

CITES COP15 and CEEweb's contribution

The [15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties](#) to CITES took place between 13 – 25 of March 2010 in Doha, Qatar. CEEweb was lobbying mainly for strengthening the ivory trade moratorium established during the last CoP, to build opposition for American proposal for deletion of the bobcat from the CITES Appendices and to ensure proper regulation with regard of the internet wildlife trade.



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Report of the CITES CoP15

During the last two weeks in Doha, capital of Qatar, 15th Conference of the Parties (CoP) of Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) took place. It is believed by many, that CITES is one of the most important nature conservation convention. It seems to be true, as at the moment there are 175 CITES Parties (countries who signed this agreement), in which countries rules of this convention are implemented. On the other hand, some are indicating, that it is more and more difficult to include into CITES Appendices those really heavily exploited species and therefore the major sense of this Convention is slowly washing away. Sadly it has to be admitted, that last CoP seems to confirm this observation.

Without any doubts the biggest losers of the CoP 15th are marine species. All of the four proposals, for listing **nine new species of sharks** into CITES App II, were rejected. The biggest chances for listing had porbelagle shark, which initially was accepted during the Committee I session with big applause from the pro-conservation side of the room, but during the plenary session proposal was reopened and rejected. One sixth of all of the shark species are endangered. The main reasons for that are overfishing, shark finning and by-catch. According to the OCEANA, an international non-governmental organization focusing on the marine conservation, each year between 26 and 73 millions of sharks are finned. Fishermen are collecting only fins, as its price significantly exceeds the price of the shark meat. Crippled bodies of caught sharks (usually still alive) are discarded back to the water.

Parties of the CITES rejected also proposal for listing **blue-fin tuna** into Appendix I. This is the biggest tuna species. The price for a single individual on the auctions in Tokyo is over 100.000 USD! It is therefore not a surprise that the populations of this fish are going rapidly down due to the heavily overfishing - e.g. West Atlantic blue-fin tuna population has been reduced by more than 82% between 1970 and 2007.

Also proposal for listing of the 31 species of **red and pink corals** into Appendix II was not accepted by the Parties. These animals are heavily exploited for the jeweler industry. The biggest consumer of these species is the USA. Between 2001 and 2008 this country imported over 26 million worked pieces and over 50 tones of manufactured items!

The biggest loser of the CoP 15th was the **polar bear**. The USA proposal for up-listing this majestic mammal from the App II to App I was rejected during voting at Doha. According to U.S. Geological Survey in the nearest 45 years this species has gone to decline in two-third, as a result of global warming, due to which the sea ice -the habitat of this species - melts.

Although the painful defeats mentioned above, there were also some positive outcomes of the Conference in Qatar. The biggest achievement of the pro-conservation side was probably rejection of the Tanzanian and Zambian proposals regarding **African elephants**. Both countries submitted a

proposals to down-list the populations of elephants from App I to App II and to one off sell of their government owned stocks of ivory (together over 100 tones) to Japan and China. Proposals were strongly opposed by most nature conservation NGOs, 23 African elephant range states and many other Parties of CITES.



Zambian official delegate trying to convince the CITES Parties during the plenary session to agree for down-listing of the Zambian elephant population from the CITES App. I to App. II.

The most welcomed decision by CEEweb for Biodiversity was the decision about rejecting the USA proposal for deletion of the **bobcat** from the CITES Appendices. According to the USFWS, trade in this species is well controlled and the populations of this cat are in good conditions. It should be kept in mind, that bobcat was added to the CITES App II in 1977 to ensure effective control of the trade in other, similar in appearance felids - e.g. Iberian lynx (the most threatened cat species in the world) and Eurasian lynx (which globally is not threatened, but some of the European populations are endangered or even critically endangered). This look alike problem is still the main reason to keep bobcat in App II of CITES. Manual for the recognition of the bobcat from other lynx species - which was elaborated by the scientists of the Cornell University and mentioned in the USA proposal - does not reflect the whole diversity in fur patterns and coloration within these species and therefore it is useless as a tool for the proper identification of lynx specimens.

Furthermore, during CoP 15th some of the South and Central American herpetofauna was added to the CITES App II - four species of critically endangered **spiny-tailed iguanas** (from which three are endemic to Honduras and one to Guatemala) and five species of **tree frogs** (including very popular in pet trade red-eyed tree frog). Parties agreed also with consensus to add critically endangered Kaiser's newt, an Iranian endemic species to the CITES Appendix I. Within the last ten years population of this species has declined more than 80% mainly due to its illegal collecting for national and international trades and due to habitat loss.

Let's hope, that marine species will get more support from the CITES Parties during next CITES CoP, which is going to take place in Thailand! Otherwise it may happened, that we will loose another species soon.

For the purpose of CITES CoP 15th, CEEweb has issued a report "e-CEETES - Central & Eastern European e-Trade in Endangered Species", which can be downloaded [here](#).

The following link leads to a [list of the position](#) of Species Survival Network in regard to some of the proposals which were considered during the CITES COP15. CEEweb CITES WG fully supports these positions.

Moreover, a press release issued by CEEweb: "Animal protection and wildlife conservation organizations applaud European Parliament defence of endangered animals" can be found [here](#).

For more information about CEEweb CITES Working Group, contact [Borys Kala](#), programme coordinator

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