

An open letter to CITES Secretary General, Ms. Ivonne Higuero

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CITES Secretariat
Palais des Nations
Avenue de la Paix 8-14
1211 Genève 10
Switzerland

4 September 2019

Dear Madame Secretary General:

We at the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC), International Wildlife Management Consortium – World Conservation Trust (IWMC), the European Pet Organization (EPO), Parrot Breeders of Southern Africa (PASO), Ornamental Fish International (OFI), Livelihood International, the Sustainable Use Coalition, the Fur Institute of Canada, Americas Fur Resources Council, the Ivory Education Institute (IEI), the International Professional Hunters Association (IPHA), the Private Rhino Owners Association (PROA), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Herpetologie und Terrarienkunde (DGHT) stand together in protest at the deficit of time and discussion that was allotted for certain flora and fauna at the recent CITES meeting. It was alarmingly apparent that there were manifest discrepancies in which species were being appropriately deliberated, and which were not. The listing of a species in CITES is a substantial and impactful action that merits careful consideration, and the voices of stakeholder observers, regardless of their size or affluence, deserved to be heard.

For the second straight CoP, proponent groups for flora and charismatic megafauna were provided significant time to hold the floor regarding the proposed listing, up-listing or down-listing of species of concern to them, while the responsible committee limited debate and took no NGO comments on the proposed listing of less-charismatic species including reptiles and arachnids. The inescapable impression is that the concerns of wealthy NGOs are important, while those of smaller NGOs are not. Even more egregious is that these incomplete deliberations meant that multiple decisions were made without consideration of the full data and facts, prioritizing spin over science.

Those observers for whom attendance at a CITES CoP consumes a substantial portion of their resources deserve to have their views considered equally with those observers who bring large delegations, sponsor side events or hand out stuffed animals. We do not advocate curtailing the comments from megafauna NGOs, but rather equitably allocating time to those concerned with other species, as well.

We assert that the CoP should determine the length of the meeting based on the number of species to be considered, rather than fitting all listing proposals into a specified time period. Alternatively, the CoP could decree that it will only consider a fixed number of proposals, to be selected from those submitted

prior to a predetermined deadline. This would cause parties to prioritize the species that they offer and ensure that the Secretariat receives comprehensive listing proposals in a timely manner.

CITES was conceived in a spirit of international cooperation and respect, and this spirit should remain—without any doubt—the basis for all upcoming decision-making processes. We urge the Secretariat to ensure that equitable and thoughtful deliberation is allowed for all flora and fauna, so that CITES can succeed in ethically and impartially constructing practical solutions to the increasingly complex wildlife trade and conservation issues that face our world.

With respect,

Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council
International Wildlife Management Consortium – World Conservation Trust
European Pet Organization
Parrot Breeders of Southern Africa
Ornamental Fish International
Livelihood International
Sustainable Use Coalition
Fur Institute of Canada
Americas Fur Resources Council
Ivory Education Institute
International Professional Hunters Association
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Deutsche Gesellschaft für Herpetologie und Terrarienkunde