

Minutes of CSG Steering Committee Meeting (2 June)

1. Opening

The Chairman, Grahame Webb, opened the meeting at 0850 h. Agenda papers were available in advance online, with some spare copies and late papers for members and observers.

Steering Committee members present were: Grahame Webb, Dietrich Jelden, Alejandro Larriera, Tom Dacey, Perran Ross, Charlie Manolis, Alvaro Velasco, Carlos Piña, Sergio Medrano-Bitar, Bernardo Ortiz, Samuel Martin, Ruth Elsey, Allan Woodward, Don Ashley, Yoichi Takehara, Enrico Chiesa, Jorge Saieh, Jerome Caraguel, John Caldwell, Paolo Martelli, Kent Vliet, Val Lance, John Thorbjarnarson and Phil Wilkinson.

Apologies were received from: Richard Fergusson, Olivier Behra, Jenny Daltry, Nao Thuok, B.C. Choudhury, Asghar Mobaraki, Roberto Soberon, Ralf Sommerlad, Hank Jenkins, Yoshio Kaneko, C.H. Koh, Kevin van Jaarsveldt, James MacGregor, Fritz Huchzermeyer, Tomme Young, Harry Messel, Rom Whitaker, Rob Stuebing, Bruce Shwedick, Jiang Hongxing, Uthen Youngprapakorn, Toshinori Tsubouchi, Jon Hutton, Noel Kinler, Chris Banks, Steve Peucker and David Wilken. Some non-SC members also sent apologies; Mangal Shakya, Antoni Cadi, Antoine Joseph, Robert Godshalk, Manuel Tabet and Toby Ramos.

Observers present included: Vicki Simlesa, Merlijn van Weerd, Pablo Siroski, Gisela Poletta, Ivan Palacios, Hideki Sakamoto, Marc Gansuana, Giovanni Ulloa, Luis Bassetti, Hetty Abadie, Sally Isberg, John Caldaron, Ayan Ofance Rojano Ofanr, Hector Raigosa Villegas, Godfrid Solmu, Robert Sine, John Brueggen, Adam Britton, Craig Franklin, Jon Wiebe, Beatrice Martin, Chris Moran, Geoff McClure, Hernando Zambrano, Ari Palmo, Adriana Rivera, John Breuggen, Sonia Canto and Alfonso Llobet.

1.1. Chairman's Report

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked the workshop organisers, including representatives of Government, academic institutions, industry and NGOs. Particularly thanks were extended to Alfonso Llobet and Karina Sauma. He also passed on the personal best wishes from the Chair of the Species Survival Commission, Holly Dublin.

The Chairman drew attention to the activities of the CSG over the past two years, highlighting:

- CoP14 (The Hague, Netherlands, June 2007);
- Significant support provided by our donors and Wildlife Management International, which has enabled the CSG to build up its financial resources;
- Centralisation of the CSG in Darwin, Australia, including the financial arrangements;
- Proposed changes to the CSG regional structure and Steering Committee, which will be required leading up to the IUCN Congress in Barcelona in October 2008;
- Successful West African sub-regional meeting held in Niger in 2007;
- Recent gharial mortality event in Chambal National Sanctuary, India; and,

- CSG reviews in Madagascar and Vietnam and proposed mission to Cuba in November 2008.

The meeting held one minutes' silence for two long-serving members who passed away: Dr. Tirtha Man Maskey (Nepal) and Douw "Swannie" Swanepoel (South Africa).

The Chairman drew attention to the large agenda and indicated that the agenda papers would be taken as read and opened for discussion and questions.

1.2. Minutes and Actions from CSG SC Meeting, Montelimar, France (19 June 2006)

Completion of actions from the previous CSG Steering Committee meeting were noted.

1.3. Executive Officer's Report

The EO highlighted: the composition of the Steering Committee; CSG membership (337 at May 2008); reviews (Madagascar and Vietnam and proposed mission to Cuba); CSG Newsletter (reduction to 300 hard copies under the new policy, >50% cost savings achieved); launching of new CSG website; and, the revised financial management arrangements. The report was noted.

1.4. Financial Report

The financial report highlighted the: current balance of around \$US320,000; transfer of the bulk of CSG funds to Darwin; resignation of Perran Ross as Treasurer; and, the strong and determined efforts to build up resources. It was reported that CSG member Rene Hedegaard (Krokodille Zoo) has advised that the temporary crocodile exhibition he helped establish at the Aquarium in Norway has turned out to be a great success. It is anticipated that it will generate a donation of around \$US25,000 to the CSG by October 2008, to be followed by a similar amount in 2009. The Chairman thanked the CSG donors, particularly the industry members, some of whom were present at the meeting. The report was noted.

2. Regional Reports

2.1.1. Africa

The report from the Regional Chairman for Africa, Rich Fergusson, was included in the agenda documents. Richard was unable to attend the meeting. The report was noted.

