

CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA



Sixty-seventh meeting of the Standing Committee
Johannesburg (South Africa), 23 September 2016

Interpretation and implementation matters

Exemptions and special trade provisions

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION RELATING TO CAPTIVE-BRED
AND RANCHED SPECIMENS –TRADE IN CAIMAN CROCODILUS FUSCUS SKINS
FROM COLOMBIA: REPORT OF COLOMBIA

1. This document has been submitted by the Management Authority of Colombia* in relation to item 16 of the agenda: Implementation of the Convention relating to captive-bred and ranched specimens - trade in Caiman crocodilus fuscus skins from Colombia: Report of Colombia.

BACKGROUND

2. Since 2011, pursuant to document SC61 Doc. 27 submitted by the European Union, the trade in specimens declared as captive-bred or ranched has been under review.
3. The working group set up for the purposes of that review put forward 14 examples of specimens in trade (including *Caiman crocodilus fuscus* from Colombia) in document SC62 Doc. 26, which states: "The examples cited below were not thoroughly researched by the working group and are not considered to be confirmed areas where there is improper implementation of CITES; rather, they are examples that may warrant further examination."
4. The sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties adopted Decisions 16.63 to 16.66, pursuant to which TRAFFIC was engaged by the Secretariat to produce document AC27 Doc. 17 (Rev. 1), which presented the results of the analyses for those 14 examples.
5. Subsequently, at the 27th meeting of the Animals Committee, a working group was set up with the mandate of reviewing that document intersessionally, before the 28th meeting of the Animals Committee. As a consequence of that review, the Committee adopted document AC28 Doc. 13.2 and the recommendations contained in document AC28 Com. 5 (Rev. by Sec.).
6. The 66th meeting of the Standing Committee decided in its document SC66 Com. 10 (Rev. by Sec.) to submit for consideration by the seventeenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties a draft Resolution relating to a review of trade in animal specimens reported as produced in captivity, as contained in Annex 2 of document COP 17 Doc. 32.
7. Also at the 66th meeting of the CITES Standing Committee, the European Union submitted document SC66 Inf. 20, on the trade in babilla skins originating from Colombia. During that Standing Committee meeting Colombia voluntarily pronounced "Colombia's Unilateral Declaration on *Caiman crocodilus fuscus*."

* The geographical designations employed in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the CITES Secretariat (or the United Nations Environment Programme) concerning the legal status of any country, territory, or area, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The responsibility for the contents of the document rests exclusively with its author.

8. In that Declaration, Colombia voluntarily undertook to complete a number of activities and to provide related reports, by various dates, with respect to:
- 1) Regulations and tracking mechanisms for monitoring the export of specimens of *Caiman crocodilus fuscus*;
 - 2) Status of the populations and prospects for establishing a ranching programme at pilot sites;
 - 3) Export quota based on a Non-Detriment Finding, for the ranched specimens at the pilot sites;
 - 4) Establishment and implementation of a marking system for the ranched specimens;
 - 5) Clarification of whether its national legislation currently prohibits the export of skins above a specified size, and
 - 6) If such a prohibition does exist, clarification on whether there are legal measures in place authorizing the confiscation of skins obtained illegally, or, if not, adoption of measures for seizing skins of a size higher than the established limit;
 - 7) Colombia will submit a written progress report to SC67.

