

# The Washington Convention (CITES)



Currently, an increasing decline in global biodiversity is being observed. The main reason is the loss of habitats. The second important factor of species decline is their over-exploitation.

A special agreement on international trade in endangered species of wild animals and plants, called the Washington Convention or CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) regulates this practice. The text of the Convention was agreed upon 1973 at a meeting in Washington, D.C., with the aim to protect certain animal and plant species against over-exploitation through international trade and maintaining those species throughout their range at a level consistent with their role in the ecosystem. Currently, 182 countries and the EU are Parties to the Convention worldwide.

The Convention encompasses three Annexes including approximately 30 000 species of plants and 5 800 species of animals. Their protection is slightly different according to the Annex they are in and is connected with their threat status.

Annex I - includes over 1000 species threatened with extinction. Trade in them is only permitted in exceptional cases.

Annex II - there are about 35 000 species that are currently not endangered by the international trade, but the trade must be controlled, as acquisition of specimens from the wild may lead to their extinction.

Annex III - contains about 220 protected species in at least one country that has asked CITES Parties for help in controlling trade.

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