

## **Crocodile Specialist Group Steering Committee Meeting**

(Darwin, Australia; 24 May 2004)

**Present:** H. Messel, P. Ross, D. Jelden, G. Webb, J. Hutton, K. Van Jaarsveldt, A. Velasco, R. Ferguson, D. Ashley, A. Woodward, Y. Takehara, A. Larriera, J. Thorbjarnarson, F. Huchzermeyer, V. Lance, R. Elsey, C.H. Koh, C. H. Giam, L. Verdade, M. Muñiz. There were numerous CSG observers.

**CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION.** Professor Messel opened the meeting at 9:00 am and welcomed Mr. H. Sakamoto of JLIA and Dr. Nicholas Pilcher, Chairman of the Marine Turtle SG as visiting observers. Special thanks were expressed to Grahame Webb and his Darwin group for organizing the 17th Meeting and the Steering Committee meeting. The Chairman confirmed his previously announced intention, after 15 years in the chair, not to seek reappointment at the expiration of his current term in November 2004. After a process of solicitation of member views on suitable candidates he would recommend to SSC was described. The chairman indicated his intention to finalize the discussion and recommend a chairman elect to begin transitional operations at this meeting.

**CSG BUSINESS.** A written report from the Executive Officer was presented and accepted.

The report provided annual financial reports for 2003 and year to date 2004. The CSG has a current balance of \$104,438 and no outstanding obligations. Details on current account operation and balances, membership, office operations, fundraising, general operations, and the CSG website were presented. The successful production and distribution of the proceedings of the last meeting were presented. A summary of activity with National Geographic Television – Crocodile Chronicle series was given. CSG received support totaling \$34,000 from NGS between 2000 and 2004 including fees for use of photo images.

The relationship was not renewed by mutual consent after the termination of the series in December 2003. While financially rewarding, the relationship did not result in significant influence of CSG on program content. The newsletter was produced under the guidance of the expanded editorial committee and with paid assistance for layout and assembly since December 2002.

The chairman commented on the importance of maintaining a healthy financial position and hoped that patrons would continue their support as CSG changed its leadership.

Grahame Webb introduced the concept of a review of core CSG business. Without formal corporate or NGO status, and with impending leadership change, the group needs to review its goals, function, and aspirations.

Grahame expressed his view that the minimum obligation of the CSG was to provide the IUCN, through the SSC, with expert scientific opinion and advice on the conservation of crocodilians, and to assist the IUCN to fulfill its mission with regard to crocodilians and their habitats and indicated that a workshop during the 17th Working Meeting would solicit and compile member views. The main activities of CSG are accomplished by the independent actions of members. The chairman noted the need for information derived from member research as the basis for conservation action and that the conservation of crocodilians in the wild was the core business of CSG.

**REGIONAL REPORTS.**

Grahame Webb presented a short written summary of recent activity in the **East Asian - Australian Oceania** region. High points included the current discussion in Australia of a proposal for safari hunting of 25 crocodiles/year in Northern Territory that faces opposition from animal rights groups. The CSG has already expressed support for the concept to the Australian Government. The situation in Cambodia was noted and deferred to discussion later in the agenda. CSG's efforts to encourage Papua New Guinea to resume crocodile surveys with support of CITES Animals Committee were successful. A letter from CSG member B. Pitu on current crocodile-human conflict problems in Solomon's was referred to the regional vice chair. Recent political instability prevented active CSG intervention.

**South Asia:** Nikhil Whitaker presented a written report on behalf of Rom Whitaker. In India, increased conflict between people and crocodiles was a growing concern. There remains a large stock of captive crocodiles; the captive breeding program is under-funded; and the program in Uttar Pradesh was closed. The situation of *C. porosus* in the Andamans was improved with a variety of size classes observed and reduction in previous illegal removal.

Sri Lanka continues to be the location with the most stable population of *C. palustris*, with new sites confirmed in the north. In Bangladesh, the development of a crocodile farm is approved and the farm will begin operations. Integrating this activity with crocodile conservation and the independent activities of government and academic sectors is needed. Additional information on status of crocodiles in Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan, and Iran was presented.

**Africa:** Richard Fergusson advised that Namibia has submitted a proposal to CoP 13 to downlist *C. niloticus*. Limited utilization through trophy hunting is envisaged. With limited habitat and populations but good management capacity, this proposal will probably be OK. Zambia recently conducted surveys to support a request for a limited export quota of PAC and sport-hunted trophies. Mozambique was also rumored to be considering increasing sport hunting to 1,000 specimens, but the unresponsive nature of the Management Authority and complete lack of data cause concern for this proposal.

In Madagascar, activities focused by the CITES review of ranching programs have allowed development of a draft management plan that is now in the government approval process. At the IUCN World Parks Congress in South Africa last year, Madagascar's president committed to increasing the percentage of land in protected areas. A letter from CSG to Madagascar requesting inclusion of wetland crocodile habitat in this action was approved. (R. Fergusson drafted for H. Messel).