PROGRESS

9. Within the context of the Unilateral Declaration, and specifically with respect to the fulfilment of its commitments 1, 5 and 6, Colombia by way of CITES Notification to the Parties No. 2016/017 reported that the country has an extensive regulatory framework to regulate and monitor the captive breeding of *Caiman crocodilus fuscus*, through the requirement to obtain an environmental licence, as well as to cover the processing (tanning), transformation (manufacture) and selling of the specimens that comprise the production chain, though the issue of permits, and that this set of regulations also establishes the mechanisms for monitoring those activities, thereby ensuring that exporting takes place in accordance with national rules and with CITES.
10. It should be pointed out that in the Notification referred to Colombia communicated that it was implementing new control measures and making adjustments to the existing ones, seeking to increase the effectiveness of its tracking of the captive breeding programme and the trade in the specimens obtained, such as checks to ensure that the skins are traceable when they are cut and when they are exported, with such checks being carried out by the Management Authority, as established under Resolutions 2651 and 2652 of 2015 and in force since January 2016, resulting in some cases in the application of preventive measures and the initiation of investigations.
11. Furthermore, as a mechanism for efficient tracking of the productive capacity of the facilities for captive breeding of *Caiman crocodilus fuscus*, work is proceeding jointly among the CITES Management Authority, the CITES Scientific Authorities, the National Environmental Licensing Authority and the trade, on the design of a system of criteria and indicators, which will be ready for implementation at the end of 2016, and which is based on the following factors:
- Status of closed-circle captive breeding;
 - Status of the management of the impacts associated with the development of closed-circle captive breeding activity;
 - Status of activities of the breeding facilities contributing to conservation.
12. Finally, Colombia clarified that its current legislation does not incorporate limits on the size of the skins that may be exported, but that it does regulate the obtaining of the environmental licence, the performance of the excision of the 10th caudal scutes of new-born animals on farms; the monitoring and tracking of the cutting of the skins and the monitoring and tracking of exports at the port of embarkation, carried out by Colombia's CITES Management Authority. It was also reported that on the basis of that information Notification to the Parties No. 2015/064 was issued, limiting the export of whole skins at any state of processing to those which present the scar button from the excision of the 10th caudal scute and to parts or fragments of skins finished prior to being exported, that have been monitored and tracked before cutting, in order to ensure the

traceability of the scar button, thus ensuring that they have indeed been produced in captive-breeding facilities, regardless of the size of such parts or fragments.

13. Subsequently, on 30 June Colombia provided the CITES Secretariat with information on the status of the populations of *Caiman crocodilus fuscus*, in order to fulfil commitments 2 and 3 of the Unilateral Declaration. Colombia submitted a summary of the studies carried out between 1994 and 2015 to assess the populations in various areas within the range of the species in the country.
14. While the country has carried out population assessments throughout the period stated, they have been performed in different locations and have not been characterized by continuity in time. They have been in the nature of spot-check population assessments, not running continuously with monitoring programmes. In such cases, the individual results of each study are observed, these being indicative of the presence at a given moment of wild populations varying in density and age structure; not allowing us to establish trends in population dynamics but acting as reference points for the studies that the country has undertaken since 2015 and that will be continued.
15. Furthermore, it was reported that some experience had been gathered on strategies for ranching this species, which had made it possible to demonstrate the possibility of improving hatching percentages, and to identify the potential for obtaining neonates of wild origin with the participation of local communities. These studies will continue, with the aim of turning them in the short term into strategies involving the communities in the production chain of the species and in the monitoring and tracking mechanisms, resulting in their assisting in the conservation and sustainable use of wild populations.
16. With respect to the prospects for establishing a ranching programme, and on that basis establishing an export quota, it should be clarified that, as is said in points 2 and 3 of the Declaration, the information that could be contributed had to do with the pilot sites at which Colombia had carried out an assessment of wild populations in 2015. On that understanding, and based on the partial results of the study carried out by the National University as forming part of the country's CITES Scientific Authorities, Colombia reported that the intended study needed at least three iterations of capture and marking, covering two seasons of climate. However, it was explained that that it had not been possible to carry out the third sampling, owing to climatic conditions arising from El Niño, and consequently it had not been possible to estimate either the number of individuals nor the survival rates for the overall population of each breeding ground, and therefore it had not been possible to draw up an estimate of population size and dynamics at the pilot sites.
17. These characteristics of each population are essential for making a quantitative assessment of numbers that might be harvested, either by means of calculations of the maximum sustainable harvest or by analysis of flexibilities in population projection. Consequently Colombia reported that a zero export quota had been established for the pilot sites. However, the high number of babillas captured and marked, as well as the sampling carried out systematically and in a standardized form, represent the beginnings of a serious study of the babilla populations in these four areas. In consequence, Colombia will continue this major effort to obtain the necessary data to enable appropriate decisions to be taken for the proper management of this resource, with a particular focus on the following activities to be carried out in the coming 12 to 18 months:
 - Continue with the monitoring of the pilot sites started by the National University, with the aim of obtaining population characteristics which are essential for the future inclusion in ranching programmes leading towards sustainable use of the species, after drafting of a conservation strategy based on recovery activities for populations and their habitat.
 - With support from the Scientific Authorities, starting in 2017 we will establish a programme of ongoing evaluation and monitoring of the status of *Caiman crocodilus fuscus* and its habitat at various pilot sites within the range of the species in our country, in order to determine population structure and trends, as well as other demographic aspects. This step is an essential prerequisite for their inclusion in the programme of ranching for commercial purposes and in order to determine an overall regional quota.
 - The Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development – MADS – is in the process of regulating the programme of monitoring and tracking of the use of ranching quotas, to be applied by the regional environmental authorities.
 - The MADS is drawing up the regulatory mechanism for the issue of ranching quotas among the closed-cycle breeding facilities.