2.1.2. West Africa Sub-Regional Meeting

Deputy Chairman, Dietrich Jelden, reported that the first West African sub-regional meeting held in Niger in November 2007, was a very important initiative that achieved the three major objectives:

1. To obtain a summary of the current and historical status of the three crocodile species distributed in countries of the West and Central African region;

2. To become familiar with the aims and aspirations of regional countries with regard to the conservation, management and sustainable use of crocodiles, and where appropriate, the constraints preventing those goals from being achieved; and,
3. To assess areas where the CSG may be able to offer technical assistance in the future and to foster contacts and networking that may be possible within West Africa, and between West Africa and the international community in order to increase activities with crocodiles within the region.

Documented recommendations are included in the proceedings from the meeting and it is now proposed to hold a follow up meeting in Burkina Faso in 2009/2010 (see Letter 1 attached).

Under the new CSG regional structure, Africa will be divided into two separate regions: West Africa (including the Francophone countries and Madagascar) and East and South Africa.

The report was noted.

2.1.3. Madagascar Review

The Chairman reported that crocodile conservation in Madagascar has been a very difficult management problem for both CITES and CSG for a long time. A CITES mission to Madagascar was undertaken in late 2006. In accordance with the recommendations of that mission, the CSG has commenced a follow up project to assist Madagascar implement the recommendations of the CITES Standing Committee. This review commenced in 2007, with funding support from several CSG donors. Christine Lippai has been engaged as the CSG Coordinator. Following consultation with the relevant stakeholders, the Madagascar Government has approved the work plan developed in consultation with the relevant stakeholders, a consultative Crocodile Management Committee established and field surveys are planned to commence in July-August 2008. The report was noted. [see Letter 2 attached to CITES Standing Committee regarding progress with the workplan].

2.1.4. Uganda and Malawi: CITES SC Recommendations on Implementation of Resolution Conf. 11.16 (Rev. CoP14)

The report from Richard Fergusson was noted.

2.2.1. East and Southeast Asia

Neither of the Regional Chairs was able to attend the meeting. The Chairman and Merlijn van Weerd provided an update on some of the activities in the Philippines with *C. mindorensis* programs, following the successful "Forum on Crocodiles in the Philippines" in February 2007.

Discussion was also held on the "intractable" problem in the whole region with *C. siamensis*. There are many captive breeding farms (>1000 in Vietnam, >900 in Cambodia, etc.), but few animals

remaining in the wild. Conventional ways of dealing with the problem have met with little success, and perhaps more innovative options need to be examined (see Letter 3 attached). It was agreed that it is a complex logistic situation and called for a roundtable discussion between the relevant countries (Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, China).

2.2.2. China

The Regional Chairman Jiang Hongxing was unable to attend the meeting. John Thorbjarnarson provided an update on the Chinese Alligator reintroduction programs, workshop held in Shanghai in March 2008, slight but important increase in the wild population and nest production, and the establishment of a new breeding centre in Nanjing. Discussion was held on the possible use of funds held in the Chinese Alligator Fund. The CSG Executive is considering the suggestion of a public education poster and will discuss the proposal with Chinese representatives. The report was noted.

2.2.3. Cambodia: Update on Implementation of Recommendations

The report from Fisheries Administration of Cambodia on the implementation of the recommendations of the 2005 CSG review was noted. Some progress had been made since the 18th CSG working meeting; some recommendations are ongoing.

2.2.4. Vietnam Review

There are around 400,000 crocodiles in captive breeding facilities, which range from households with a few crocodiles to large breeding farms with over 30,000 animals. The concept of using small village holding farms is fully supported by the Government of Vietnam. The CITES-registered captive breeding facilities have working arrangements with the small satellite farms, and the system raises many potential difficulties. It is recommended that a Regional Workshop be held to address the various illegal trade issues particularly trade with Cambodia without CITES permits.

2.3.1. Latin America and the Caribbean

The report from the Regional Chairman, Alvaro Velasco, was noted.

2.3.2. Colombian Farm Management

Sergio Medrano-Bitar presented the paper, explaining the proposed scute marking system being adopted in Colombia and highlighting:

- a. Marking of babilla (*Caiman crocodilus*) production - Resolution No. 923 May 2007;
- b. Marking of parental stock in Colombia - Resolution No. 221 of 2005, No. 1172 of 2004; and,
- c. Government initiatives being implemented to meet the requirements of the CITES Ranching resolution.

The Deputy Chairman, Dietrich Jelden, indicated that an analysis of the trade data, available publically on the UNEP-WCMC website, indicates a substantial increase in Colombian exports of *Caiman crocodilus fuscus* skins, from 515,000 in 2003 to 926,000 in 2006. This raises significant questions in regard to compliance and enforcement, which needs to be addressed by Colombia and by the major importing countries, such as the European Union, Japan, USA and Singapore. The Chairman was requested to raise all concerns with Colombia and to offer such technical assistance from the CSG as the Colombian authorities may request (see Letter 4 attached to Minister).

2.3.3. Brazil: Progress with *M. niger* Harvest Program

Sonia Canto from the Secretaria de Estado da Producao, Brazil, addressed the meeting, outlining the history of the *Melanoschus niger* program in Brazil and the current activities being undertaken in Mamiraua Reserve, following the successful downlisting of the species to Appendix II at CoP14. This includes experimental harvesting, and testing of the processes to ensure that the appropriate procedures are in place before a harvest program is implemented. There may be a possible extension of the management program into other areas.

