

Resolution Conf. 11.9

Conservation of and trade in freshwater turtles and tortoises in Asia and other regions

AWARE that the global international trade in freshwater turtles and tortoises involves millions of specimens each year, affecting more than 50 Asian Chelonian species and at least five North American species;

RECOGNIZING that nearly all Asian freshwater turtle and tortoise species are found in trade, and that a number of species are already included in Appendix I or II;

OBSERVING that the collection of freshwater turtles and tortoises is carried out through an extensive informal network of trappers, hunters and middlemen, and that collection efforts and export volumes have increased significantly, especially throughout much of Asia;

CONSIDERING that, in addition, turtles in general are vulnerable to overexploitation, because of biological characteristics such as late maturity, limited annual reproductive output, and high juvenile mortality, as well as habitat degradation and loss;

NOTING that there are two significant types of trade in freshwater turtles and tortoises, a high-volume trade in freshwater turtles and tortoises and their parts for consumption both as food and in traditional medicine, and a species-focused trade for pets;

CONCERNED that the movement of live freshwater turtles and tortoises to non-range states where introduction could occur could have adverse impacts on the native species of importing countries, and that little is known of such impacts by alien species;

CONSIDERING that little is known of the population status and ecological role of freshwater turtles and tortoises;

RECOGNIZING that trade from and transit through some countries that are not party to CITES could be a concern;

RECALLING Resolution Conf. 10.19 on traditional medicines;

RECALLING that Article III, paragraph 2 (c), Article IV, paragraph 2 (c) and Article V, paragraph 2 (b), of the Convention require that live specimens be so prepared and shipped as to minimize the risk of injury, damage to health, or cruel treatment;

NOTING that the shipment of living freshwater turtles and tortoises is often not conducted in accordance with the provisions of Articles III, IV and V of the Convention, and in particular that transport of living freshwater turtles and tortoises by air is often not conducted in accordance with IATA regulations;

RECOGNIZING that many countries have legislation concerning freshwater turtles and tortoises but that there are inadequacies in the scope and extent of coverage, and that enforcement is often insufficient;

ACKNOWLEDGING that the demand for and trade in freshwater turtles and tortoises poses a significant threat to wild populations, and that international cooperation is needed to urgently address these threats;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION

URGES:

- a) all Parties, especially Asian freshwater turtle and tortoise range, exporting and consuming States, to enhance and increase enforcement efforts with regard to existing legislation as a matter of urgency;
- b) all Parties, especially Asian freshwater turtle and tortoise range States, to assess current efforts to manage native freshwater turtle and tortoise populations, and improve those efforts as necessary, e.g. by establishing quotas;
- c) all Parties to develop and implement research programmes to identify the species involved in trade, and programmes to monitor and assess the impact of trade;
- d) all Parties whose national legislation is not sufficient to control effectively the unsustainable harvest of and trade in freshwater turtles and tortoises, to enact legislation to protect these species;
- e) all Parties involved in the trade in freshwater turtles and tortoises to examine their national legislation to ensure that treatment of these animals during transport is in accordance with the provisions of the Convention and, where relevant, with IATA regulations, and to take immediate action to correct any deficiencies in such legislation;

f) all Parties to increase public awareness of the threats posed to freshwater turtles and tortoises, including harvest and trade to supply the demand for food, traditional medicines and pets; and

g) all Parties to explore ways to enhance the participation of collectors, traders, exporters, importers and consumers in the conservation of and sustainable trade in freshwater turtle and tortoise species.

Decision Directed to the Secretariat

Regarding freshwater turtles and tortoises

11.150 The Secretariat shall:

- a) subject to available funds, convene a technical workshop in order to establish conservation priorities and actions to achieve sustainable trade in freshwater turtles and tortoises and invite the Chairman of the Animals Committee as well as representatives from range, exporting and consumer States and relevant inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations to participate in this workshop, to be held within 12 months after the 11th meeting of the Conference of the Parties. Recommendations elaborated at the Workshop on Trade in Terrestrial and Freshwater Turtles and Tortoises in Asia, held in Cambodia in December 1999, should be considered at the technical workshop. The findings and recommendations of this workshop should be reported to the Animals Committee by the Secretariat before the 12th meeting of the Conference of the Parties;
- b) encourage Parties, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and other appropriate bodies to assist capacity-building and training efforts throughout the Asian region with respect to the trade in freshwater turtles and tortoises; and
- c) encourage Parties and trading companies involved in the trade in freshwater turtles and tortoises to assist in raising funds for the workshop.

Decision Directed to the Animals Committee

Regarding freshwater turtles and tortoises

11.93 The Animals Committee shall consider the trade in specimens of CITES-listed freshwater turtles and tortoises in the context of the Review of Significant Trade, pursuant to Resolution Conf. 8.9 (Rev.).