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## New Pact Addresses Trade in China's Endangered Wildlife

**BEIJING, China, July 3, 2002 (ENS)** - Better protection of endangered species in China is the goal of a new agreement of cooperation formalized late last month between the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) and the Chinese government agency responsible for enforcing the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).

IFAW and the CITES Management Authority of China (CITES China), a government agency, signed an official Memorandum of Cooperation June 27, laying out framework for more regular and effective cooperation between the two parties during the period of 2002 to 2005.

The two groups will focus on enhancing public

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awareness of wildlife protection, enforcing implementation of CITES regulations, strengthening investigation of wildlife trade, and improving the management of import and export of wildlife in China.

"The Chinese government needs constructive support from all social circles, including specialized animal protection organizations in enforcing the implementation of CITES regulations in China," said Meng Xianlin, deputy director of CITES China Authority. "We believe this cooperation with IFAW will help improve the healthy development of wildlife protection in China."

IFAW will fund cooperative projects with CITES China and provide technological assistance to strengthen the government capacity in enforcing CITES regulations in China.

"Through the deepening of our cooperation with CITES China, IFAW, as an international NGO, will play a bigger role in reducing large-scale commercial exploitation of animals, protecting endangered species and enhancing animal welfare in China," said Aster Zhang, IFAW China acting country director.

IFAW will assist in training for law enforcement, compiling handbooks for identification of key animal species and their products and producing teaching materials for wildlife import and export management.

The two parties will also conduct investigations of trade in key wildlife species, including domestic and foreign trade, domestic smuggling and illegal transactions, and exchange information on international legal and illegal trade. Both parties agree to make an effort in promoting information exchange and cooperation among Asian countries in the implementation of CITES regulations.

Since 1999 IFAW and CITES China have cooperated in the protection of endangered Tibetan antelope through anti-poaching efforts and a crackdown on the illegal trade of Tibetan antelope wool used the manufacture of shahtoosh shawls.

In 2001, with assistance from IFAW, the proposal on Tibetan antelope protection and trade control presented by CITES China was passed by the 11th conference of countries that are Parties to the CITES treaty.

In March, IFAW supported CITES China to publish the English edition of "Identification Manual for Common Turtles and Tortoises." It will strengthen the management of trade in turtles and tortoises and aid enforcement officers at border crossings and customs.

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### **Malaysia to Bar Indonesian Logs**

**LONDON, UK, July 3, 2002 (ENS) -** The Malaysian Minister of Primary Industries Lim Keng Yaik announced last week a ban on all logs from Indonesia, saying that the move was aimed at combating allegations that the country is buying illegally sourced timber.

The Indonesian environmental group Telapak and the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) of London and Washington have cautiously welcomed this commitment.

"Malaysia has recently been responsible for laundering millions of dollars of illegally logged Indonesian timber on to international markets," said Dave Currey, EIA director. "We are glad to see Malaysia finally ban log imports from Indonesia. If this new measure is enforced it should greatly reduce illegal logging in Indonesia. We now look forward to see if this new policy will be enforced."

EIA and Telapak will be monitoring the situation closely.

The new regulation comes after a series of investigations carried out by EIA and Telapak exposed the trade to Malaysia of timber stolen from Indonesia's dwindling forests.

In May, an EIA/Telapak team discovered new and expanded facilities on the coast of Peninsular Malaysia where illegal logs from Indonesia were being unloaded in what the EIA describes as "huge numbers," their import processed through an official customs post.

The information was followed up by a team from the UK's BBC news and reported worldwide exposed on prime time television. A UK government minister expressed serious concerns.

Last November, the Indonesian government banned log exports in an attempt to crack down on the illegal trade. Despite a commitment to assist Indonesia enforce the new regulations, an estimated three million cubic metres of illegally felled Indonesian timber enters Malaysia every year - a trade worth more than half a billion dollars.

Indonesia contains 10 percent of the world's remaining tropical forests. Over 70 per cent of Indonesia's original frontier forests have been lost. Research indicates that over 70 per cent of timber processed in Indonesia comes from illegal sources.

Illegal logging accounts for over 70 percent of log production in Indonesia, and without drastic action the country's tropical forests will disappear within 10 years, environmentalists estimate.

Malaysia is the largest exporter of tropical timber in the world and is a major exporter of wood furniture. In 2000 the value of Malaysia's exports of tropical logs, sawn, ply and veneer was in excess of US\$2.4 billion, while wood furniture exports were valued at over US\$1 billion.

In April the UK government signed an agreement with the government of Indonesia to work to stop illegal logging and the trade in stolen timber from Indonesia. Currey says Malaysia's role has been threatening to undermine international efforts to control the problem.

Indonesia's threatened national parks provide a haven for critically endangered species, such as the orangutan, the Sumatran tiger, the Sumatran rhinoceros, the clouded leopard and the sun bear. EIA and Telapak have been campaigning to stop the illegal logging of Tanjung Puting National Park, Central Kalimantan, since August 1999.

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## **Jamaican Conch Exporters First to Face Charges**

**KINGSTON, Jamaica**, July 3, 2002 (ENS) - The three directors of Wilmot Seafood are facing criminal charges for exporting conch without an export certificate as required by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).

The three men were charged in the Ocho Rios Resident Magistrate's Court on June 24. They have each been granted bail in the amount of J\$300,000.

The charges come after a year long investigation facilitated by the Natural Resources Conservation Authority (NRCA), which is a part of the National Environment and Planning Agency, says spokesperson Rosemarie Chung.