2.3.4. Cuba: Proposed Review of Crocodile Management

The report on the proposed CSG mission to Cuba in early November 2008 was noted.

2.3.5. Venezuela: *C. intermedius* Proposal

The EO advised that the following advice had only recently been received from the Venezuelan Government:

- a. The Ministry of Environment is not proceeding with a downlisting proposal for *C. intermedius* at this time. It wishes to further involve local communities into the conservation program and proposes to commence this process later in 2008 or early 2009.
- b. Government will soon create a new protected area in the Cojedes River area, which is one of the most important areas for *C. intermedius*.

The report was noted.

2.3.6 Ecuador: CITES Standing Committee Recommendations

There appeared to be two possible options for Ecuador:

- a. maintain the population of *Melanoschus niger* on Appendix II, which would require a submission by Ecuador to CoP15; or,
- b. return the species to Appendix I.

(See Letter 5 attached to Minister).

2.3.7. Paraguay: Latest Developments

Deputy Chairman Alejandro Larriera presented the report on the CSG mission to Asuncion, Paraguay, on 10 April 2008, regarding the self-imposed moratorium on trade. Paraguay has not formally presented a draft management plan for *Caiman yacare* to the CSG. Should it do so, it would be circulated to selected CSG members for review, and comments submitted back to the relevant Paraguayan authorities. [The management program was formally submitted to CSG and reviewed - see Letter 6 attached].

2.4. North America

The report was presented by the Joint Regional Chairs, Ruth Elsey and Allan "Woody" Woodward, clarifying the current situation with the requests to the USFWS for the reclassifications under the US Endangered Species Act in respect of *C. latirostris* by Argentina and *C. moreletii* by Mexico. The testing of bar codes on CITES skin tags by Louisiana was also mentioned. The report was noted.

2.5.1. West Asia

The Regional Chairman for West Asia was unable to provide a report due to his wife being very ill. The Executive Officer briefly reported on information that had been provided for Iran, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

2.5.2. Indian Gharial

The Vice Chair of the Veterinary Science Group presented their report on the Gharial mortality events in the Chambal National Sanctuary, India, highlighting some of the difficulties with communication of the information. The Chairman thanked the CSG Veterinary Science Group, and particularly Fritz Huchzermeyer, for the excellent report. The report was noted.

2.6. Australia and Oceania

The Regional Chairman Charlie Manolis presented the report, highlighting: the impact of cane toads on wild populations of Freshwater crocodiles in the Northern Territory; an outbreak of *Chlamydia* type disease two years ago which affected two farms in Darwin; and, the unknown status of Saltwater crocodiles in the Solomon Islands and East Timor. The report was noted.

2.7. Europe

The Deputy Chairman presented the report, highlighting that John Hutton has advised that UNEP-WCMC is working with Daniela Lainez, a Masters student, to create a database of crocodile surveys in Africa. Jon is seeking support for this project by requesting CSG members to dig out all their survey reports from Africa and Madagascar and to submit them to this project. The finished product

will be available for the future use of members. For further information e-mail Jon Hutton (jon.hutton@unep-wcmc.org). The report was noted.

3. Thematic Vice Chair Reports

3.1.1. CITES

The report was briefly introduced by the Chairman, in the absence of Hank Jenkins, covering CoP14 (2007), 23rd CITES Animals Committee meeting (April 2008) and CITES Standing Committee Working Group on personal and household effects.

3.1.2. Use of CITES Re-export Skin Tags

The paper was presented by the Executive Officer. Mr. Yochi Takehara explained the difficulty of implementing the re-export tag system in Japan and indicated that he would like the issue to be raised with the CITES Standing Committee when they are addressing the review of the Universal Tagging System. Dietrich Jelden, who is on the Standing Committee working group for this review, met with industry members on 2 June to discuss solutions to this issue.

Enrico Chiesa raised an example of a recent problem experienced in the USA, where authorities were requesting individual tags on each "backstrap". It was advised that if the USA has stricter domestic legislation, then they should advise the exporting countries accordingly. Don Ashley spoke briefly about some trade issues. The report was noted.

3.1.3. CoP14

The report was noted.

3.2.1. IUCN

The report was noted.

3.2.2. SSC Chairs Meeting

The Chairman, who attended this meeting, presented an outline of the structures within the IUCN, its core programs, and the SSC and how they impact upon the CSG and other Specialist Groups. The proposal to restructure each Specialist Groups into a Red List Group and a Conservation Action Group was generally opposed by the Specialist Group Chairs and the proposed restructure now seems to be "on hold".

At the IUCN World Congress to be held in Barcelona in October 2008, it appears the current Chair of the SSC Chair Holly Dublin may be challenged. From a CSG perspective, Holly Dublin, herself a Specialist Group Chair, had demonstrated strong and sensitive leadership in a demanding position. She had always been an active source of advice and of both technical and administrative guidance to the CSG Chair when needed. Her views on the ways in which sustainable use can and is being incorporated

into crocodylian conservation efforts have always been logical and sound. Under the circumstances he considered any challenge to the SSC Chair at this time was counterproductive and unwarranted, and that IUCN members attending the Barcelona Meeting should be mindful of the admirable and skilled performance of Holly Dublin with regard to the CSG if the re-election issue is contested.

