



50 Years of CITES

[Source: UN](#)

Why in News?

The [Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora \(CITES\)](#) completed 50 years on 1st July 2025.

Note: The United Nations General Assembly designated **3rd March** as [UN World Wildlife Day](#) in 2013, to **coincide with the anniversary of the signing of CITES.**

What is CITES?

- **About:** CITES, also known as the Washington Convention, was signed on 3rd March 1973 during the World Wildlife Conference and came into force on 1st July 1975. It was drafted following a 1963 resolution adopted by the [International Union for Conservation of Nature \(IUCN\)](#) to regulate wildlife trade.
 - The Convention now has 185 Parties, including India (a member since 1976) and the European Union.
 - Administered by the [UN Environment Programme \(UNEP\)](#) in Geneva, CITES regulates international trade in over 40,000 species of wild animals and plants, including live specimens and wildlife-derived products.
 - The treaty aims to ensure that such trade is sustainable, legal, and traceable, supporting biodiversity, local livelihoods, and national economies in line with the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#).
- **Working Procedure:** CITES regulates international trade through permits for export, import, re-export, and sea introduction. Each member country appoints management and scientific authorities to oversee licensing and conservation advice.
 - **Appendices System:**
 - **Appendix I:** Species threatened with extinction. Trade is highly restricted.
 - **Appendix II:** Species not endangered but need controlled trade to avoid risk.
 - **Appendix III:** Species protected by at least one country that seeks cooperation to regulate trade.
 - Changes to Appendices I and II are decided at the [Conference of the Parties \(CoP\)](#), while Appendix III can be amended unilaterally by individual Parties.
- **Importance:** Wildlife trade is a multi-billion dollar global industry, and unregulated trade alongside habitat loss threatens many species with extinction.
 - CITES is recognized as one of the most effective environmental agreements, supported by tools like the **CITES Trade Database** (a global reference on legal wildlife trade) **and clear guidelines for enforcement and legal acquisition.**
 - It has helped save **critically endangered species such as African elephants, pangolins, and crocodiles.**
 - Initiatives like the [Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants \(MIKE\)](#) Programme have significantly reduced poaching in Africa and Asia.

- All species listed in the **CITES Appendices** are now included in **Schedule IV of the [Wild Life \(Protection\) Amendment Act, 2022](#)**, reflecting India's strengthened cooperation with CITES.
- **UN and CITES:** CITES complements the work of other UN entities, such as the **[Food and Agriculture Organization \(FAO\)](#)** to improve fisheries management, capacity building and technical cooperation with the **Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)**, and initiatives focusing on the youth with the UN Development Programme.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. With reference to the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), which of the following statements is/are correct? (2015)

1. IUCN is an organ of the United Nations and CITES is an international agreement between governments.
2. IUCN runs thousands of field projects around the world to better manage natural environments.
3. CITES is legally binding on the States that have joined it, but this Convention does not take the place of national laws.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (b)

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