This is the first prosecution under the NRCA Endangered Species Act of 2000 which provides for the protection, conservation and management of endangered wild animals and plants, and for the regulation of trade in such species.

The lucrative Jamaican Queen Conch fishery opened again in May 2001 more than two years after it was closed under a court injunction. Thousands of people lost their jobs as a court battle between government agencies and conch exporters stopped the harvest of more than a million kilos (1,100 tons) of the shellfish delicacy annually.

A closed season is a part of new conch fishery rules to allow the conch population to recover from the ravages of fishing. This is done through a strict program of monitoring, protection and control through a quota system that was developed by local and international scientists to preserve the queen conch.

Chung says the provisions of the NRCA Endangered Species Act were written to conform to the articles and resolutions of the CITES Convention. "Its aim is to ensure that

international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival," she said.

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### **First Critical Albatross Habitat Listed in Australia**

**CANBERRA, Australia**, July 3, 2002 (ENS) - Four albatross breeding sites will be added to the Register of Critical Habitat to protect the vulnerable species, federal Environment Minister David Kemp has announced. The birds are at risk from incidental capture and drowning during longline fishing activities as well as from introduced feral animals and disturbance of their foraging and breeding habitats.

The critical habitat sites at Albatross Island, Mewstone, Pedra Branca and Macquarie Island are recognized as important breeding sites for the wandering, shy and grey-headed albatross. These species are listed under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC).

The Humane Society International (HSI) applauded the decision. HSI wildlife and habitat protection campaigner Rebecca Brand said, "These are the first listings on the EPBC Register since the Act came into force in July 2001. HSI is pleased that the Environment Minister is making use of this important conservation tool."

All three albatross species are considered vulnerable under the EPBC Act's threatened species list and were listed following past nominations from the Humane Society.

Listing of critical habitat sites will permit the Commonwealth government to impose penalties that include prison sentences upon people who knowingly cause significant damage to one of these areas.

"HSI hopes the listings of critical habitat sites for these vulnerable albatross species will pave the way for additional listings for other threatened seabirds," Brand said. The society

will now urge the minister to list Heard Island and Macdonald Islands as critical habitat for the endangered southern giant petrel.

"We look forward to critical habitat listings for EPBC listed threatened species including the blue whale, six species of marine turtle, the mountain pygmy possum, and the green and golden bell frog," Brand said.

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### **West African Fish Stocks Halved by Foreign Fleets**

**DAKAR, Senegal, July 3, 2002 (ENS)** - West Africa has lost half of its stocks of bottom fishes in the last 20 years, a world authority on global fisheries trends warned at a symposium here last week. The conservation group WWF is calling on the European Union to work with West African nations to avert a potentially catastrophic collapse in fish populations that provide food and income in countries such as Senegal and Mauritania.

At a June 28 press conference of WWF and the Sea Around Us Project based at the University of British Columbia, Canada, fisheries expert Dr. Daniel Pauly said, "The bottom fish biomass off the coast of Northwest Africa has now declined to less than a quarter of its value in 1950 while similar trends are occurring further south along the African coast all the way to Namibia."

The press conference took place at an international symposium in Dakar where Dr. Pauly and other members of the Sea Around Us Project presented papers showing the extent of the exploitation of West African fish resources.

"Despite a nearly threefold increase in fishing activity, catches of bottom fishes off the coast of Northwest Africa have been stagnating since the mid-1970s around two million tonnes," said Dr. Pauly

Claude Martin, director-general of WWF International, called on the European Union to take an international lead in preserving fish

stocks off the coast of West Africa.

"A collapse of fish stocks in West Africa could have significantly more serious human consequences than in Europe and North America," said Martin. "The reform of the European Union's fisheries policy provides an ideal opportunity to reverse its over-exploitation of the fish resources of West Africa."

Exploitation of West Africa's fish resources by foreign fleets has increased six fold from the 1960s to 1990s.

"The European Union, Russia and Asian countries are mainly responsible for over-exploiting the fish resources, which ought to be providing food for Africa now and in the future," said Martin.

In addition to promoting sustainable use of marine resources, WWF has established a marine program based in Dakar and launched a campaign to reduce the negative impact of European fishing fleets on developing countries.

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### **Rising Water Table Threatens Ancient Monuments**

**DAVIS, California**, July 3, 2002 (ENS) - The monuments of ancient Egypt may have stood for thousands of years in the desert sands, but now they face a new threat from rising groundwater.

Ayman Ahmed of the University of Sohag, Egypt, is working with Graham Fogg, professor of hydrology at the University of California, Davis, to study the problem and find ways to solve it.

Ahmed and Fogg are using data from sites including the temples at Luxor and Karnak to build a computer model of how groundwater moves under the monuments. They hope to find ways to prevent or reduce the damage.

Preliminary findings by Ahmed and Fogg

indicate that farming, urbanization and residential housing near the temples are causing water tables to rise. When the water table rises, the groundwater comes closer to the foundations, columns and walls of the antiquities, causing structural damage. Water and salts weaken the sandstone structures.

"Probably the most dangerous factors affecting the pharaonic monuments are urbanization and agricultural development," Ahmed said.

Damage to the monuments has worsened in the years since completion of the Aswan dam, allowing year-round irrigation of crops instead of seasonal flooding, said Fogg.

Ahmed approached Fogg's group after concluding that the University of California-Davis has one of the strongest hydrology programs in the world. "It's a fascinating problem," said Fogg.

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