Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES): accession of the EU

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PURPOSE: to approve the accession of the European Union to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

PROPOSED ACT: Council Decision.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: Council may adopt the act only if Parliament has given its consent to the act.

BACKGROUND: the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) to which 178 countries, including all Member States, are a party, is a major international instrument aiming at protecting endangered species of fauna and flora through controls on international trade in specimens of those species.

It covers about 35 000 species, which are listed in three Appendices, according to the degree of protection they need. All import, export, re-export and introduction from the sea of species covered by the Convention has to be authorized through a licensing system.

The initial text of the Convention foresaw that CITES membership would be limited to States only. At the second extraordinary meeting of the Conference of the CITES Parties in Gaborone, Botswana, on 30 April 1983, an amendment to the Convention was agreed. This amendment stipulated that the Convention shall be open for accession by regional economic integration organizations constituted by sovereign States which have competence in respect of the negotiation, conclusion and implementation of international agreements in matters transferred to them by their Member States and covered by this Convention.

The Gaborone amendment entered into force on 29 November 2013, after its ratification by two-thirds of the 80 countries that were Parties at the time of adoption of the amendment. The European Union has been to date an observer to CITES and the entry into force of the Gaborone amendment now allows the European Union to become a Party to CITES.

CONTENT: the proposal for the Council Decision aims at **approving the accession of the European Union to CITES**.

The matters covered by CITES relate to areas (protection of the environment, trade, internal market, customs) which are subject to Union law. CITES provisions have been implemented in a harmonized manner at EU level since 1984 and are now regulated through Council Regulation (EC) No 338/97 and various Commission Regulations.

The accession of the European Union to CITES is a logical and necessary step to ensure that the European Union is fully able to pursue its objectives under its environmental policy.

BUDGETARY IMPLICATION: CITES, like other Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) administered by UNEP, is financed through assessed contributions paid by all Parties and that are based on the UN Scale of Assessment adopted every three years by the General Assembly.

It is expected that for CITES, the Conference of Parties will decide that, following the accession of the European Union to CITES, **the EU should pay 2.5% of the total amount of the CITES Trust fund annually**.

The next CoP will only meet in 2016 but the EU will be expected to make a contribution in 2014 and 2015 (approximately **EUR 112 000**, 2.5% of the total amount of the CITES Trust fund for 2015), in line with the practice that Parties should contribute as soon as they accede.