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Implementation: The experience of CITES

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By video link

Treaty basics

Adopted in Washington D.C. 3 March 1973. Entered into force on 1 July 1975. Currently 179 Parties

An operational rather than a framework convention with decades of implementation experience

A trade regulation instrument and a conservation instrument - with clear, well crafted and specific obligations to ensure that trade in 35,000+ listed animal and plant species is legal, sustainable and traceable

Obligations imposed on exporting and importing States

Stricter domestic measures allowed



Decision making

Does not work on a consensus model – if no consensus matter goes to a 2/3 majority vote on substantive matters (voting patterns and blocks are fluid)

International cooperation + national implementation – central role of designated national CITES authorities

Science-policy interface embedded in the Convention

Interpretation and evolution of the Convention through CoP Decisions (actions) and Resolutions (interpretation) over time – on science, legislation, compliance, enforcement and the involvement of stakeholders

Significant role given to the Secretariat and Committees



Incentives and compliance

Implementation links to MDGs, Rio+20, Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and Aichi Targets and to peoples livelihoods

No dedicated financial mechanism - GEF role

External financial support – government, intergovernmental, nongovernmental

Private sector – Technology and Innovation Fund

Fees for issuing permits and certificates

Compliance measures – reporting levels of trade, legislation, enforcement – trade suspensions possible



Implementation approach

Small but catalytic Secretariat

Emphasis on partnerships – International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (CITES, INTERPOL, UNODC, World Bank, WCO), UNCTAD, FAO, ITTO etc

Links to other processes and entities

- WCO and Single Window for electronic permitting
- UNODC – UN Conventions against Transnational Organized Crime and Corruption
- NBSAPs and UNDAFs
- Sub-regional agreements – Vicuña, WENs etc



Tools for effectiveness/confidence/trust

Programme on monitoring the illegal killing of elephants (MIKE) - site-based monitoring across several continents, to measure the impact of CITES decisions and inform CITES decision-making

CITES trade data base – 13,000,000 trade transactions

Targeted capacity building efforts - Virtual College – online training



Differentiation

Convention does not provide for differentiated responsibilities

Decision making under the Convention, however, recognizes 'respective capabilities' in a pragmatic manner and on a case-by-case basis

Under the CITES compliance procedures:

- when the Standing Committee decides upon one or more compliance measures, it takes into account the capacity of the Party concerned, especially developing countries, and in particular the least developed and small island developing States and Parties with economies in transition
- the Secretariat advises and assists Parties in complying with obligations under the Convention



Conclusion

A well-crafted, focused and pragmatic convention that has been usefully interpreted over time to adapt to changing circumstances and problems which arise

Voting has been used in certain cases to ensure that the Convention has moved forward and has not been prevented from making progress

National Authorities are the 'engine room' of the Convention and have ensured its success

This 40 year old Convention is a visionary instrument and paragraph 203 of *The Future We Want* shows its continued relevance – *standing at the intersection between trade, the environment and development*



CITES Secretariat Geneva

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