Tanzania had reported results of a crocodile survey in 2003 that, in addition to the normal survey areas, addressed the crocodile status in some of the harvest areas. This was an improvement over previous surveys. Some populations have increased since the previous surveys, while others have declined.

R. Fergusson reported for the rest of Africa under separate agenda items.

**Europe:** Dietrich Jelden reported that the wild population of crocodiles in Europe remained stable (at zero!), but captive stocks in zoos and personal collections continued to grow. He recognized and thanked Mr. Krall representing the manufacturing sector of the German industry who had provided support to CSG. The German government also provided funding to support the recent CITES Mission to Paraguay. Dietrich was now representing EU on CITES Standing Committee and presented several CITES-related issues. The development of a process to facilitate the temporary transfer of trade samples was now resolved. CITES Secretariat will submit, to the 13th CoP of CITES in October 2004, a document that had been adopted by the Standing Committee in March.

CITES was adopting definitions and procedures for sustainable use based on a document adopted at the 7th Meeting of the Convention on Biological Diversity, and CSG had an opportunity to assist IUCN to support this initiative. The next CITES CoP will also discuss results of a recent workshop held in Germany that would facilitate linkage of species-based and site-based conservation and address CSG concerns for endangered crocodylians of low commercial value.

Dietrich introduced John Caldwell of UNEPWCMC, who proposed a revision of the Crocodile Farming and Ranching Directory. The directory could be compiled by WCMC in six months for distribution by CD-Rom and on the Internet for an estimated cost of EU 30,000. Caldwell requested support from the crocodile industry for this work.

Ralf Sommerlad presented a written report on the *Tomistoma* Task Force Project in Europe. A registry, genetic analysis, and studbook approach to conserving captive *T. schlegelii* are proposed.

**North America:** Allan Woodward gave a brief synopsis of the continued good condition of alligator populations throughout their range and presented recent egg collection and production data. *C. acutus* in South Florida are reported to be steadily increasing. Manuel Muñiz presented an extensive written report on activity in Mexico (see previous issue of CSG News – Vol. 23, No. 1, pp. 21- 24). The national survey program continued to confirm the strong status of *C. acutus* in many coastal locations and *C. moreletii* throughout its range, including some reported range extensions in the northeastern states of Mexico. These results were being compiled into a request for the USA to downlist *C. moreletii* on the Endangered Species Act. Mexico continues to consolidate its position as a major processing center, importing 250,000 skins/year. Additional information on national and regional coordination were presented.

**Central America:** Manuel Muñiz reported on recent reports of surveys in Nicaragua and Costa Rica and interest in crocodile (caiman) farming in El Salvador. Alvaro Velasco reported continuing surveys in Honduras and in Cuba.

**South America:** Alejandro Larriera reported that Argentina now has ranching programs in three states. Brazil has recently recognized the non-endangered status of all its crocodylian species and changed its national listings. This followed extensive work by Luciano Verdade. Venezuela recently resumed sustainable harvest of wild caimans with a quota this year of 70,000 skins. Research on *C. latirostris* in Uruguay continues by CSG member Claudio Bortiero. Discussion of Paraguay, Bolivia, and Colombia were deferred to later in the agenda.

#### **SPECIES AND TASK FORCE REPORTS.**

Nikhil Whitaker presented a recent paper by R. Sharma and D. Basu detailing the apparent decline of gharial in the Chambal sanctuary in India and describing the various factors involved. A decline of approximately 40% in five years is documented. This is the direct result of people's activities, particularly illegal fishing. The Chairman expressed deep concern and indicated that CSG's role should be to encourage the Government of India to react. Unfortunately, India has been unresponsive to several recent CSG requests. After discussion it was decided to try to use the IUCN Congress resolution process to capture Indian NGO and state government support. The success of a similar strategy in regard to Chinese alligators was noted. A working group of D. Jelden, Nikhil Whitaker, Dr. Giam, and Dr. Rashid was asked to develop a draft resolution and strategy for CSG.

**Bangladesh crocodiles:** The development of crocodile farm in Bangladesh was reported, and some difficulty and criticism from the Dept. of Forestry and university sources was noted. A suggestion for the commercial sector to promote a national crocodile management and conservation association was made. Perran Ross asked to pursue this with the interested parties.

**Chinese alligators:** Mr. Ruan of the State Forestry Administration reported on Chinese government efforts to support Chinese alligator conservation and the national conservation plan. Substantial government funds were allocated to the two captive breeding centers. A trial release of three specimens was underway to test reintroduction techniques, conducted by Anhui University in conjunction with Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS). Mr. Ruan noted that the CSG's Chinese alligator fund was no longer growing and asked if the fund could be reactivated and its application to the national program discussed. John Thorbjarnarson of WCS reported the most recent results of the reintroduction trial, including the re-discovery of the third released animal that had an intermittently operating radio transmitter but was alive and well. The released specimens have therefore successfully survived their first winter hibernation period.

