to prevent that they take wildlife souvenirs back home or buy medicinal products made out of wildlife.

7. **Leverage the EU's trade and development instruments** to establish dedicated programmes, with substantial funding, to strengthen the implementation of CITES and provide capacity building against poaching and trafficking. In particular support, strengthen and expand Wildlife Enforcement Networks such as ASEAN-WEN and HA-WEN which aim to establish regional centres of expertise and provide a pre-existing model for regional cooperation against wildlife crime. The EU should also assist countries in establishing robust domestic legislation and enforcement.

8. **Include wildlife crime as a regional priority** where appropriate in the Country and Regional Strategy Papers which are currently being drafted as part of the Cotonou agreement. In particular support cross border cooperation for enforcement and anti-poaching efforts to combat this security threat.

9. **Lobby for higher sanctions in African and Asian countries.** In South-Africa poachers might get away with a 10.000 euro fine, while trafficking up to 5 grams of cocaine is sentenced with five years in jail.

10. The success of any intervention hinges on **support from local communities** living nearest to the wildlife. Where livelihoods are threatened or conflict issues are present, the EU must provide programmes that support alternative income generation from non-lethal means.

11. Support initiatives which **reduce the demand for wildlife products** in the key demand states of China and south-east Asia.

12. Given the high priority and experience of the USA, **wildlife trafficking should be a key point in transatlantic cooperation**, ensuring exchange of best practices and a holistic complementary strategy on wildlife crime.

13. Bring together a **global coalition** including the US, African Union, ASEAN, China, and other affected bodies to establish a **high level global strategy against wildlife crime**. Such a strategy should cover prevention through demand reduction and education, enforcement and trainings.



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European Parliament resolution of 6 February 2013 on the EU strategic objectives for the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), to be held in Bangkok (Thailand) from 3 to 14 March 2013 (2012/2838(RSP))

The European Parliament ,

- having regard to the forthcoming 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP16) to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), to be held from 3 to 14 March 2013 in Bangkok, Thailand,
- having regard to the questions to the Council and to the Commission on key objectives for the CoP16 to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in Bangkok, Thailand, 3-14 March 2013 (O-000201/2012 – B7-0109/2013 and O-000202/2012 – B7-0110/2013),
- having regard to Rules 115(5) and 110(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
 - A. whereas CITES is the largest global wildlife conservation agreement in existence, seeking to prevent the over-exploitation of wild fauna and flora through international trade, with 176 parties, including the 27 Member States of the European Union;
 - B. whereas the aim of CITES is to ensure that international trade in wild animals and plants is not a threat to the survival of the species in the wild;
 - C. whereas it is important to put long-term prosperity over short-term economic interests;
 - D. whereas the exploitation of wild species, illegal trade in wild fauna and flora, habitat destruction, climate change and human consumption of natural resources are the main causes of biodiversity impoverishment;
 - E. whereas delineating intact forests and keeping areas roadless are cost-effective methods of preserving biodiversity and ecosystem services;
 - F. whereas Annex 4 of CITES Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP15) refers to precautionary measures to be taken into consideration or implemented when amending the appendices;
 - G. whereas CITES should base its decisions on science;
 - H. whereas the species under CITES are listed in appendices according to their conservation status and levels of international trade, Appendix I containing species threatened with extinction for which commercial trade is prohibited, and Appendix II species in which trade must be controlled in order to avoid utilisation incompatible with their survival;



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I. whereas CITES Appendix I species are strongly protected, with any commercial trade in species listed therein being prohibited; whereas any permit to sell confiscated specimens or products (for example ivory, tiger bones or rhino horn) would undermine the aim of the CITES Convention;

J. whereas the periodic review process has shown that CITES has been successful for certain species listed in Appendix I, which can now be moved to Appendix II;

K. whereas Aichi Target 12 of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, under the Convention on Biological Diversity, foresees that, by 2020, the extinction of known threatened species will have been prevented and their conservation status, particularly of those most in decline, will have been improved and sustained;

L. whereas Aichi Target 6 of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, under the Convention on Biological Diversity, foresees that, by 2020, all fish and invertebrate stocks and aquatic plants will be managed and harvested sustainably, legally and applying ecosystem-based approaches, so that overfishing is avoided, recovery plans and measures are in place for all depleted species, fisheries have no significant adverse impacts on threatened species and vulnerable ecosystems and the impacts of fisheries on stocks, species and ecosystems are within safe ecological limits;

