Resolution on the EU strategic objectives for the 14th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), The Hague, 3-15 June 2007

2007/2563(RSP) - 24/05/2007 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the EU strategic objectives for the 14th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), to be held in The Hague, 3-15 June 2007.

Parliament called on the Commission and the Member States to use the precautionary principle as the leading principle for all their decisions on working documents and listing proposals, also taking into account the user-pays principle, the ecosystem approach and traditional conservation principles. They must ensure that any decisions aimed at enhanced coordination between CITES and other biodiversity-related conventions do not undermine the nature of CITES as a global conservation agreement or CITES" strict conservation measures. Parliament strongly opposed the use of secret ballots and was disappointed that the CITES Standing Committee had not come forward with proposals to exclude the possibility of using secret voting in the decision-making process of the Convention.

Welcoming the proposals by Kenya and Mali to establish a 20-year moratorium on all ivory trade, Parliament recalled, however, that the proposed moratorium would not affect the decision taken at CoP 12 to allow, subject to conditions, a one-off sale of government-owned ivory stocks from Botswana, Namibia and South Africa. The conditions for trade laid down in those decisions have still not been fulfilled.

Members stressed that acceptance of the proposal by Kenya and Mali would give time to refine MIKE (Monitoring Illegal Killing of Elephants) and allow the international community to change the focus of the debate from the ivory trade to the real threats to elephants and their habitats. Pointing out that seizures of illegal ivory have increased significantly since CoP 13, and 20 000 or more elephants are estimated to be killed annually, Parliament urged that the decision taken at CoP 13 for the implementation of an action plan for the control of trade in African elephant ivory, including reporting requirements, be fully executed by African governments in collaboration with NGOs. In addition, the Commission was asked to support efforts to improve tiger conservation, for example by identifying legislative gaps, implementation difficulties, and enforcement and capacity weaknesses, and to report on progress in implementing the caviar labelling requirements.

Parliament went on to urge the EU to support certain proposals for the CoP. These include the proposal by Kenya and Mali to establish a 20-year moratorium on all ivory trade. The list of proposals that the EU was urged to reject include Japan’s proposal in CoP 14 Doc. 51 that all cetaceans in Appendix I that are managed by the IWC be included in the Periodic Review of the Appendices, that the CITES Resolution Conf. 11.4 setting out the relationship between the IWC and CITES be amended and that the IWC provide scientific data and advice on CITES listings of whale species. It also includes the replacement of all existing annotations to the listings of the Botswana, Namibian, South African and Zimbabwe elephant populations in CITES Appendix II to allow the establishment of annual export quotas for trade in raw ivory. Parliament understood that CITES could best contribute to the livelihoods of the poor through ensuring enforcement of the convention and preventing unregulated and illegal trade. It therefore called on

the Commission and Member States to withdraw CoP 14 Doc.14, "CITES and Livelihoods". The Commission and Member States were asked to step up international cooperation in the implementation of CITES by developing a strategy with identified priorities to facilitate implementation and by providing additional incentives and financial support, particularly for training and technical assistance in species identification and enforcement measures. Parliament recalled that the EU is one of the largest markets for the illegal wildlife trade and that compliance varies between Member States. It asked the Commission and Member States to step up coordination of their efforts to enforce EU wildlife trade legislation.

Lastly, it urged those parties to CITES which have not done so to ratify the Gaborone Amendment, which would allow the European Community to become a contracting party to CITES.