**Cambodia:** Mr. Nao Thuok, Director of Fisheries, presented an update of activities and concerns. Recent surveys report crocodiles in ten provinces, but all populations are very small and subject to illegal capture. Workshops conducted with government officials and farmers have addressed the problem, and new procedures for inventory and regulation were adopted. New legislation has been drafted and awaits approval. However, the very large number of small, unregulated farms and infrastructure limitations impede progress.

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Forests offered to host a CSG meeting in Cambodia. After discussion, the Chair expressed thanks and appreciation but suggested that, in view of the need for rapid consideration of Cambodia's crocodile management, a regional meeting could be held more quickly.

Jenny Daltry of FFI expanded the report with details on surveys locating 23 sites and an estimate of no more than 162-200 individuals and only three breeding sites. Threats from illegal collection are intense—for example, 61 cases documented in last three years and two last month. National exports from farms total many thousands, so wild animals are only a small proportion, but the effect on the wild population is very severe. Good efforts by the government include improved enforcement, external support, and community programs to promote cultural support of crocodile protection. But these actions will be futile if illegal removal continues. Wild collection is driven by demand and high prices: \$20 for a hatchling and \$1,000 for an adult, compared to local salaries (\$14/month).

Professor Messel expressed extreme concern and congratulated efforts of those involved. He suggested that a regional meeting in Cambodia be a priority to draw political attention to the issue. These efforts linked to broader question of CITES compliance and illegal trade from Cambodia under CITES review, and will be considered by CITES Standing Committee and CoP. Dietrich Jelden was asked to chair discussions at this meeting and prepare a draft letter to be sent to CITES secretariat.

John Thorbjarnarson reported on the activities of **the CSG Siamensis Working Group** and noted the participation of the IUCN–GEF Wetlands Program. This program has targeted four flagship species for Asian wetlands, of which *C. siamensis* is one. Alvin Lopez, coordinator of the program, was present, as well as representatives from Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand. TRAFFIC - SE Asia is preparing a report on crocodile farming results, expected soon. Dr. Giam, who sits on the CITES Animals Committee, reported that CITES also was reviewing trade issues in Cambodia and that ASEAN might also be a vehicle for effective intervention at the regional level. The issue and avenues for solution therefore extend beyond CSG.

On 27 May, a workshop involving CSG members and representatives from Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia, the IUCN Mekong Wetlands Program, Flora and Fauna International, and Wildlife Conservation Society was conducted. The workshop identified key factors threatening *C. siamensis* throughout its range and recommended a range state workshop to further assess threats and develop

a coordinated regional strategy. The group recommended integration of this proposed workshop with the IUCN-GEF program and the suggested regional meeting in Cambodia, in order to provide guidance on how the issues identified could be brought to the attention of the Cambodian government, neighboring range states, and the CITES secretariat.

**Tomistoma Task Force (TTF):** Grahame Webb gave an update on the activities of the TTF, which was formed in 2002 at the Gainesville meeting to coordinate individuals interested in this species. TTF has generated a strategy and work plan, developed a website, and started fund-raising. Efforts of Akira Matsuda (website), Ralf Sommerlad, Bruce Shwedick, and Scott Pfaff (fundraising) were applauded. TTF also has received useful funding support from AZA and member zoos and from Terry Cullen. At this stage Grahame suggested that the species task force concept be examined and possibly expanded to be a task force addressing needs of all the endangered crocodylian species.

The Chair thanked the supporters of TTF but noted that piecemeal funding was inefficient and that a coordinated and coherent fund-raising strategy was needed. A written report on TTF activity in Europe by Ralf Sommerlad again was acknowledged.

**Papua New Guinea:** After an introduction by Mr. Takehara, Godfrid Solmu of the PNG Dept. of Environment summarized recent actions of the department in PNG. These included surveys in 2003 and 2004 that confirm the stable status of representative harvested crocodile populations in PNG. CSG efforts in encouraging the resumption of surveys were gratefully acknowledged. Current population levels and wild skin exports were at the low end of the recent range, which is thought to be due to recent high water levels, and the department will monitor for the next six months to confirm. David Wilken, of Mainland Holdings Crocodile Farm, reported that Mr. Paul Stobbs, the previous general manager of Mainland Holdings, had left the company and Mr. McCardle was the next general manager. Mr. McCardle was unable to attend the meeting due to a conflict in his schedule and commitments in PNG, but sent his best wishes and assurances that he intended to continue the close collaboration between CSG and Mainland. Professor Messel expressed the sincere thanks of CSG for the many years of support from Mainland.

**Colombia:** Alvaro Velasco presented a report on the recent site visit to Colombia, conducted 1-5 March 2004 by A. Larriera, A. Velasco, G. Webb, B. Ortiz, and M. Rodriguez. The trip was arranged in conjunction with the Colombian Ministry of Environment, Housing, and Land Development and caiman producer organizations AZOOCOL and Biodiversa, who also financed the visit. The report provides a detailed itinerary, observations, and recommendations from CSG to Colombia and has been submitted to the Colombian government and producer associations; their response is awaited. Alejandro Larriera indicated that the visit team was very pleased with the outcome, felt CSG had a much improved understanding of the situation in Colombia, and had laid the foundation for an enduring, mutually beneficial relationship. Professor Messel congratulated the team on their excellent work and diplomatic and technical skills that had initiated this contact and brought it to such a successful point.