It was stressed that perhaps the CSG has always been in an awkward position by not being a legal entity in its own right, which constrains CSG conservation activities in many ways. It was suggested that the way in which the Freshwater Turtle and Tortoise Specialist Group had established a foundation to support the FTTSG activities appeared to be a model that the CSG could follow. This matter is addressed further under Agenda Item 3.9 Legal Affairs.

3.3. Industry

Don Ashley presented the report, highlighting:

- a. Review of the Universal Tagging and small leather goods;
- b. Personal and Household Effects;
- c. Re-export tags;
- d. Current trade operations;
- e. Need for benefits to conservation and communities being integral to benefits to the commercial industry; and,
- f. Need for dedicated funding to take issues to the next level.

The report was noted.

3.4. Trade Monitoring

John Caldwell presented the report, highlighting:

- a. Information on the global trade in crocodylian skins is gathered by UNEP-WCMC from CITES Annual Reports and CFAZ;
- b. The latest IACTS report for 2006 is lacking information from Australia, Papua New Guinea and Japan. It demonstrates some disturbing sharp increases in trade from Colombia that do not appear to be explicable by substantial increases in farm production capacity and thus explanations from Colombia are needed.
- c. The lack of reporting from Papua New Guinea and Brazil places them in breach of CITES reporting requirements;
- d. Trade information is freely available on the WCMC website;
- e. Report on a study of the crocodile meat trade will be completed by the end of June 2008; and,
- f. The proposed "Directory" needs 20-30 farmers to trial the system.

The report was noted

3.5. Veterinary Science

Paolo Martelli has been appointed as the new Vice Chair of the Veterinary Science group, following the

retirement of Fritz Huchzermeyer. Fritz will remain an active member of the group. Paolo presented the report, highlighting: the development of a list of veterinarians who are prepared to participate in the group and share information freely; and, development of a web-based capacity building manual to increase peoples' capacities.

3.6. Red List Authority

The report was presented by John Thorbjarnarson and noted.

3.7. Zoos and Community Education

Kent Vliet presented the report, highlighting recent activities: funds for the Philippine Project in Luzon; funds for the Chinese Alligator project; funds for the gharial crisis in India; and, proposed website. The report was noted.

3.8. General Research

Val Lance presented the report, indicating that scientific research on crocodilians is increasing rapidly, which is very welcomed. There are many new crocodilian papers being published, and the number of quality students in Latin America is increasing. The report was noted.

3.9. Legal Affairs

There was discussion on the need to advance the proposed CSG Charter prepared by Tomme Young as a means of ensuring the proper management of the CSG and its legal status in the future. The report was noted.

4. Task Force/Working Group Reports

4.1. Tomistoma Task Force

The new CSG-TTF Chairman, Bruce Shwedick, was unavailable. Tom Dacey reported on the success of the CSG-TTF workshop held in Pattaya, Thailand, in March 2008.

4.2. Philippine Crocodile

In the absence of the joint Regional Chairs, Merlijn van Weerd provided an update on the CROC project in San Mariano, northern Luzon, and confirmed that funding had been secured to keep the project going for another year. Discussion was held on the matter of structural funding. The Chairman advised that projects based upon on continual donor funding are not sustainable and there is need to canvass how to get sustainable funding for projects. Tom Dacey provided a brief update on the successful nesting of *C. mindorensis* on the Mercado Farm in Mindanao. The report was noted.

4.3. Human-Crocodile Conflict

In the absence of Richard Fergusson, the Chairman spoke briefly on the subject of Human-Crocodile

Conflict and the impacts that it can have on crocodile conservation projects. Reference was made to the recent HCC work undertaken by Nikhil Whitaker in India. It is intended to make this available on the new CSG website. The report was noted.

5. General Business

5.1. CSG Website

The new CSG website was launched on 27 May 2008 and all reports to date have been very favourable.

5.2. Electronic Crocodilian Journal

Very little action had been taken to progress this proposal since the last working meeting. Charlie Manolis suggested the formation a small working group to progress this matter and report back to the meeting. [The working group met on 3 June - see page 17].

5.3. CSG Newsletter

This matter was covered previously in the Executive Officer's report (Agenda Item 1.3, page 4).

5.4. Student Research Assistance Scheme

Following general discussion on the proposal, it was unanimously approved in principal and members were requested to get comments and suggestions back to the EO during the meeting. Perran Ross advised that he would donate \$AUD1000 towards the scheme. [See page 17 for details].

5.5. Crocodilian Management Capacity Building Manual

The Chairman advised that there was a pressing need for the CSG to make a wide range of information readily available on the new website and that it may be necessary for CSG to pay someone to coordinate the preparation of the Manual. It was agreed that this proposal should proceed.

5.6. Castillos Award

The Chairman advised that the Executive had considered several nominations and the successful recipient would be announced at the Bolivian Dinner on the evening of 4 June. [The Castillos Award was presented to Zilca Campos from Brazil; see page 16].

