Protection of wild fauna and flora: control of trade of species

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Significant improvements to the protection of some 30 000 animals and plants threatened with extinction worldwide were approved today by the Environment Committee in a trade regulation measure which will be of great interest to environmental groups, animal welfare organizations, pet-lovers, zoos and large-scale plant growers. Animal species covered include the snow leopard and the northern hairy-nosed wombat. Plants include certain types of agave and aloe. Under the cooperation procedure, the committee approved with amendments the Council's common position on changes proposed by the Commission to the way in which the European Union implements the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (the CITES Convention). In the light of its amendments, it is recommending approval at second reading by the Full House. The committee's recommendation included accepting a proposal to divide the endangered species into four categories with varying levels of protection ranging from an outright trade ban to monitored trading. In the face of opposition from the Commission, however, the committee amended the common position to include bird species "in relation to which it has been established that live specimens in trade are unlikely to survive shipment or are unlikely to survive in captivity for a considerable proportion of their potential life span". Trade in such species, the committee considers, should require prior authorization by Member State authorities. The committee also adopted an amendment which foresees the possibility of sanctions "if the standards for caring for live specimens during transport and quarantine are not complied with". It is calling on the Commission to submit a report to Parliament every two years.