**Bolivia:** Alejandro Larriera introduced Alphonso Llobet, who described recent problems with the management of the yacaré harvest. Limited management capacity, unreliability of surveys, allocation of harvest quotas, and poor enforcement were noted. Alphonso had prepared a report with recommendations, and the new Bolivian government was more responsive. However, Alejandro noted that while CSG provided extensive advice to previous Bolivian management authorities, harvest management difficulties persist. The problem is similar to that in Paraguay and continued CSG intervention was requested.

**Paraguay:** The current status of developments following the Paraguay trade suspension was described. Marcos Couthino has been assisting CITES and advising Paraguay, participating in the

CITES Paraguay review in March 2004 and a second recent trip. The current issue concerns a stockpile of about 30,000 caiman skins harvested legally during the previous harvest season but now stranded by the trade ban. After discussion, it was agreed that CSG had no objection in principle to releasing the stockpile. CSG has managed such dispositions many times before. However, Paraguay should be required to make some concrete demonstration of improved management capacity, as required by the CITES Standing Committee. Inventory, tagging, permitting, and orderly export of the stockpile could be a valuable demonstration of Paraguay's renewed commitment to effective CITES implementation. Alejandro and Alvaro will draft a letter to the Paraguay government offering our assistance.

**Crocodile - Human Conflict Task Force:** Richard Fergusson reported on his activities in Africa. The task force has been relatively inactive, although Richard is developing guidelines for Management Authorities and proposes a database, public awareness program, and additional research to examine determinants of conflict situations. At the IUCN World Parks Congress, a proposal to integrate Human - Animal conflict issues within IUCN was approved and the SSC Commission on Economics and Social Policy is establishing a global network on the topic. Concerns about excessive bureaucracy were expressed. Completion and distribution of the guidelines and reactivation of the Task Force was recommended.

**CITES ISSUES.** Professor Messel noted that the only reason to discuss CITES and trade issues is their link to conservation. Dietrich Jelden and Don Ashley then advised the group as follows:

**Personal effects exemption:** Recent estimates are that 30% of sales of crocodile items are directly to "tourists" who then move across borders. Adoption of the CITES personal exemption is therefore a significant assistance to sustainable trade. At the last CoP, CITES called on parties to implement this exemption for a limited number of well-regulated species, including crocodylians. A process of harmonization of regulations in major importing nations (USA, EU, Japan) is under way, but not complete. Two proposals for the next CoP will introduce additional species for inclusion under the exemption (sea horses, corals, and giant clams) and propose that all parties apply the exemption or advise the secretariat that they are not doing so (the reverse of the present process). CSG members should support these initiatives at the CITES CoP in Bangkok in October.

**Infractions and enforcement:** CITES parties suspended the report of infractions due to concerns that this was unduly punitive and embarrassing to parties; however, some mechanisms to track and correct "inconsistencies" are still required. Extra-CITES mechanisms, such the IACTS report, address this need.

**Live trade:** In the last four years approximately 160,000 live *C. siamensis* were exported from Thailand and Cambodia to China, many via Vietnam. Noting continuing problems with illegal transfer of wild crocodiles to farms in Cambodia, the meeting called on importing states to assist range state exporters to improve internal controls and capture conservation values from this very extensive and valuable trade.

**Movement of trade samples:** A short report on the development of this matter in CITES was submitted. After CITES approved the development of a mechanism for this purpose, various technical and legal issues have impeded implementation. CITES Standing Committee was recommending that an ATA carnet and CITES permit could serve this purpose, and a procedure was proposed. CSG members should ensure their national delegations to CITES are aware of and supportive of these measures. CSG could consider appropriate intervention to advise the CITES Secretariat and Parties of our support for these measures.

**CITES compliance issues:** Ms. Tomme Young from the IUCN Environmental Law Center gave a brief overview of the complexities of international law regarding enforcing compliance with treaties like CITES. CITES is proposing a "Compliance Committee," but the structure and activity of this remains undefined. To support this initiative, IUCN is preparing an information paper for CoP that will include case studies and "best practice" examples of successful compliance improvement strategies. Crocodiles may provide valuable examples for this report (e.g., universal tagging of crocodile skins). Ms. Young will attend the CSG meeting to obtain information.

