

## **50 YEARS OF CITES: ENVIRONMENT**

**NEWS:** The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) marks 50 years since it entered into force .

### **WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?**

CITES, in force since July 1, 1975, is a global treaty regulating international trade in endangered species to ensure it is legal, sustainable, and traceable.

Marking 50 years in 2025, it protects over 40,000 species through a permit system and classification under three Appendices.

### **CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora)**

- CITES, also known as the **Washington Convention**, was **signed on March 3, 1973**, and **came into force on July 1, 1975**, marking **50 years in 2025**.
- It was originally **conceived in 1963** at a meeting of the **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)**.
- CITES is the **first global multilateral agreement** to regulate the **international trade of endangered wildlife and plants**.

### **Membership and Institutional Framework**

- CITES currently has **185 Parties**: 184 countries and the **European Union**.
- **India became a party** to CITES in **1976**.
- The **CITES Secretariat** is administered by the **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)** and is headquartered in **Geneva, Switzerland**.
- Parties designate **Management Authorities** to issue permits and **Scientific Authorities** to assess species status and trade impact.

### **Objectives and Purpose**

- CITES aims to ensure that **international trade in wild fauna and flora** is:
  - **Legal**
  - **Sustainable**
  - **Traceable**
- It supports **livelihoods of local communities**, national economies, and contributes to the **UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.
- It is a response to **overexploitation, habitat loss, and illegal trade**, which push many species toward extinction.

### **Trade Regulation Mechanism**

- **CITES regulates trade through a system of permits and certificates** that are required for:
  - **Export**
  - **Import**
  - **Re-export**
  - **Introduction from the sea**
- The convention applies to **live and dead animals and plants**, as well as their **parts and derivatives** (e.g., ivory, timber, medicines, leather goods).

### **Appendices Under CITES for Species Protection**

CITES categorizes over **40,000 species** into three appendices based on their conservation status and trade impact:

#### **1. Appendix I**

- Species **threatened with extinction**.
- **Trade is generally prohibited**, except for non-commercial purposes such as scientific research.
- Examples: Tigers, Asiatic lions.

#### **2. Appendix II**

- Species **not necessarily endangered**, but trade must be regulated to prevent overexploitation.
- Also includes “**look-alike species**” that resemble those of conservation concern.
- Examples: Mahogany, certain orchids, African lions.

#### **3. Appendix III**

- Species **protected in at least one country** that has requested other CITES members to help control its trade.
- Trade is allowed with **proper certification or permits**.

### **Amendments and Decision-Making**

- Changes to **Appendices I and II** are made only at **Conference of Parties (CoP)** meetings based on **scientific and trade criteria**.
- **Parties vote** on amendment proposals.
- **Appendix III changes** can be made **unilaterally** by any Party without consensus.

### **Why CITES Matters: Significance and Impact**

- **Wildlife trade** is a **multi-billion-dollar industry**, involving live animals/plants and derived products (e.g., leather, medicines, ornaments).
- CITES is crucial in preventing species loss by providing an **international legal framework** for sustainable wildlife trade.
- Promotes **global cooperation**, essential as wildlife trade crosses international boundaries.

### Achievements of CITES

- Developed tools like the **CITES Trade Database**, the **largest and most comprehensive source** of wildlife trade data globally.
- **Helped recover critically endangered species** such as:
  - African Elephants
  - Pangolins
  - Crocodiles
- Launched programs like **Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE)**:
  - Active in over **70 sites across Africa and Asia**.
  - Covers around **half of the global elephant population**.
  - Data from MIKE has shown a **decline in illegal killings**, especially in Africa.

### Collaborations and Complementary Role

- CITES works in collaboration with other UN agencies:
  - **FAO** for fisheries and sustainable marine life trade.
  - **ESCAP** for technical support in Asia-Pacific.
  - **UNDP** for capacity building and youth engagement.

### Conclusion

CITES has evolved into one of the most effective **multilateral environmental agreements**, balancing **wildlife conservation** with **economic development**, ensuring species survival, promoting **global legal cooperation**, and reinforcing **biodiversity goals**.

Source: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2025/07/50-years-of-cites-protecting-wildlife-from-trade-driven-extinction/>