



Main outcomes of the meeting of the EU Scientific Review Group of 15 September 2015

The European Union Scientific Review Group (SRG) adopted on 15 September 2015 opinions on the import into the EU of a number of CITES-listed species. It notably agreed to maintain its negative opinion with regard to the import of elephant hunting trophies from Tanzania and Mozambique, while agreeing on a positive opinion for the import of such trophies from Zambia. The SRG confirmed its previous opinions that the import of hunting trophies from lions from Tanzania, Zambia and Mozambique would continue to be subject to strict scrutiny. The SRG also decided to prolong until the end of 2016 the ban on the import and export of European eels and adopted opinions with regard to the import of tropical trees from the Congo basin (African cherry and African teak) into the EU.

The SRG decided to withdraw its negative opinion for the import of **hunting trophies for elephants from Zambia**. Further to the negative opinion adopted on 9 April 2015 and confirmed at the last SRG meeting on 2 July 2015, the authorities from Zambia provided extensive information to the SRG on the population numbers of elephants in their country and the results from an aerial survey conducted in 2013 in the three main ecosystems for elephants in the country (Luangwa, Kafue and Lower Zambezi), indicating that the population size was estimated at more than 33 000 elephants for these three ecosystems, with an increasing trend. They also indicated that a new survey was on-going, and communicated information on their hunting trophy management scheme, whereby 80 elephant trophies can be exported per year under a number of conditions. On the basis of the information provided, the SRG agreed on a positive opinion for future import of elephant hunting trophies into the EU, but recommended that Zambia share the results from the 2013 survey with the IUCN SSC African Elephant Specialist Group for analysis and incorporation in the African Elephant Database. The SRG maintained its opinion that each import of **hunting trophies of lions from Zambia** should be assessed on a case by case basis.

The SRG confirmed its negative opinion for the import of **hunting trophies for elephants from the United Republic of Tanzania**. Further to the adoption of the negative opinion on 2 July 2015, the authorities from Tanzania provided comprehensive information to the SRG on the recent efforts and actions taken to reduce mortality rates due to poaching and showing how much trophy hunting is important to generate revenues for wildlife conservation, development of rural communities and anti-poaching measures. In light of the very steep decrease of elephants in Tanzania in recent years, the SRG considered that it was not in a position to deliver a positive opinion for now. While recognising that progress has been done by Tanzania in the last year to counteract elephant poaching and ivory trafficking, the SRG indicated that information would be needed showing that these efforts have yielded the expected results and that the elephant population has stabilised, before forming a positive opinion for the import of elephant hunting trophies from Tanzania.

In relation to the import of **hunting trophies of lions from Tanzania**, the SRG maintained its current positive opinion but indicated that clarification would be needed from Tanzania on the setting of the national hunting quota for lion trophies to get reassurance that these quotas would be set according

to scientific recommendations. The SRG also encouraged Tanzania to continue to apply its age restriction system. The SRG will review the situation at its first meeting in 2016 based on the response from the Tanzanian authorities regarding their national hunting quota for lions.

The SRG maintained its negative opinion for the import of **hunting trophies for elephants from Mozambique**. The SRG also maintained its approach that each application for import of **hunting trophies for lions from Mozambique** should be assessed on a case by case basis.

The SRG also confirmed its negative opinion with regard to trade into and from the EU for the **European eel** (*Anguilla anguilla*). This opinion was first adopted in December 2010 and will be in place until the end of 2016, when it will be reviewed again. The European eel is ranked as critically endangered by IUCN and listed in Appendix II of the CITES Convention and Annex B of Council Regulation (EC) No 338/97. The SRG found that, while some progress has been achieved for its recovery in the last years (notably with the implementation of the EU Eel Regulation), its conservation status remains too poor to justify that international trade can resume pursuant to Council Regulation (EC) No 338/97.

The SRG discussed as well how to consider possible increases in export quotas for **African cherry** (*Prunus africana*) from the Democratic Republic of Congo and Cameroon. In all cases, the SRG agreed that the information available did not allow to conclude that the proposed increased quotas would be sustainable. It agreed in particular that it would only accept quota increases in the future provided that a number of conditions are met, including with regard to the monitoring of impacts of harvesting on the population of the species in exporting countries.

The SRG issued a positive opinion for imports of **African teak** (*Pericopsis elata*) from the Democratic Republic of the Congo with regard to an export quota of 31 905 m³ for the year 2015 based on the fact that the proposed quota is based on management inventories submitted to the forestry administration of DRC. However, the SRG could not accept the proposal from DRC to adopt an additional transitional quota of 19 058 m³ for timber felled in 2014 corresponding to an overall volume of 31 763 m³ in round wood equivalent.

Background information

African elephant (*Loxodonta africana*) populations from Tanzania, Mozambique and Zambia are included in Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) and Annex A of Council Regulation (EC) No 338/97. Commercial trade in elephants and their derived products such as ivory is banned.

Hunting trophies benefit from an exemption to this ban, given that they are considered as personal effects and in recognition of the fact that trophy hunting can play a positive role in conservation efforts. Import of hunting trophies is therefore authorised in the EU, under certain conditions designed to ensure that hunting trophy programmes are not detrimental to the conservation of the species, and provide conservation benefits in the case of Annex A species. These conditions are assessed by the Scientific Review Group, in line with Article 4 of Regulation (EC) No 338/97 and the EU Scientific Authorities guidelines available on the Commission's website.

More information on the EU wildlife trade regulations can be found here: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/cites/home_en.htm.