**Review of ranching for the Animals Committee:** The development of this project and its current implementation by CSG—with partial funding of \$11,000 from the Swiss government—was described. A summary of results to date was presented by Richard Fergusson (Africa) and Alejandro Larriera (Latin America). The initial report indicates that incomplete compliance with the requirements of the ranching resolution (e.g., monitoring, conservation benefit, and reporting) is widespread. However, compliance is good in some countries, demonstrating that this can be achieved and in no case was there any indication that wild populations were declining as a result of ranching. It appears that the provisions of the ranching resolution were overly precautionary and impede realistic compliance, particularly in less developed nations. Simplification of requirements to the minimum necessary to improve compliance and ensure nondetriment/conservation benefit as required by CITES is needed. Discussion of particular situations included movement of eggs from Mozambique to South Africa, developing ranching in Brazil and Colombia, and Venezuela's production of 12,000 hatchlings annually for the pet trade. CSG will report the results of the analysis forthrightly, indicating where the problems lie. The Chair noted that there may be failures in compliance but there is not a failure of conservation.

**Ranching program of Ecuador:** As part of his presentation on ranching in South America, Alejandro Larriera described recent events regarding Ecuador. A request from the Ecuador Authority in 2002 to increase their export quota from zero to 15, to allow the export of live specimens collected in the ranching program, was approved by CSG and CITES. However, the export had still not been accomplished. CITES recently received a request for further expansion of the quota to additional 50 live specimens and asked for CSG's opinion. After extended discussion of the history and circumstances of the effective failure of ranching in Ecuador due to unavoidable and inherent infrastructure and capacity deficiencies, the chairman ruled that CSG would not approve additional export quotas in the absence of any reports concerning the farms operation, numbers of animals, or structure of the management program. A minority view suggested that further export of specimens already held would have no conservation effect, but the chair's decision was widely supported and after further discussion was confirmed.

**Economic study of crocodylian trade:** Kevin van Jaarsveldt brought forward concerns previously expressed about the content and wording of the first report from this project. Confusion about the definitive version of the report (draft Oct. 2001 or final Oct. 2002) was resolved and the improvements in the final draft noted. The document is now widely disseminated on TRAFFIC, Resource Africa, and CSG websites. Concern was expressed about the origin, funding, and authority for Phase II of the project. Professor Messel clarified that due to the concerns about the first report, Phase II was deliberately structured as project of TRAFFIC International funded directly by Florida and Louisiana industry sources to TRAFFIC with no direct CSG oversight to keep it at "arms length." However, CSG would receive and review the report and have opportunity to comment and amend its content. The draft Phase II report was then submitted to the Steering Committee for review.

**Proposals to CITES CoP regarding source codes and modes of production:** The USA was submitting a proposal to change the definitions of "R" (Ranched) and "W" (Wild), apparently to rectify inconsistencies in source coding on US export permits for alligators derived from mixed

stocks of ranched and captive-bred specimens. Simultaneously, CITES is proposing a general review of the modes of production of specimens and review of simplification of source codes. CSG will recommend that the USA defer its proposal until a general review and more refined general definitions of production and source codes for CITES species has been conducted.

**Cuban proposal to downlist its *C. acutus* population for ranching:** This proposal received detailed input from CSG since its inception. The proposal has a strong biological basis with good data on crocodile populations, and the proposed activities are moderate and well-designed. The first submitted draft was circulated to all Steering Committee members, and the final draft was reviewed by seven CSG members. All comments received were supportive, and minor changes for improvement were directed to the Cuban Authority. Unfortunately the Cuban representatives failed to obtain visas and were unable to attend the meeting at the last minute. Recent communications indicate the suggestions are all incorporated into the final submission and on this basis CSG will give its full support to the proposal. Any final amendments can be introduced during discussion at CoP.

**VETERINARY ISSUES:** Val Lance introduced Dr. Steven Salisbury, who described in detail a proposal to establish an International Committee on Crocodylian Anatomical Literature and prepare an annotated atlas of crocodylian anatomy. He requested CSG approval in principle and cooperation of CSG members for this initiative. The Chair indicated that CSG supported this useful action that would greatly assist physiological and paleontological studies, and asked Val Lance to draft a suitable letter to Dr. Salisbury.

Fritz Huchzermeyer presented short information items regarding the veterinary group's deliberations on humane slaughter of crocodylians and on the movement of crocodylians as a vector of crocodylian disease. These were noted and the veterinary group was encouraged to develop documentation on these matters for the group.

#### **OTHER BUSINESS:**

**Synergy with SSC Sustainable Use Group:** Jon Hutton, Chair of the SU group, described his group and indicated that CSG members could expect to interact with the SU group and its members. SUSG had reorganized its 500 members into subgroups that cross-cut taxon interests. Jon requested further detailed coordination between SUSG and CSG through the Executive Officer and proposed that SUSG members could receive the CSG Newsletter. Some members of CSG would be invited to be members of SUSG's global membership class.

Jon also advised that CITES was considering adopting definitions of sustainable use based upon the definitions used in the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which would bring the two conventions into harmony regarding SU and strengthen SU within CITES. CSG members were requested to support this move at CITES CoP.