M. whereas transparency of decision making in international environmental institutions is a key element for their effective functioning; whereas the Outcome Document of the Rio+20 Conference, 'The Future We Want', reaffirms that 'to achieve our sustainable development goals we need institutions at all levels that are effective, transparent, accountable and democratic'; and whereas promoting transparency also forms part of the 'CITES Strategic Vision: 2008-2013' contained in CITES Resolution Conf. 14.2;

N. whereas the current CITES Rules of Procedure stipulate that votes by secret ballot 'shall not normally be used' for issues other than the election of officers and host countries; whereas, despite this rule, a large number of votes were taken by secret ballot at the latest CoP; whereas secret ballots are regularly used for sensitive and important issues, for example with regard to marine species or the ivory trade;

O. whereas porbeagles are highly vulnerable to overexploitation in fisheries;

P. whereas hammerhead sharks are threatened worldwide due to the international fin trade and bycatch, which have caused historic population declines;

Q. whereas a significant rise in elephant poaching is now affecting elephant populations across all four African subregions and is of serious and increasing concern; whereas the quantities of illegal ivory seized also reached unprecedented levels between 2009 and 2011;

R. whereas unsustainable and unethical trophy hunting has caused large-scale declines in CITES Appendix I- and II-listed endangered species; whereas trophy



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hunting is seriously undermining the aim of the CITES Convention;

S. whereas a lack of effective enforcement means that CITES Appendix I- and II-listed endangered species are still being killed for profit;

T. whereas about 80 % of the rhinoceros population in Africa can be found in South Africa; whereas poaching of these animals across range states is escalating rapidly;

U. whereas tigers and other Appendix I Asian big cats are still subject to significant illegal trade but there is a lack of reporting to CITES on enforcement measures and, specifically, a lack of reporting on compliance with CITES Decision 14.69, which the EU supported in 2007, to phase out tiger farming and ensure that tigers are not bred for trade (including domestic trade) in their parts and derivatives;

V. whereas climate change is a significant threat to polar bears (*Ursus maritimus*); whereas hunting and commercial trade in polar bear parts also pose a serious threat;

W. whereas the European Union is a major import market for reptiles as pets, including imports of species that are listed under CITES;

X. whereas many turtle species are heavily exploited for food markets and the international pet trade;

Y. whereas increasing fishing pressure driven by international trade in ray gill plates has led to significant rates of decline in the population sizes of Manta rays (*Manta spp.*) and other ray species;

Z. whereas international fisheries instruments and CITES should work towards the same objective of ensuring the long-term conservation of fish stocks on the high seas, taking account *inter alia* of the impact of bycatch on non-target species;

AA. whereas the CITES Convention currently includes provisions on ‘introduction from the sea’ that are unclear and, more specifically, provisions on the ‘State of introduction’ when species are caught on the high seas;

AB. whereas the CITES Working Group on Introduction from the Sea has proposed a solution respecting the jurisdiction of the Flag State which would be responsible for issuing the CITES documentation, with some narrow exceptions related to chartered fishing vessels;

AC. whereas the proper functioning of the CITES Convention is likely to require Parties to considerably step up funding over the next few years;

AD. whereas the European Union does not contribute directly to the CITES Convention; whereas it is, however, one of the main donors through its development aid;

1. Calls on the European Union and the Member States to use the precautionary principle as the leading principle for all their decisions on working documents and



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listing proposals, taking into account, in particular, the user-pays principle, the ecosystem approach and traditional conservation principles;

2. Urges the European Union and the Member States to speak with one voice and to improve the speed and efficiency of their internal decision-making procedures so as to be able to agree quickly on an internal EU position for CITES CoP16 and make full use of the strength of having 27 Parties within the EU to move CoP16 decisions towards a precautionary direction;

3. Urges the European Union to play a leading role in the protection of endangered species, by taking an active part in negotiations on the CITES Convention and promoting the removal of loopholes that aggravate the situation; deplores the fact that there have been allegations about Member States and European Union citizens being used as intermediaries in the transfer of rhino horn into Vietnam or other countries where it has high commercial value and thereby stimulating demand and further poaching;

4. Urges the European Union and the Member States to reach out to third countries, both prior to and during the Conference, and to establish alliances;

5. Encourages the CITES Parties to consider further opportunities to strengthen cooperation, coordination and synergies among biodiversity-related conventions at all relevant levels;