6. Other Business

The Chairman briefly advised members of the outcome of the matters discussed by the CSG Executive on 1 June. This included:

1. The need to restructure some of our regions and appointments of Steering Committee members, prior to the IUCN Congress (Barcelona, October 2008).

- a. It has been agreed to split Africa into two regions

- "West Africa" and "East & South Africa".

- b. Proposed changes to the Latin America and Caribbean Region are under consideration.
- c. Appointment of new Regional Chairs for West Asia and East & Southeast Asia is also under consideration.

2. The Status and Conservation Action Plan is being reviewed and updated by Colin Stevenson.
 3. The Philippine Crocodile and Siamese Crocodile Working Groups were disbanded.
 4. A CSG Charter will be developed to guide the future operations and management of the CSG, leading to the creation of a Foundation to handle the financial affairs of the CSG.
7. Next CSG Working Meeting (2010)

Approaches are being made to find a host for the 20th Working Meeting and members will be advised when a venue has been determined.

No other business was raised and the meeting closed at 1730 h.

[Minutes of the Steering Committee meeting are available at "www.iucncsg.org/ph1/modules/Publications/reports.html"]

Letter 1: Burkina Faso Regional Meeting

Mr. Alain Edouard Traore
Conseiller des Affaires Etrangères
Le Secrétaire Général
Du Ministère de L'Environnement
Et du Cadre de Vie
Burkina Faso

27 June 2008

Dear Mr. Traore,

Thank-you for your letter of 11 June 2008 regarding the proposed West African CSG sub-regional meeting at Ranch du Gibier de Nazinga in Burkina Faso, together with the names of members of the organising committee. I wish to gratefully thank the Government of Burkina Faso for undertaking to host this meeting.

We would be interested to know your preferred dates for convening this meeting. The CSG would like to suggest late 2009 (November) or early 2010 (January-February) as possible dates for your consideration.

The CSG is still holding \$US3500 that was raised through the auction at the CSG meeting in 2006, to assist your proposed meeting. Whilst we can increase this contribution to a total of \$US7000, as previously promised, it will be necessary for your organisers to seek support funding from other sources.

Recognising the importance of crocodile issues in West Africa, at the recent CSG meeting in Bolivia (2-7 June 2008) a decision was made to recognise West Africa as a CSG region. Dr. Samuel Martin was appointed as CSG Regional Chairman for West Africa. Dr Martin (s.martin@lafermeauxcrocodiles.com) and the CSG Executive Officer Tom Dacey (csg@wmi.com.au)

should be considered as CSG contacts for the meeting.

Yours sincerely,
Dr. Grahame Webb
Chairman, IUCN-SSC Crocodile Specialist Group

Letter 2: Chairman of CITES Standing Committee regarding Madagascar

H.E. Sr. Cristián Maquieira
Presidente del Comité Permanente de la CITES
Dirección de Medio Ambiente
Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores
Santiago
Chile
E-mail: cmaquieira@minrel.gov.cl; cmaquieira@yahoo.com

26 June 2008

Re: SC57 Doc. 22 - Ranching Operations (Madagascar)

Dear Sr. Maquieira,

The following information is provided for the 57th meeting of the CITES Steering Committee. It is intended to supplement information provided by the CITES Management Authority of Madagascar, and relates specifically to a workplan developed to comply with SC recommendations.

1. In September 2007, a CSG Mission [Christine Lippai (CSG project coordinator), Charlie Manolis (CSG Regional Chairman Australia and Oceania), Dietrich Jelden (CSG Deputy Chairman)] visited Madagascar to assist the Government of Madagascar to implement the recommendations of the SC. A draft workplan was discussed with stakeholders, and formally adopted by Government at a roundtable workshop. A copy of the workplan was provided by the Government of Madagascar to the CITES Secretariat, to document its commitment to overall improvement of the current situation and to indicate its agreement with the SC recommendations. The adopted workplan as you know has been made available by the CITES Secretariat as SC57 Doc. 22 Annex to all participants of the 57th meeting of the CITES Standing Committee.
2. A preliminary analysis of nesting data collected during the 2007 CSG mission indicates a decline in nesting effort (40-50%) between 1996 and 2003 in one of the key nesting areas in Besalampy. Counts undertaken during an opportunistic aerial survey of crocodiles in the Mahavavy River conducted during the September 2007 CSG mission also suggest similar declines since the last aerial survey was undertaken in 1997.
3. Additional information provided by industry are currently being assessed with a view to developing a more defined reporting and monitoring system for the egg harvest this year.
4. In March 2008 the CSG project coordinator, Christine Lippai visited Madagascar again. Since the previous CSG mission there had been several staff changes, including the Director General of DGEEF, and links were re-formed with new personnel. Government and Industry reaffirmed their commitment to improving the management of *C. niloticus*, and various workplan activities were planned.

5. Population monitoring surveys have been organized to be carried out between 20 July and 10 August 2008, with funding being provided by the German governments Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) and industry, and involving international (CSG) and national consultants. These surveys will provide baseline data on which an annual monitoring program will be developed, and allow population size and structure to be quantified. Training will also be provided to national counterparts.
6. Assessment of crocodile ranch production and development of a monitoring system for skins and/or products will also be progressed during July-August 2008. A study to quantify and assess human-crocodile conflict in different regions of the country has also been initiated.