**IUCN Red List:** Grahame Webb referred to a recent publication focusing on difficulties applying Red List criteria to long lived and widespread species. Discussion followed on the need to keep Red Listing of crocodylians relevant and practical and the different approaches applied by different groups. Further attention to this matter will be required as CSG moves to re-evaluate crocodylian Red Listing that is mandated by IUCN.

**Venue of the next meeting:** The proposal from Cambodia had been referred back to Cambodia with the suggestion that a Regional Meeting would address their concerns in a more timely manner. Mr. Luc Fugeirol of Ferme de Cocodriles in Peirrelatte, France, tentatively proposed that the next meeting be held in southern France. After some discussion on the benefits of this venue for close contact to trade and manufacturing interests and its convenience, safety, and low cost, the Vice

Chair for Europe was requested to pursue the matter and generate a detailed proposal from the hosts on location, facilities costs, funding, etc. for consideration and approval by CSG.

**Chairman of the CSG:** Following upon Professor Messel's announcement that he would not accept re-appointment to the Chair in November 2004, being eager to pursue personal activities, the group was requested to advise him on a suitable candidate whom the SSC Chair would recommend for appointment in November. Two qualified and willing candidates were identified: Grahame Webb and Perran Ross. The Steering Committee had conducted an internal discussion and a confidential indication of preferences that had been transferred to the Chairman. The meeting questioned Dr. Ross and Dr. Webb separately and then after discussion agreed that Professor Messel would recommend Grahame Webb to SSC.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 5:45 pm

**FOLLOW-UP MEETING: 28 MAY 2004.** Present: H. Messel, P. Ross, D. Jelden, A. Larriera, G. Webb, L. Verdade, D. Ashley, F. Huchzermeyer, J. Hutton, A. Velasco, R. Elsey, J. Thorbjarnarson, R. Fergusson, V. Lance, A. Woodward.

Dispositions of the following Action Items were reported; text of letters and responses follows:

- (1) A draft letter to the President of Madagascar requesting inclusion of wetland crocodile habitat in protected areas expansion proposed at World Parks Congress was approved. See below.
- (2) CSG members will be encouraged to support initiatives to facilitate transfer of trade samples through their national delegations to the CITES CoP.
- (3) A working group on the Chambal gharial crisis prepared a draft resolution and recommended a strategy to insert this resolution into IUCN World Conservation Congress in November, with the assistance of Indian IUCN members.
- (4) A draft letter of reply to the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Forestry, Cambodia, recommending a regional meeting and detailed range state workshop to address *C. siamensis* issues was approved. Outputs and recommendations of the *C. siamensis* working group conducted during the meeting were integrated into this response.
- (5) Don Ashley and Perran Ross were asked to communicate with CITES Management Authority USA regarding proposals on changes to product listing codes and production methods and coding.
- (6) Perran Ross was charged with advising the CITES Secretariat of CSG's decision not to approve additional export quotas of live, ranched specimens of *Melanosuchus niger* from Ecuador.
- (7) A draft report of Economic Study of the Crocodilian Trade, Phase II by James McGregor and TRAFFIC was received and submitted for review to H. Messel, D. Jelden, G. Webb, K. Van Jaarsveldt, J. Hutton, and P. Ross. Comments are to be sent directly back to Steve Broad.
- (8) The Executive Officer was charged with advising the CITES Secretariat of the CSG positive reviews and approval for the Cuban proposal to downlist their population of *C. acutus* for ranching.
- (9) Val Lance was charged with drafting a letter to Dr. Salisbury endorsing preparation of the Anatomical Guide to crocodilians.
- (10) In new business, Dr. Jayantha Jaywardene of the Biodiversity and Elephant Trust, Sri Lanka, requested CSG's support for an approach to the government of Sri Lanka to activate crocodilian conservation with CSG's assistance. Dr. Jaywardene agreed to provide CSG with a draft for the chairman's review and signature.

After thanks to members for their participation and congratulations again to Dr. Webb and his team for an excellent 17th Working Meeting, the Chairman closed the meeting.

**LETTER RE: MADAGASCAR PROTECTED AREAS:**

M. Marc Ravalomanana  
President of the Republic of Madagascar  
BP 955 Antananarivo, Madagascar

Mr. President,

The Crocodile Specialist Group of the IUCN SSC respectfully introduces itself to you and wholeheartedly welcomes your commitment made at the 5th World Parks Congress held in Durban, South Africa in 2003 to increase the area of protected habitats in Madagascar.

The Crocodile Specialist Group has on several occasions assisted the Ministry of Environment, Water, and Forests and the stakeholders in Madagascar by providing technical assistance and suggestions on crocodile management policy. Members of the Group have most recently assisted in drafting a formal Policy and Management Plan for crocodiles in Madagascar. The plan provides for the conservation and sustainable use of the species while appropriately responding to the serious problem of conflict between people and crocodiles to safeguard peoples welfare and livelihood.