Transparency of decision making

6. Strongly opposes the use of secret ballots as a general practice within CITES, given that the CITES Rules of Procedure provide for it to be used in exceptional circumstances only; supports in this context the relevant proposal made by Denmark on behalf of the EU Member States;

7. Welcomes the proposal by Denmark on behalf of the EU Member States to include in Resolution Conf. 11.1 (Rev. CoP15) a new paragraph on conflicts of interest;

Funding

8. Urges the Commission to ensure continuity of funding through its development aid with a view to achieving the CITES objectives; specifically refers, in this context, to the ongoing MIKE programme (Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants) which, subject to an independent review and assessment of its effectiveness, could be up for renewed commitment from the European Union;

9. Encourages the Commission and the EU Member States to look into possibilities of providing for long-term financial support to the CITES Convention through the European Development Fund;

10. Supports the proposal for CITES to ask the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to serve as a financial mechanism for CITES and also to open the biodiversity strategy



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for GEF 6 to include a species component⁽¹⁾ ;

Introduction from the sea

11. Welcomes the discussions and progress made in the CITES Working Group on Introduction from the Sea; supports CoP16 Doc.32, aimed at improving enforcement for CITES-listed marine species caught in seas outside the jurisdiction of any State, and urges the Parties to conclude work on the issue at the CoP16 meeting;

Sharks

12. Welcomes the proposal from Brazil, Comoros, Croatia, Egypt, and Denmark on behalf of the European Union Member States to include the porbeagle shark (*Lamna nasus*) in Appendix II; urges the European Union and the Member States to support this proposal;

13. Welcomes the proposal from Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico, and Denmark on behalf of the European Union Member States to include three hammerhead shark species (*Sphyrna* spp) in Appendix II; urges the Commission and the Member States to support this proposal;

14. Urges the European Union and the Member States to support the proposal to include the oceanic whitetip shark (*Carcharhinus longimanus*) in CITES Appendix II, tabled by Brazil, Colombia and the United States of America;

Elephant ivory and rhino horn

15. Welcomes the withdrawal of the Tanzanian proposal for the downlisting of its African elephant (*Loxodonta africana*) population from Appendix I to Appendix II and for a one-off sale of Tanzanian stocks of elephant ivory;

16. Urges the European Union and the Member States to reject any proposals to downlist the African elephant or the trade in African elephant ivory until an assessment can be made of the impact of the one-off sale in November 2008 by Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe and it has been established that the one-off sale has had no adverse effect on elephant populations in those countries or in neighbouring countries;

17. Encourages the CITES Parties, bearing in mind the current elephant poaching crisis, to take a precautionary approach and base their decisions on the possible impact on elephant conservation and the implementation of the African Elephant Action Plan when considering the decision-making mechanism for a future trade in elephant ivory after the complete nine-year resting period starting from the one-off sale in November 2008 by Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe; calls, accordingly, on the European Union and the Member States to support a proposal to amend Decision 14.77 on a decision-making mechanism for a future trade in elephant ivory, tabled by Benin, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Liberia, Nigeria and Togo;



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18. Encourages the CITES Parties to support the adoption of the resolution on the African Elephant Action Plan, as tabled by Nigeria and Rwanda, and the implementation of this plan as the most efficient way forward for the conservation of elephants across Africa;

19. Calls on the European Union, the Member States and all CITES Parties to support Kenya's proposal for a temporary zero quota on exports of rhino trophies from South Africa and Swaziland, and calls on the CITES Parties to look into measures on how to reduce the demand for rhino horn;

20. Calls on the parties to reduce the annual national export quotas for trophy hunting of CITES Appendix I- and II-listed endangered species;

21. Calls on all Parties where rhino horn is consumed, and Vietnam in particular, to take urgent measures to stop the illegal importation of rhino horns, to impose severe penalties on those who violate the law and to take measures to educate consumers about the impact of their consumption on wild rhino populations; calls on the Commission and the Member States to address these issues in trade negotiations with the respective Parties;

Big cats

22. Urges the European Union and the Member States to call for trade suspensions against Parties that have failed to comply with CITES Decision 14.69 on tigers, and Parties that encourage the breeding of tigers for trade in their parts and derivatives;

23. Urges the CITES Parties to stop unsustainable and unethical trophy hunting, which has caused large-scale declines in African lion populations;

24. Regrets that no proposal has been submitted to transfer the lion (*Panthera leo*) from CITES Appendix II to Appendix I;

Reptiles

25. Urges the European Union and the Member States to support a series of proposals to add several species of turtles and tortoises from North America and Asia to CITES Appendix II and to transfer seven species to Appendix I;

