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In reply please quote No. 2/83/36.....

DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL PARKS
AND WILDLIFE

P.O. BOX 30131

LILONGWE 3

MALAWI

1st June, 1990

Dr. Mustafa Tolba,
Executive Director,
United Nations Environment Programme,
P.O. Box 30552,
Nairobi, Kenya.

Dear Dr. Tolba,

On March 2, 1990 I wrote to you on behalf of the CITES Standing Committee regarding my intention to investigate your stated concerns over the matter of the conduct of the Secretary General with the press prior to the last meeting of the Conference of the Parties. I instructed the CITES Secretariat to prepare and circulate to Standing Committee members a package of materials including all contacts they had had with the press prior to the meeting. This was done, and the Standing Committee members have now all responded to my questions.

In summary, there is agreement among the members of the Standing Committee that the Secretary General did not breach the requirements of the Convention, or exceed his authority in his relations with the press. In fact, there is broad agreement that the published opinions of UNEP were much less neutral than those of the CITES Secretariat, and could more readily be described as advocacy of an Appendix I listing.

Members of the Standing Committee also took the opportunity to comment on the timing of the departure of Mr. Lapointe from the post of Secretary General. Once again, there was broad agreement among the members that a change should not be made until the time of the next meeting of the Conference of the Parties in Japan (March 1992), although a minority were prepared to accept a "compromise" date of early 1991.

Members of the Standing Committee have expressed surprise that UNEP has already issued a Vacancy Announcement for the post of the Secretary General, without further consultation with the Standing Committee and apparently without Mr. Lapointe having resigned. We feel that such unilateral action breaches the understanding that has existed for some time about the role of the Standing Committee in overseeing the operation of the Secretariat, an understanding that was formalized by the Conference of the Parties in Resolution Conf. 6.1, Annex 1. The UNEP representative to the 17th meeting of the Standing Committee in fact highlighted the situation with respect to the appointment of the Secretary General. The approved minutes of that meeting state, on page 12 under item 6a) "... the representative of UNEP gave the example of staff appointments, suggesting that the Executive Director would feel obliged to consult regarding the appointment of the Secretary General ...".

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May we urge you to reconsider your decision to conduct such a precipitous competition for a new Secretary General. It is still the position of the majority of members of the Standing Committee that Mr. Lapointe should remain in his position until the time of the next meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

While we do not want to seem to contest your decision, however, we are concerned that the timetable established by the Vacancy Announcement issued on May 18, 1990 does not provide adequate time to conduct a proper search for qualified candidates, and certainly does not provide enough time to properly involve the Standing Committee in the selection process. As the Secretary General of CITES serves the Conference of the Parties to CITES, and as the Parties to CITES have assumed financial responsibility for the Convention, it is essential that the Parties be notified when a decision is made to make a change. All Parties must have the opportunity to identify potential candidates for such a key position. It is essential that the Parties' representatives between meetings of the Conference of the Parties, the Standing Committee, be fully involved in making such a crucial decision as the selection of a new Secretary General.

CITES has been a remarkably successful force for conservation during the first 15 years of its life. It has accomplished many things, almost always in a spirit of co-operation and a spirit of willingness to work together for the good of our natural heritage. This spirit was bruised by the sometimes acrimonious debates about the African elephant at the last meeting of the Conference of the Parties in Lausanne. It must not be abused again so soon afterwards or I am afraid the world will lose one of its most effective conservation tools. The Secretary General of CITES must have the respect and support of those for whom he works, the Parties. If a new Secretary General is imposed on the Secretariat without the full involvement of the Parties in the selection process I find it difficult to believe that the required support would be immediately evident.

I sincerely urge you again to involve the Standing Committee in any staffing action with respect to the position of the Secretary General of CITES. I stand ready to discuss this matter with you personally or with the Deputy Executive Director.

Yours sincerely,

HENRI REANJANA

CHAIRMAN
CITES STANDING COMMITTEE