Your commitment to significantly increase the area of land that is protected in national parks and protected areas will greatly improve the status of many species of Madagascar's unique flora and fauna and contribute to human welfare in surrounding areas. We would like to respectfully suggest that the proposed park expansions include a significant amount of freshwater ecosystem (rivers, lakes, swamps). Most of the protected areas in Madagascar do not currently include significant amounts of these habitat. Some reserves have no wetland, while those that do, use the rivers as boundaries excluding much of the most valuable watershed area. The inclusion of wetland habitats in protected areas would ensure the conservation of entire wetland ecosystems with their many unique species, including the Nile crocodile. This would preserve the potential economic value of crocodiles, separate crocodiles from the problems they can cause to people, provide a visible flagship species for the preservation of Madagascar's wetlands and support fisheries and freshwater resources. The CSG would be pleased to assist your personnel in identifying suitable areas.

Sincerely yours,

Professor H. Messel

cc: Minister of the Environment, Water & Forest, BP 243 Antananarivo, Madagascar

**RESOLUTION ON: DECLINE OF THE GHARIAL (*GAVIALIS GANGETICUS*) IN THE CHAMBAL RIVER BASIN:**

RECALLING that the status of the gharial in the wild has long been of concern to the Government of India;

AWARE that the gharial was classified as Endangered in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Animals 2003, and has been given high priority for conservation action by the IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC) Crocodile Specialist Group;

ACKNOWLEDGING the success of actions initiated by the Government of India to:

- (a) give the gharial highest protection—Schedule 1—under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972
- (b) rehabilitate the gharial through the Government of India/FAO/UNDP Project with the rehabilitation of several thousand gharial into viable habitat
- (c) protect India's crocodylians in nature with the establishment of 13 sanctuaries totaling over 8,000 square kilometers
- (d) collect gharial eggs from nature and rear the hatchlings to a size appropriate for reintroduction in three rehabilitation centers in Uttar Pradesh;

CONCERNED that, in addition to national concerns about the survival of wild gharial in the Chambal, a very high level of international concern was expressed at the meeting of the IUCN/SSC Crocodile Specialist Group held in Darwin, Australia in May 2004, about the need for urgent action to ensure this unique crocodylian does not become locally extinct, largely due to the detrimental effects of fishing, sand mining, and agriculture.

The 3rd World Conservation Congress in Bangkok, Thailand, in November 2004:

1. ENCOURAGES Government of India to continue its efforts to save the gharial in the Chambal River and elsewhere;
2. URGES all IUCN members to support the Government of India in their efforts to:
  - (a) maintain a strong research presence dedicated to the species
  - (b) manage biodiversity within the tri-state Chambal Sanctuary, of which the gharial is a component
  - (c) take such actions that are necessary to ameliorate current threats to the existing Chambal gharial, with the primary aim of improving the status of this population
  - (d) undertake measures to reverse population declines of gharial in the Chambal
3. REQUESTS the Species Survival Commission, within available resources, to offer assistance to India, through the IUCN/SSC Crocodile Specialist Group, in convening a technical workshop to implement the foregoing actions

**LETTER RE: CAMBODIAN ISSUES AND MEETING:**

H.E. Chan Sarun  
Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries  
#200 Preah Norodom Blvd.  
Sangkat Tonle Bassac, Khan Chamcar Morn  
Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Re: Conservation of Crocodiles in Cambodia

Honorable Minister,

The Crocodile Specialist Group of IUCN/SSC views Cambodia as the last stronghold of the Siamese Crocodile. We have received with great approval recent reports of new discoveries of crocodile populations and the efforts of your Ministry to address regulation of crocodile farming and trade. At our 17th Working Meeting held in Darwin, Australia, May 24-30, 2004 we heard from 10 Cambodians from government departments and private sector, as well as two international reports that indicate that the Royal Government Cambodia is committed to the conservation of wild crocodiles. We congratulate the progress that has been made in the country that will indeed contribute to the survival of this critically endangered species.

We were also honored to receive your invitation for CSG to consider holding a meeting in Cambodia hosted by the Cambodian Government. During our meeting a workshop was conducted among Cambodian and other range state representatives to identify issues and concerns and provide guidance on how these issues could be brought to the attention the Government of Cambodia, neighboring range states and appropriate international bodies such as the CITES Secretariat. Considering the recommendations of this workshop and the urgency of the issue, we would like to respond to your kind invitation by proposing that a special range state meeting be held as soon as possible. This meeting, held at the regional level, would be more quickly organized and could provide valuable guidance for immediate activity in the region and could be the basis of a report on progress to a future CSG Working Meeting. In order to guarantee the participation of the other states and the undertaking of fruitful discussions on the regional issue of trade in Siamese crocodiles we would also suggest that the meeting be organized in conjunction with the CITES Secretariat.

Integration of this regional meeting with broader efforts undertaken in the context of the IUCN Mekong Delta initiative, and ASEAN would enhance its value.

We very much appreciate your efforts to conserve and manage wild crocodiles in Cambodia and look forward to working cooperatively with your Ministry and other Cambodian institutions and representatives to achieve this important conservation goal.

