



CITES CoP19

For Prelims: CITES, Shisham, Sea Cucumber, Red Crowned Roofed Turtle, CoP 19, Wildlife Protection Act 1972

For Mains: CITES, Outcomes of CoP19, Conservation Efforts.

Why in News?

The 19th Meeting of the **Conference of the Parties (CoP19)** to the [Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora \(CITES\)](#) is being held at Panama City.

- CoP19 is also known as **the World Wildlife Conference**.

What are the Highlights of the Conference?

- **52 proposals** have been put forward that would affect **the regulations on international trade for:** sharks, reptiles, hippos, songbirds, rhinos, 200 tree species, orchids, elephants, turtles and more.
- India's [Shisham \(*Dalbergia sissoo*\)](#) is included in **Appendix II** of the convention, thereby requiring it to follow CITES regulations for the trade of the species.
 - A relief was provided by easing the CITES rules for export of *Dalbergia sissoo* based products. This is expected to **boost Indian handicraft exports**.
- The Conference has accepted a proposal to include [sea cucumbers \(*Thelepena*\)](#) in **Appendix II** of the Convention.
 - An analysis published by the [Wildlife Conservation Society-India \(WCS-India\)](#) this September showed that sea cucumbers were the most frequently trafficked marine species in India from 2015-2021.
 - Tamil Nadu had recorded the highest number of marine wildlife seizures during this period, according to the analysis. The state was followed by Maharashtra, Lakshadweep and Karnataka.
- India's proposal for induction of **fresh water turtle [Batagur kachuga \(Red Crowned Roofed Turtle\)](#)** earned wide support of the parties in CoP 19 of CITES. It was widely appreciated by the **parties and well accepted when introduced**.
 - **Operation Turtshield**, India's efforts to curb wildlife crime was appreciated.
 - India also highlighted that many of the species of turtles and freshwater tortoises which are recognized as critically endangered, endangered, vulnerable or near threatened are already included in [Wildlife Protection Act 1972](#) and given high degree of protection.
- India has decided not to vote against a proposal to re-open the international [trade in ivory](#) at the ongoing conference.

What is CITES?

- CITES is an **international agreement between governments — 184** at present — to ensure that international trade in wild animals and plants does not threaten the survival of the species.

- The convention entered into force **in 1975 and India became the 25th party** — a state that voluntarily agrees to be bound by the Convention — in 1976.
- States that have agreed to be bound by the Convention ('joined' CITES) are known as Parties.
- Although **CITES is legally binding on the Parties** - in other words they have to implement the Convention - it does not take the place of national laws.
- All import, export and re-export of species covered **under CITES must be authorised through a permit system.**
- Every two to three years, the Conference of the Parties meets to review the implementation of the Convention.
- **It has three appendices:**
 - **Appendix I**
 - It lists species that are the most endangered among CITES-listed animals and plants.
 - Examples include gorillas, sea turtles, most lady slipper orchids, and giant pandas. Currently 1082 species are listed.
 - They are **threatened with extinction and CITES prohibits international trade in specimens** of these species except when the purpose of the import is not commercial, for instance for scientific research.
 - **Appendix II**
 - It lists species that are **not necessarily now threatened with extinction** but that may become so unless trade is closely controlled.
 - Most CITES species are listed in this Appendix, including American ginseng, paddlefish, lions, American alligators, mahogany and many corals.
 - It also includes so-called "look-alike species", i.e., species whose specimens in trade look like those of species listed for conservation reasons.
 - **Appendix III**
 - It is a list of species **included at the request of a Party that already regulates trade** in the species and that needs the cooperation of other countries to prevent unsustainable or illegal exploitation.
 - Examples include map turtles, walrus and Cape stag beetles. Currently 211 species are listed.
 - International trade in specimens of species listed in this Appendix is allowed only on presentation of the appropriate permits or certificates.
 - Species may be added to or removed from **Appendix I and II**, or moved between them, only by the Conference of the Parties.

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