

Quo vadis? CITES, Conservation and Livelihoods

Prepared by Nikolas Sellheim for IWMC World Conservation Trust

Excerpts from Quo Vadis

The approach CITES has chosen as regards its recognition of livelihoods, namely its location within contexts of poverty, follows the Convention's strategic support for the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, particularly concerning the eradication of poverty and hunger (Goal 1) and ensuring environmental sustainability (Goal 7).

This support was expressed in Resolution Conf. 14.2. at CoP14 in 2007 in The Hague as part of CITES Strategic Vision: 2008–2013. While this may politically explain the conceptual linking of 'livelihoods' with 'poverty', another aspect should be considered, namely that of 'sustainable use' of species, which also falls under the ambit of CITES. Here, the inevitable clash of normative stances towards the use of, particularly, charismatic megafauna such as elephants rises to the fore – a clash which has, for instance, for many decades paralysed the International Whaling Commission.

Since CITES was 8 at its inception one of the first international treaties to actively seek the support of non-governmental organisations (Article XII), this has translated into a significant presence of organisations lobbying state representatives to either support or reject arguments for sustainable use. The large delegations of organisations opposing sustainable utilisation of animals, such as the International Fund for Animal Welfare, the Humane Society International/United States or the Species Survival Network bear witness to the efforts these organisations make in order to influence decision-making within CITES towards an end of non-utilisation.