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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations
Subject: AOB for the meeting of the Council (Environment) on 16 December 2025 - 20th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES CoP20)
(Samarkand, Uzbekistan, 24 November - 5 December 2025)
- Information from the Presidency and the Commission

The 20th meeting of the Conference of the Parties of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES CoP20) took place from 24 November to 5 December 2025 in Samarkand, Uzbekistan.

The conference attracted over 4600 participants representing the majority of 185 Parties to the Convention as well as intergovernmental and non-governmental observer organisations and media. The EU participated as a Party in its own right alongside the 27 Member States.

The conference was well organised, with Uzbek authorities, as the host country, and the CITES Secretariat making every effort to ensure a smooth running of the event. This was particularly important given a very ambitious agenda, with many working documents and 51 proposals to bring new animal and plant species under the scope of the Convention or to change the level of protection of species already listed.

CoP20 adopted 34 out of 51 proposals to list species in CITES appendices, regulating international trade in over 70 additional species. EU had proposed or co-sponsored eight proposals to amend the CITES appendices and six were adopted.

An important outcome of CoP20 was the adoption of a budget increase of 6.98%, which will allow the CITES Secretariat to continue doing the excellent work it undertakes, in particular providing support and capacity building to the Parties that are most in need.

The general spirit at the CoP was constructive. Many of the proposals were adopted by consensus although, as usual in CITES, voting solved the most difficult discussions.

EU priorities and results

The EU and its Member States acted on the basis of a Council decision adopted on 14 November 2025.

The EU submitted or co-sponsored seven proposals to list species for better protection in international trade (Appendix II) and one to move a species from Appendix II to I (where no commercial trade is allowed). These included eels, several shark species, sea cucumbers, water frogs and one plant. These efforts aimed to strengthen protection against unsustainable or illegal trade while promoting sustainable use where possible. The EU and its Member States actively advocated for these key results and the outcome was a blend of success and some failure. Other EU priorities were achieved, notably with regard to trade in elephants, use of Pernambuco wood and protection of the falcon.

- The use of CITES as an instrument to regulate unsustainable international trade in marine species was strengthened by adopting all seven proposals on sharks and rays, thereby including many additional species of sharks and rays, and one sea cucumber species in the lists of species protected by CITES.

- However, not all proposals on marine species proposed by the EU were adopted, including the proposal on the genus listing of anguillid eels and the proposal for six Actinopyga sea cucumber species. However, a strong resolution on strengthening sustainable management of all anguillid eels, including non-listed ones, was adopted. The resolution offers a good basis to work on the challenges faced by the species in the absence of the listing.
- The proposal on water frogs (*Pelophylax epeiroticus*, *Pelophylax lessonae*, *Pelophylax ridibundus* and *Pelophylax shqipericus*) was adopted by vote with a delayed implementation.
- The proposal on *Commiphora wightii* was reopened by Pakistan in plenary on the last day, with annotation exempting a series of finished products. After a final debate and a final secret ballot the proposal was adopted, which shows the importance of pushing until the end game.
- After several bilateral discussions with other Parties and stakeholders and going in to an in-session working group, the Brazilian proposal to include *Paubrasilia echinata* (Pernambuco), of which bows for stringed instruments are made, in Appendix I, was amended to remain in Appendix II with a revised annotation. The compromise is a good agreement for all, as it strengthens the protection of *Paubrasilia*, as requested by Brazil (including through a zero-export quota for specimens of wild source), while preserving movement of instruments for on-commercial use by musicians. This was made possible thanks to Brazil's willingness to cooperate, the great work from the EU and its Member States and high-level engagement from the EU.
- The proposal to except the population of *Saiga tatarica* of Kazakhstan from the existing listing in Appendix II was adopted after several bilateral meetings with other Parties and stakeholders – the amended proposal from Kazakhstan was a result of the collaborative and constructive dialogue with the EU and other Parties. It was possible to find a compromise between the objectives pursued by Kazakhstan and addressing the concerns of the EU regarding the negative effects that an unlimited reopening of trade could have on the conservation of the species in Kazakhstan and in other range states, such as Mongolia.

- With regard to conservation of elephants and rhinos, the proposals to reopen trade in stocks of government-held elephant ivory and rhinoceros-horns was rejected. The proposal to harmonise the conditions for trade in elephants was adopted by consensus, after the African region agreed to the amended proposal.
- The proposal on downlisting the peregrine falcon from Appendix I to Appendix II was rejected, very much in line with the EU's position.
- Discussions on issues related to sustainable use, livelihoods, indigenous people and local communities resulted in an agreement to continue work on engaging Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLC) in sustainable trade by deferring terminology discussions to allow the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) to finalize its glossary. Parties also agreed to publish non-binding Guidance on the CITES website to facilitate IPLC participation and invited international financial institutions to assist with developing supportive policies and institutions at national and local levels.
- CoP20 has been marked by a high number of listing proposals for endemic species, as well as discussions related to additional measures that might be necessary to address specific challenges linked to trade in such species. New decisions have been adopted to encourage consultation of countries of origin as well as to identify specific issues and, if necessary, adopt measures to address them at the next CoP.
- In addition, Parties discussed the extent of the obligations by the countries issuing permits to check whether the specimen was obtained legally, and, for captive-bred or artificially propagated specimens, whether the legal origin of the 'founder stock' (i.e. the first specimens that were used to establish a breeding operation) should also be verified. Work on this topic will continue ahead of the next CoP, with outcomes potentially having significant impact on numerous entities in the EU that export captive-bred CITES listed species.
- Speaking and voting with one united voice ensured strong negotiation power for the EU and its Member States. The EU and its Member States exercised the right to vote in accordance with the declaration of competence submitted prior to the CoP. In this context, it is important to stress the need for all EU MS to be present and accredited at CITES CoPs.

- The Presidency team (Denmark) led coordination on the spot and the experts from the Member States and the Commission led negotiations on listing proposals and many other agenda items. All were able to count on the support of other Member States' experts and on the good cooperation shown by all within the EU.
- When other parties questioned institutional arrangements regarding the EU's role, the Secretariat provided helpful legal guidance and a solution was found with good cooperation with Member States to avoid raising such issues in plenary.
- The EU actively reached out to key partners during the CoP. Two general meetings with stakeholders were held with a large attendance from representatives of diverse organisations, in addition to bilateral meetings that the Presidency, the Commission and the Member States held with many stakeholders and other Parties. A delegation of the European Parliament attended as observers. The Presidency and the Commission together hosted an EU reception for representatives of all delegations to the CoP.
- The EU and the Member States will now need to implement the decisions and commitments taken at the CoP, including through amendments to the Annexes to Council Regulation (EC) No 338/97 and to the Commission Regulation (EC) No 865/2006.