



MEDIA RELEASE

NT Wildlife Trade Expert to Chair CITES Committee

The international trade of elephant ivory, leopard skins, sharks, corals and orchids are set to be several hotly-debated issues at an international conference held in Europe next week.

Chairing an integral part of the conference will be Northern Territory wildlife trade expert Dr Greg Leach, Executive Director of the Biodiversity Conservation Unit within the Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts.

Dr Leach said the CITES Conference of the Parties (CoP) being held at The Hague in The Netherlands from 3-15 June would also focus on tropical timber tree species and Australia's northern sawfish, among many other plant and animal species.

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) of Wild Flora and Fauna is a United Nations agreement to ensure that international trade does not threaten wildlife with extinction.

The NT has had a long-standing interest and active involvement in the Convention due to its international trade in crocodile and Cycad products.

Dr Leach, who leaves Darwin on Thursday, said he was extremely proud and honoured to be chairing an important element of next month's conference.

"The CITES 14th CoP will be split into two committees to debate and vote on particular elements relating to the international wildlife trade," Dr Leach said.

"I will be chairing Committee 1, which focuses on the scientific elements within CITES such as what trade in wildlife might be sustainable or not, whereas Committee 2 looks at permits and other compliance or administrative-related issues.

"The majority of the 1500 to 2000 people, who attend the conference representing the 170 signatory countries and non-government organisations, will be attending Committee 1 so part of my role will be to control the debate and ensure discussion and voting remains within their allotted time.

"An item on the agenda that I anticipate will gain much attention is whether the trade in elephant ivory should be altogether banned or if it should be allowed under CITES where its trade can be strictly administered without the threat of a black market opening up, which some nations fear could happen."

Dr Leach is also a representative on the CITES Plants committee and represents the broader region of Oceania signatory countries of Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Palau and Samoa. The Plants Committee, deals with technical matters and reports to the CoP.

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Media Note – For more information contact Greg Leach on 8999 4520 or 0401 118 454.

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