

1.29 Trade in Sturgeon

NOTING that the world trade in the caviar of sturgeon (Acipenseridae) has almost tripled in volume since 1991, from 150 tons to over 350 tons;

AWARE that the IUCN Species Survival Commission has listed all three of the major caviar-producing sturgeon species – beluga (*Huso huso*), sevruga (*Acipenser stellatus*) and Russian (*Acipenser gueldenstaedti*) – as Endangered;

CONCERNED that there is very little if any natural reproduction of beluga sturgeon in the wild – the Black Sea population is on the verge of extinction, the Caspian Sea population survives only as a result of restocking, the Adriatic Sea population is extinct and it is unclear whether spawning continues at the last remaining natural site in the Ural River;

ALARMED that because of poaching, the hatcheries which raise beluga sturgeon for restocking have no brood stock and have been forced to discontinue their restocking programmes;

DEEPLY CONCERNED that consumers are unaware that the flood of caviar for sale in markets worldwide results from criminal poaching and is causing the extinction of sturgeon species;

RECOGNIZING that urgent and concerted measures are needed to protect the very existence of several sturgeon species and to maintain a commercial trade in caviar at sustainable levels;

The World Conservation Congress at its 1st Session in Montreal, Canada, 14–23 October 1996:

1. CALLS ON States party to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) to submit before 10 January 1997 a proposal to the CITES Secretariat for consideration at the Tenth Conference of the Parties to CITES (June 1997) to include commercially exploited sturgeon species on the Appendices of CITES;
2. URGES States to alert their CITES enforcement agencies to prepare to control trade in any listed sturgeon species and their products, especially caviar;
3. ENCOURAGES exporting States to adopt a labelling standard that requires the species name on all sturgeon products, especially caviar;
4. URGES those States located on (a) the Danube and Black Sea, (b) the Caspian Sea and (c) the Amur River, to conclude regional treaties to control all fishing of sturgeon, and to make enforcement of anti-poaching laws a high conservation priority in those regions;
5. CALLS ON all retailers and wholesalers of caviar to adopt a voluntary moratorium on the sale of beluga caviar until such time as the species is no longer threatened with extinction and poaching is brought under control.

Note. This Recommendation was adopted by consensus. The delegation of the State member Norway indicated that had there been a vote the delegation would have abstained.