



CITES Secretary-General, Ms Ivonne Higuero looked stunning in her Panamanian traditional dress during a media press briefing yesterday. She outlined the importance of CITES to help conserve endangered wild fauna and flora. Then talked about key issues to be discussed at COP19. Journalist didn't get the chance to ask her questions.



Africans who obtained a master's degree at Spanish University, specialising in the management and conservation of species in trade, are attending CITES COP19. They said that they now have in-depth knowledge on international trade in wildlife products.



THE SOURCE

ISSUE NO.2 15 November 2022

CITES Cop19 Notes

Panama City, Panama

Compiled by Emmanuel Karo, African environmental journalist, under the sponsorship of the Ivory Education Institute.

ZIMBABWE FAILS TO JUMP OUT OF THE CITES 'BED' WHERE IT CONTINUES TO BE NEEDLESSLY 'BITTEN' BY ANTI-IVORY TRADE 'LICE'



Part of the Zim team that fought but failed to jump out of the CITES 'bed' full of 'lice' that are harmfully 'biting' the people and their wildlife.

Yesterday, Zimbabwe (Zim) failed to jump out of the UN CITES 'bed' full of anti-ivory trade 'lice.' The 'lice' have 'bitten' Zimbabweans and their wildlife for close to half a century since the formation of CITES.

The jump from the CITES 'bed of biting lice' was planned before the Cop19 lunch break yesterday, when the elephant over-populated Southern African country of Zim proposed to have CITES rule 25.6 changed to allow parties to have their votes *weighted* according to the size of their elephant populations.

Zim wanted one vote to represent 1% of the world's total population of a particular species. Although Botswana, Indonesia, and South Africa argued that Zim's proposal be given serious consideration, other African countries and Western nations unsurprisingly, shot down the proposal. Without diligent lobbying in the capitals of CITES member states for such a radical change in a UN agency's voting patterns, nothing is likely to happen at a Conference of the Parties.

Voting, after all, is one of the most sensitive subjects of UN procedure. The UN Security Council has awarded 5 vetoes to just 5 countries — and never altered the five, despite great changes in international economic and political circumstances since 1948. Anyone familiar with the UN knows that one 'NO' or 'YES' in the Security Council cancels the interests and desires of 192 other countries in the world.

Nigeria opposed the Zim proposal arguing that at times African countries' elephant population information is outdated and also unavailable, making the process of weighing votes according to the population size of a species is complicated and unreliable.

Although Zimbabwe argued that this proposal be seriously considered because the International Tropical Timber Agreement (ITTA), now known as ITTO uses the same approach in its deliberations, Western nations led by the USA and UK easily '*masked*' their Security Council sensitivities by arguing that the ITTA is not a UN agency. Therefore, Zimbabwe's proposal was unprecedented. It was rejected.

No one raised the delicate matter of the UN Security Council in trumpeting the UN principle that UN democratic voting procedure demands that nations are given equal voting powers of one vote per country, without regard to its powers and wealth, etc.

Nevertheless, former CITES Secretary-General and current President of IWMC-World Conservation Trust, Eugene Lapointe, said: "Zimbabwe sent a strong signal that the Southern African countries are fed up for being punished for having been successful with their conservation programmes."

U.S.A. SUSPENDS SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL'S SUGGESTION TO SELECTIVELY LOOK AT COMMERCIAL INTERESTS TO DISQUALIFY ONE FROM HOLDING CITES CHAIR OF COMMITTEES POSITION

This week, a member of the Sustainable Use Coalition (SUCO) demonstrated that he always has his thinking cap on when he made an important suggestion in the SC75th meeting that made the U.S. Government appreciate its logic for the need for an all-inclusive disclosure of conflicts of interests before one can be considered for appointment as CITES Committee member chair.



SUCO member, Dr Stephen Palos applauded for being alert and keeping his 'thinking cap on' at CITES COP19.

This followed the discussion on the criteria to be used to ensure that people who need to be elected as members of the Animals and Plants Committees, the following procedures apply:

- Parties proposing candidates as members or alternate members are to request that, together with their names and curricula vitae, each candidate provides a declaration of Interest which should be circulated to the parties of the region concerned before the meeting of the conference by the parties at which the members will be elected.
- In that declaration in the standard disclosure form agreed by the CITES Standing Committee, the candidate should disclose any current financial interest that might call into question his or her impartiality, objectivity or independence in carrying out his or her duties as a member or alternate.

In its contribution to the criteria that should be used to assess eligibility to become a member of the Plants and Animals Committee, Israel proposed that the word “commercial” be added to the text. But Dr Stephen Palos, a member of SUCO from South Africa said, “This is sinister, as all trade is commercial and CITES is a trade convention. What it would do is suggest that commercial interest is corruptible, whereas other interests, such as philosophical interest [including anti-use values that ignore and harm other nations’ conservation and socioeconomic needs], are not.”

At that point, the U.S.A. Government representative recognised the value of Dr Palos’ intervention and suggested suspending the support for Israel’s exclusive focus on commercial interests as the only reason to disqualify people from becoming members of the Plants and Animals Committees.

IFAW CEO CONFIRMS THE IMPORTANCE OF A PEOPLE-CENTRED CONSERVATION APPROACH

With the slogan, ‘Animals, and People Thriving Together’ one would think that the International Fund For Animal Welfare still has the old approach of exclusively focusing on animal rights without giving equal attention to human rights.



IFAW CEO, Azzedine Downes

However, the CEO for IFAW, Azzedine Downes, said yesterday that IFAW recognises the need to ensure that communities derive sustainable benefits from their natural resources, including wildlife in order to entice them to conserve them.

His explanation sounded like IFAW might have made a policy shift away from the animal rights agenda it has long been known for.

Pressed to confirm whether or not IFAW had made a policy shift from an animal rights focus to a new focus that balances the need for animals and human beings, Mr Downes said that IFAW policy had not changed.

THE SOURCE notes that, if one shifts the IFAW slogan: *Animals and People Thriving Together*’ to: *People and Animals Living Together*’ – a difference in meanings and focus might emerge.