The information which will be collected in the next few months will definitely serve to provide a more in depth report by the Government of Madagascar to the 58th meeting of the CITES Standing Committee as decided by the Committee by postal procedure based on the recommendations contained in SC55 Doc. 13. I would therefore not object if this letter would made available to the attendants of the Steering Committee as an information document.

The major challenge currently in front of the Malagasy Government is the implementation of a management plan suited to the specific needs of this large, poor country, which could include an unconditional transfer of *C. niloticus* to Appendix II at CoP15, with establishment of a sound sustainable wild harvest and overall improvement of the ranching scheme.

Again I do hope that this additional information provided through this note might be useful for the discussions of agenda item 22 at the forthcoming 57th meeting of the CITES Standing Committee for which I would like to wish you all the best.

Yours sincerely,
Dr. Grahame Webb
Chairman, IUCN-SSC Crocodile Specialist Group

cc.: CITES Secretariat, Mr. Willem Wijnstekers

Letter 3: Cambodia and *Crocodylus siamensis*

H.E. Dr. Nao Thuok 29 June 2008
Director General, Department of Fisheries
PO Box 582
Phnom Penh
Cambodia
Email: naothuok.fia@maff.gov.kh

Dear Nao,

Our recent Crocodile Specialist Group meeting in Santa Cruz was very successful and it was regrettable that neither you nor Heng Sovannara was able to attend and participate. At the CSG Steering Committee meeting discussion was also held on the "intractable" problem in the East & Southeast Asia Region with *C. siamensis*. There are many captive breeding farms (>1000 in Vietnam, >900 in Cambodia, etc.), but few animals remaining in the wild. Conventional ways of dealing with the problem have met with little success, and perhaps more innovative options need to be examined. It was agreed that it is a complex logistic situation and called for a roundtable

discussion between the relevant countries (Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, and China).

You may remember that I emailed you in September 2007 with the idea of the CSG buying some *C. siamensis* hatchlings, mark them distinctively, and release them to the wild. It is our understanding that the price paid for hatchlings now is much reduced, and that as a consequence, it may be economically possible to buy a few thousand. The appearance of any of these animals in trade or on farms would obviously need to be a serious offence. I would like to pursue this idea with you further and would appreciate any ideas that you might have on this proposal.

Yours sincerely
Dr. Grahame Webb
Chairman, IUCN-SSC Crocodile Specialist Group

Letter 4: Colombian Minister of Environment

Ministro Juan Lozano Ramirez, 17 June 2008
Ministerio de Ambiente, Vivienda y
Desarrollo Territorial,
Calle 37 #8-40, Piso 4,
Bogota, Colombia
ministro@minambiente.gov.co
fax: 57.1.332 34 00

Dear Minister,

re: Issues concerning Colombia at the 19th Working Meeting of the IUCN-SSC Crocodile Specialist Group (Santa Cruz, Bolivia 2-7 June, 2007)

At the 19th CSG Working Meeting, progress in the conservation, management and sustainable use of crocodylians in different countries was reviewed by the 220 attendees from 26 countries involved in the meeting. With regard to Colombia, the following issues were discussed/resolved:

1. The CSG applauds the recent crocodylian conservation initiatives reported from Colombia, particularly the ranching program for *Caiman crocodilus fuscus* and the research programs with *Crocodylus acutus*, both of which involve local communities and generate benefits that help the livelihoods of rural people.
2. The CSG also welcomes the new regulations and initiatives concerning the marking of captive-bred hatchlings ("scar" identification) and inventory of adults, as part of Colombia's commitment to ensuring international trade in Caiman skins from Colombia is legal, verifiable and sustainable.
3. As you may be aware, CITES trade statistics are analysed by the World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC) in the UK, and the data are publicly available on the WCMC website. The CSG has been asked to comment on the latest WCMC assessment for world trade in crocodylians skins, which for Colombia indicates some disturbing trends with 2006 exports of Caiman skins (attached):
 - (a) In 2006 with the lifting of Colombia's self-imposed quota, exports of whole skins increased from 560,115 in 2005 to 925,835 in 2006 (60%; 365,720 skins), flanks from 78,824 to 89,791 (14%; 10,967 flanks)

and tails from 44,615 to 49,051 (10%; 4436 tails).

- (b) This does not appear to be explicable by any major expansion in farm production capacity prior to 2006, and could indicate that a significant number of wild-harvested animals and skins entered trade in contravention of Colombian legislation.
- (c) The numbers of flanks in trade, which come from Caiman larger than the 1.2 m maximum size limit self-imposed by Colombia, does not appear to be explicable by even a 10% recycling of adult breeding stock on farms (total stocks thought to be around 110,000 adults), nor by the raising of Caiman to this size on farms which appears uneconomic. It could again indicate significant wild harvest is involved.
- (d) CSG members who have been involved in inspecting shipments of Caiman skins from Colombia (as part of their duties in the CITES Management Authorities of importing nations) indicate it is common for skins from large Caiman to have the tails cut off so that the skins are less than 1.2 m (rather than the animals from which they came being less than 1.2 m). The large tails, in turn, are exported separately, but also cut to ensure they are less than 60 cm long, so they appear to be from animals <1.2 m, but clearly come from much larger animals.