26. Urges the European Union and the Member States, as regards alternative proposals for three species of freshwater box turtles (*Cuora galbinifrons*, *Mauremys annamensis* and *Geoemyda japonica*), to support the stronger proposals from the range states (Vietnam and Japan), in line with the expert recommendations from a CITES workshop in Singapore;

27. Calls for the European Union and the Member States to support the proposal to include New Zealand green geckos (*Naultinus* spp.) and the Mangshan pit-viper (*Protobothrops mangshanensis*) in CITES Appendix II, tabled by the only range states, New Zealand and China respectively;



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28. Urges the European Union and the Member States to support a draft decision on snake trade and conservation management, tabled by Switzerland;

Other species

29. Urges the European Union and the EU Member States to support a draft decision tabled by Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda to study legal and illegal trade in cheetahs;

30. Welcomes the work undertaken by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) following the momentum created at CITES CoP15 in 2010;

31. Regrets that no proposal has been put forward to include the northern bluefin tuna (*Thunnus thynnus*) in CITES Appendix I;

32. Regrets that no proposal has been put forward to include *Corallium* spp. and *Paracorallium* spp. in CITES Appendix II;

33. Urges the European Union and the Member States to support the following:

- the inclusion of the Manta rays (*Manta* spp.) in CITES Appendix II, as proposed by Brazil, Colombia and Ecuador; and the inclusion of other ray species in Appendix II, as proposed by Colombia and Ecuador;
- the transfer of polar bears (*Ursus maritimus*) from CITES Appendix II to Appendix I, as proposed by the USA and supported by the Russian Federation;
- the transfer of the West African Manatee (*Trichesurus senegalensis*) from Appendix II to Appendix I, as proposed by Benin, Senegal and Sierra Leone;
- the transfer of the Freshwater Sawfish (*Pristis microdon*) from Appendix II to Appendix I, as proposed by Australia;
- the inclusion of several rosewood species (*Dalbergia* spp.) and ebony species (*Diospyros* spp.) in CITES Appendix II, as proposed by Madagascar, Belize, Thailand and Vietnam;
- the inclusion of several species internationally traded as ornamental plants (*Adenia firingalavensis*, *Adenia subsessifolia*, *Cyphostemma laza*, *Operculicarya decaryi*, *Senna meridionalis*, *Uncarina stellulifera* and *Uncarina grandidieri*) in CITES Appendix II, as proposed by the only range state, Madagascar;

34. Calls on the European Union and the EU Member States to oppose the following:

- the proposed change to the CITES Strategic Vision Statement, requiring CITES to contribute to other globally agreed goals instead of the current goal ‘to contribute to significantly reduce the rate of biodiversity loss’;
- the disposal or sale of illegally traded and confiscated specimens of Appendix I, II and III species, as proposed by Indonesia;
- the transfer of three crocodile species (*Crocodylus acutus*, *C. porosus*, and *C. siamensis*) from CITES Appendix I to Appendix II, as proposed by Colombia and Thailand;
- the downlisting of Attwater's Greater Prairie Chicken (*Tympanuchus cupido*



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attwateri) from Appendix I to Appendix II, as requested by the Animals Committee, on the grounds that, although the last single seized illegal shipment occurred in 1998, wild populations of this subspecies declined in 2012 by 58 % to only 46 birds in the wild;

- the deletion of Sonnerat's Junglefowl (*Gallus sonnerati*) and blood pheasants (*Ithaginis cruentus*) from Appendix II, as requested by the Animals Committee, as wild populations of both species are in gradual decline, there is considerable international trade in *Gallus sonnerati* for pet markets, some of the subspecies of *Ithaginis cruentus* are distributed in a narrow range, with a very limited population, and China, as a range state, is opposed to deleting Blood Pheasants;
- the deletion of the Imperial Woodpecker (*Campephilus imperialis*) from Appendix I, on the grounds that, although this species is regarded as 'possibly extinct', anecdotal reports of sightings are regularly pursued;
- the deletion of Gastric-Brooding Frogs (*Rheobatrachus silus* and *Rheobatrachus vitellinus*) from CITES Appendix II, as proposed by Australia, as these species may not yet be extinct, and field studies are currently being conducted to identify remaining populations;

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35. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Parties to CITES and the CITES Secretariat.

(1)<http://www.cites.org/eng/cop/16/doc/E-CoP16-08-04.pdf>



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