Sincerely yours,

Professor Harry Messel, Chairman  
cc: CITES Secretariat, IUCN Mekong Delta initiative; Dr. C.H. Giam

DRAFT LETTER TO CITES MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY OF THE USA (TO THE ATTENTION OF KENNETH STANSELL):

Dear Mr. Stansell,

With this note I would like to take the opportunity to inform you on recent discussions which the IUCN Crocodile Specialist Group (CSG) had during the last meeting of its Steering Committee (SC) on 24 May in Darwin, Australia regarding a US proposal submitted for the 13<sup>th</sup> CITES Conference of the Parties (CoP), 2 October 2004, to amend CITES Resolution Conf. 12.3 with regard to the use of the source code "R" for "Ranched" specimens.

The CSG Steering Committee (SC) took note of the intention of the US to find the support from the CITES member states at the 13th CITES CoP to narrow the scope for the use of the source code "R" on CITES permits. However, the CSG SC expressed serious concern on this US initiative because it would also have serious implications on crocodilian multi-focal management programs (including wild harvests, farming, and ranching) in many CITES contracting parties. Some of these parties' ranching components had even been established long before CITES resolution Conf. 3.15 on "Ranching" had been adopted in 1981 at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Conference of the Parties such as for example in Papua New Guinea for the New Guinea and the saltwater crocodile native to this country.

In addition, the source code "R" on CITES permits, as currently defined under CITES Res. Conf 12.3, should also be regarded as an indicator for economic incentives to promote the sustainable use of well-managed wild crocodilian populations and therefore rather be maintained in a wider scope than narrow. It would from the CSG SC view be too premature to narrow the scope now.

Furthermore, the CSG SC also acknowledged and commended the US initiative for the forthcoming CITES conference in Bangkok to advance the important issue of more clearly defining the many different harvest production systems which have evolved since CITES came into force in 1975. This is an important far reaching initiative trying to solve a long-pending issue under the CITES Animals Committee. The CSG SC concluded that the issue of revisiting and streamlining the use and applicability of the source code "R" should preferably and better be dealt with under this US initiative instead of under a single proposal for amending the CITES permit and certificate resolution Conf 12.3.

In hoping that these comments might be useful, I remain as ever,

Yours sincerely,

Prof. Harry Messel  
cc: CITES Secretariat

LETTER TO PRESIDENT OF SRI LANKA:

8 June 2004

Her Excellency Chandrika Kumaratunga  
President of Sri Lanka  
Colombo 1, Sri Lanka

Your Excellency,

I am writing to you to address the important topic of crocodile management and conservation in Sri Lanka.

*The role of crocodiles in the environment:*

Decades of research on the 24 extant species of crocodiles and their cousins, the alligators, caimans, and gharials, have shown that these species play an important role in wetland ecosystems. In many situations they are good indicators of the condition of the environment. In Florida, USA, for example, the status of alligators is being used to indicate the success of a US\$25 billion program to rehabilitate the Everglades wetland. Elsewhere, the deterioration of catches of the most highly valued species in commercial fisheries has been linked to the disappearance of crocodiles, while in Africa, in regions with highly seasonal rainfall, the survival of amphibians, fish, and some reptiles is commonly linked to the ability of crocodiles to dig "hibernation" holes deep into dry river banks.

*The present situation in Sri Lanka:* As you are aware, Sri Lanka has two of the 23 species of crocodile that exist in the world today – the mugger or marsh crocodile (*Crocodylus palustris* Lesson 1831) and the saltwater or estuarine crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus* Schneider 1801). However, it seems that Sri Lanka is one of the few countries which has done little in terms of researching the biology and ecology of its crocodiles with a view to managing them.

Though the mugger is internationally threatened, there are a few thousand in the island today. However, the saltwater species, widely prevalent in many countries, is greatly threatened in Sri Lanka.

*What is the CSG?* The Crocodile Specialist Group (CSG), which is part of the Species Survival Commission of IUCN – The World Conservation Union, is a world-wide volunteer network of more than 300 specialists with skills ranging from crocodile biology and management through human-crocodile conflict and rural education to sustainable harvesting, commercial production, and marketing. Working with individuals, communities, countries, and international organizations, the CSG has over a period of more than 25 years successfully assisted in the resolution of crocodile conservation and management issues in more than 30 countries around the world. The group does not have access to significant funding, but with its extensive network of volunteers manages to invest very significant resources in crocodile conservation every year. The CSG has in the past contributed to national crocodile management through a range of services including assessment, information dissemination, training, research, mapping, planning, workshop facilitation, conflict resolution, monitoring, and evaluation.

*Offer to help Sri Lanka:* Given the situation facing crocodile conservation within Sri Lanka, we would like to offer to your Government such assistance as the Crocodile Specialist Group may be in a position to provide. This might include some help with national assessment and a crocodile biodiversity strategy if this is considered appropriate.

We await your advices.

Yours faithfully,

Professor Harry Messel, Chairman