The CSG wants to ensure that you are aware of these potential difficulties, namely that the number of skins exported in 2006 appears well in excess of what can be produced through captive breeding and that the size of skins exported may often exceed the size limits established by Colombia.

The CSG also discussed various actions that could improve implementation of Colombia's Caiman breeding program and increase compliance with Colombian national legislation:

- (i) To implement stronger sanctions nationally against people who do not comply with Colombian legislation concerning the size of Caiman which can be legally exported and traded.
- (ii) To investigate mechanisms through which the skins exported are inspected with regard to ensuring compliance with the size limits imposed by Colombia.
- (iii) Until appropriate enforcement mechanisms with regard to the size of Caiman that can be legally exported from Colombia are in place, to prohibit trade in flanks, tails and skins with incomplete tails.
- (iv) To develop and test definitive enforcement tools for estimating the size of Caiman from whole skins, flanks and tails, in both raw and processed form [a morphometric study which the CSG can assist if requested to do so].
- (v) To continue with the marking of captive-bred hatchlings ("scar" identification) and implement export controls requiring the tail tip and "scar" to be included with each skin. [A research study aimed at identification of original scars (legal) versus recent scars (illegal), in raw and processed skins, is now underway in Argentina with Caiman species].

- (vi) Obtain an estimate of the number of Caiman raising stock on farms now (2008) without "scars" (that is, animals hatched prior to 2007), which should disappear from trade by 2009-2010, by which time all skins in trade from Colombia should have a "scar" identification.
- (vii) Obtain an estimate of the numbers of larger Caiman on farms (>1.2 m; mainly breeding stock) and the rate at which they are killed and/or die, so that a future quota on skins greater than 1.2 m can be developed.
- (viii) Seek assistance from the Parties to CITES with the implementation of Colombia's 1.2 m size limit by providing them with the enforcement tools to rapidly estimate the size of animal from skins and/or pieces of skin in the export shipment [see (iv) above].

Please be assured Minister, that the CSG fully supports your Government's efforts to conserve, manage and sustainably use Caiman, and to overcome perceived difficulties with Colombia's management program. Within the limits of CSG capacity, we will continue to assist Colombia where possible.

As advised previously, there is no conservation barrier to Colombia legalising elements of wild harvest within their program. Captive breeding, ranching and wild harvest are all involved in management programs for crocodylians in other countries (eg American alligators in USA, Yacare caimans in Bolivia, Saltwater crocodiles in Australia and Papua New Guinea), reducing incentives to take and trade illegally.

In summary, WCMC analyses of world trade in crocodylian skins, using public data, have highlighted potential anomalies with Colombian exports. The CSG has been asked to comment upon them. The issue was discussed openly and transparently by CSG members, and the results will form part of the minutes of the CSG Working Meeting. Accordingly, the CITES Secretariat and CITES Management Authorities of the major importers of Colombian Caiman skins (eg European Commission, Japan, Mexico, Singapore and Thailand) will be fully informed about the WCMC analysis and the CSG concerns extended to you through this letter.

We look forward to any attention/clarification you can provide, and remain,

Yours respectfully
Dr. Grahame Webb
Chairman, IUCN-SSC Crocodile Specialist Group

Copies: Claudia Patricia Mora Pineda (cmora@minambiente.gov.co); Maria del Pilar Pardo (mpardo@minambiente.gov.co)

Letter 5: Ecuador Minister

Dra. Marcela Aguiñaga 10 de Junio, 2008
Ministra del Ambiente del Ecuador
Avenidas Amazonas y Eloy Alfaro
Edificio del Ministerio de Agricultura, Piso 8
Quito
Ecuador
Email: pgaliano@ambiente.gov.ec

Estimada Señora Ministra,

El Grupo de Especialistas de Cocodrilos de la Comisión de Supervivencia de Especies de la UICN le envía un cordial saludo desde la 19ava Reunión Mundial de Trabajo realizada en Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia.

El motivo de esta carta es consultarle sobre los planes del gobierno del Ecuador con relación al estatus del caimán negro *Melanosuchus niger* desde que en 1994 la 9º Conferencia de las Partes de CITES aprobó, por primera vez para la especie, el paso del Apéndice I al Apéndice II para las poblaciones del Ecuador exclusivamente, con cuota cero. Ante la desaparición de la empresa comercial sobre cuyo plan de manejo de la especie se hizo el traslado del Apéndice I al II de CITES, permanece entonces la duda en la comunidad internacional sobre la validez y la utilidad de la permanencia de las poblaciones ecuatorianas del caimán negro en el Apéndice II de CITES. Por este motivo, quisiéramos conocer los planes que tiene el gobierno ecuatoriano con el estatus especial que le otorga el Apéndice II de CITES a las poblaciones ecuatorianas de esta valiosa especie.