- The MADS is preparing the plan for the participation of the civil population and the communities, as a part of the post-conflict process. This will be ready by the end of 2016. Establishment of the ranching programme is intended to enlist the local population as players in the use and conservation of the species as a way of enhancing their means of subsistence and their participation in tracking and monitoring activities.
 - On the basis of supporting studies, the MADS will examine the lifting of the prohibition referred to in Article 221 of Decree 1608 of 1978 “Governing the National Code on Renewable Natural Resources and Environmental Protection”, and Law 23 of 1973 “Granting special authority to the President of Colombia to issue the Code on Renewable Natural Resources and Environmental Protection and establishing other provisions” having to do with wild fauna, which relates to commercial hunting and closed seasons for wild fauna, enabling utilization of quotas for the ranching of *Caiman Crocodilus fuscus*.
 - With support from the CITES Secretariat, Colombia will draw up the origin code for use in the export of specimens originating from the country’s mixed-cycle programme.
 - The MADS is establishing instruments for paying compensation for the use of wild populations through ranching quotas, whose funds, together with those from the compensation obligations of closed-cycle breeding facilities within the framework of Law 611 of 2000, are a financial contribution towards work to evaluate, monitor and conserve wild populations of *Caiman crocodilus fuscus*.
 - Colombia will continue to work on preventing illegal trade in specimens of *Caiman crocodilus fuscus*, through the monitoring and tracking both of the closed-cycle farms and of exports at ports of embarkation.
18. As for the marking of specimens originating from a future ranching programme, it was reported that this would be regulated through the establishment of a marking system involving excision of a different caudal scute from that laid down for captive-bred animals.
 19. Finally, the actions of the Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development in the sphere of sustainable utilization of species such as *Caiman crocodilus fuscus* cannot be separated from the overarching efforts of the Government of Colombia to bring about peace and to consolidate in the post-conflict phase a process of sustainable development based primarily around sustainable utilization of biodiversity, to combat inequity and poverty.
 20. For that reason, the Plan of Work for the Implementation of the “Mixed-cycle Programme for *Caiman Crocodilus fuscus*” is an integral part of the strategic actions of immediate priority for the Government of Colombia and forms part of what has been called the management of the post-conflict phase. In that light, the Government of Colombia, acting through the Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development, as the CITES Management Authority, with support from the Scientific Authorities, will persevere in its efforts to establish the programme of mixed use of the species *Caiman crocodilus fuscus*, combining the captive-breeding and the farm-breeding models. For that reason, it maintains its commitment to continue strengthening administrative, regulatory and technical aspects, not only under present conditions but also in the context of the peace negotiations and those on the management of the post-conflict phase, and more specifically in strategies for sustainable utilization of biodiversity.