La preocupación de la comunidad internacional sobre la situación del programa de caimán negro en Ecuador no es nueva, ya que vuestro país estuvo incluido en nuestra gira de revisión sobre diferentes países latinoamericanos, y en el informe con los resultados de la misma, en virtud de las entrevistas mantenidas con las autoridades se expresa sobre el programa que: “El Ministerio considera que debe ser revisado y adaptarse a las nuevas realidades el proyecto original del ranching o recolección de neonatos, basándose en la experiencia obtenida durante los años, se debe continuar con el monitoreo de las poblaciones naturales y realizar una evaluación de las potenciales áreas de reproducción de la especie en su hábitat natural, para posteriormente tomar una decisión sobre el futuro de la cría en granjas con fines comerciales del *M. niger* en el país”. Una copia de este reporte fue entregada a las autoridades ecuatorianas en el año 2005, a pesar de lo cual vemos que no se ha avanzado en ninguna de las actividades, por lo que interpretamos que no existiría intención de proseguir con la actividad en el país, debiendo considerarse la posibilidad de re-clasificar la especie nuevamente en el Apéndice I de CITES.

Le reiteramos nuestra mejor voluntad de colaboración y buena predisposición, para asistir a Ecuador en la conservación y manejo de las especies de cocodrilos del país, cuando su administración así lo requiera.

Cordialmente
Dr. Grahame Webb
Presidente, Grupo de Especialistas de Cocodrilos de UICN

Copia Dr Manuel Bravo Subsecretario Capital Natural
Secretariado CITES
Comité de Fauna de CITES
Email: cites@ambiente.gov.ec

Letter 6: Paraguay CITES Management Authority

Mr Carlos C. Ovelar 25 June 2008
Asesor del Ministro
Secretaria del Ambiente (SEAM)
Presidencia de la Republica
Avenida Madame Lynch 3500
Asuncion
Paraguay
E-mail: covelar@gmailcom; covelar@seam.gov.py

Dear Senior Ovelar,

Re: National program for the management of *Caiman yacare* in Paraguay

In response to your letter of 6 June 2008, concerning the “National Program for the Management of *Caiman yacare* in Paraguay”, I take pleasure in advising you that:

1. A preliminary draft of the management document was considered at the CSG Steering Committee Meeting in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, on 2 June 2008.
2. The draft management document was then circulated to a team of CSG members for more detailed review and comments (Alfonso Llobet Querejazu, Alvaro Velasco, Carlos Piña, Charlie Manolis and Dietrich Jelden), and the response coordinated by the CSG Deputy Chairman, Alejandro Larriera.
3. The detailed comments received back from the CSG review process are attached with this letter for your information and consideration. We hope it will help you in your quest to improve the National program.
4. In overview, the current program is considered to be a significant improvement on the previous program from 2004. It is more realistic and should be easy to implement, providing that the enforcement activities are themselves properly implemented. The program should generate economic incentives for local communities, and we hope that this will ensure that they are more actively involved in conservation, not just of the species, but also of the ecosystem that it inhabits.
5. Although the reviewers’ comments and minor corrections on the draft document are attached, the most important issues in the view of the reviewers are:
 - (a) The statement below, which on page 22 in the summary report of the 50th meeting of the CITES Standing Committee (<http://www.cites.org/eng/com/SC/50/E50-SumRep.pdf>), should be included in the ‘Background’ of the document “In relation to Paraguay, the Committee recognized the efforts undertaken by this Party to implement the actions identified in the action plan. It acknowledged that, until the Secretariat and Paraguay were jointly satisfied that sufficient remedial action had been taken, Paraguay would maintain its moratorium in place. With regard to exports of existing stocks of legally acquired reptile specimens, these would be authorized provided that the Secretariat, in cooperation with the IUCN Crocodile Specialist Group, was satisfied that the conditions mentioned by Paraguay were fully met,

i.e. the implementation of management plans and the establishment of solid bases to ensure the internal control of trade”.

- (b) Consideration should be given to basing the program on the utilization of the largest size class (Class IV) only. Exploitation of Class II individuals, as well as Class IV animals, could be unsustainable on the one hand and be almost impossible to control on the other.
- (c) Both monitoring and harvesting dates should be specified. It is also recommended that monitoring surveys only be carried out before the harvest, between 30 to 60 days prior to the hunting season, in order to determine the quotas. Surveys after the harvest should not be required.
- (d) It is not clear why a time limit of 5 years has been placed on the harvest program, and that it be replaced by a farming/ranching program by that time. If the wild harvest program is sustainable, it should be able to continue indefinitely.
- (e) A mechanism to prevent the laundering illegal skins must be implemented. The placing of tags on skins after tanning will definitely not suffice for this purpose.. The preferred way of doing this is to implement a tagging system which begins at the time of hunting, and which continues all the way through tanning, until the time of export of the skins. Such a tagging system is now approved in Argentina and is also about to start in Bolivia.

The proposal makes no mention about the current stockpiles of *Caiman yacare* skins held in Paraguay since 2003.

The CSG agrees that the program presented by SEAM is a positive step forward, as long as the recommendations and modifications proposed in this review are taken into account. We are thus now prepared to support any agreement on the stockpile reached between the CITES Secretariat and the Paraguayan Government.

Yours sincerely,
Dr. Grahame Webb
Chairman, IUCN-SSC Crocodile Specialist Group
