

In Attendance

AFCD

Mr CHEUNG Chi-sun	Senior Endangered Species Protection Officer
Miss Pauline TONG	Endangered Species Protection Officer/Enforcement
Mr Alfred WONG	Endangered Species Protection Officer/Licensing 1
Miss CHAN Yu-nam	Endangered Species Protection Officer/Licensing 2

CUSTOMS & EXCISE DEPARTMENT

Ms. KWOK Ngan-ping	Senior Staff Officer (Management Services) (Acting)
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OCEAN PARK, HONG KONG

Ms Suzanne M. GENDRON	Executive Director, Zoological Operations & Education, Ocean Park
Mr Timothy NG	Director, Zoological Operations & Education, Ocean Park

Absent with Apologies

Dr Craig Kirkpatrick

Ms Katherine MA Miu-wah

Prof. Frances MAHR Ching-ki

Mr Thomas WONG Cheung-chi

Mr CHOW Kwong	Assistant Commissioner (Boundary and Ports), Customs & Excise Department
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Opening Remarks by the Chairman

32/07 The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting, in particular, Miss CHEUNG Siu-hing, JP, Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation, who was attending the meeting for the first time, and the two representatives from Ocean Park, i.e., Ms Suzanne M. GENDRON and Mr Timothy NG.

(Mr WONG Hing-keung joined the meeting at this juncture.)

Agenda Items

I. Confirmation of Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 13 April 2007

33/07 The minutes of the last meeting held on 13 April 2007 were confirmed without amendments.

II. Matters Arising from the Last Meeting

(a) New Giant Pandas to Hong Kong (Para. 22/07)

34/07 Ms Suzanne M. GENDRON thanked the Endangered Species Advisory Committee (ESAC) for its support on importation of the new pair of giant pandas to Hong Kong. She was pleased to advise that the new giant pandas were adapting very well in Ocean Park. It had been an incredible success to connect visitors with these precious animals. Because of the increase of visitors to Ocean Park and the proceeds from panda souvenirs sales, there had been an increase in donation to the Ocean Park Conservation Foundation for supporting future giant panda conservation programmes.

35/07 Mr Timothy NG went on to provide a general update on the four giant pandas in Ocean Park i.e. An An, Jia Jia, Ying Ying and Le Le. He said that Ocean Park had renovated the giant panda habitat in order to provide the best living facility for the pandas. The renovated facility now provided three separate living exhibit areas and five holding back-of-house dens for the four giant pandas. The total panda living space had increased by 25%. Over one million people had visited the giant panda habitat since its re-opening on 1 July 2007. Besides, more than three million people had watched the giant pandas via the Panda Channel on Now TV. Mr NG then showed two short videos on Ying Ying and Le Le during their husbandry training and at play with enrichment toys to the meeting.

36/07 A member asked whether the Panda Channel on Now TV provided 24-hour live broadcast. Ms Suzanne M. GENDRON replied that, at present, live broadcast of the giant pandas was only provided during daytime. The cameras were not running at night when the giant pandas had their rest time.

(b) CITES 14th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP 14) – Proposals to Amend the Appendices and Annotations (Para. 26/07)

37/07 Mr CHEUNG Chi-sun reported that the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP14) was held in The Hague, the Netherlands from 3 to 15 June 2007. Details of the meeting including the adopted listing proposals and resolutions would be reported under

Agenda V. Mr CHEUNG said that a member had previously expressed concern at the possibility of the Mainland of re-opening their domestic trade for tiger bones. He advised that China had clarified at CoP14 that domestic trade in tiger bones would not be re-opened.

III. Introduction of New Animals at Ocean Park in 2008

38/07 Mr CHEUNG Chi-sun said that to tie in with its Master Redevelopment Plan, Ocean Park planned to import new animals in 2008. Against this background, representatives of Ocean Park had been invited to brief members and seek members' comments on their redevelopment plan and proposed animal acquisition.

39/07 Ms Suzanne M. GENDRON said that as a world leader in providing excellent guest experiences in a theme park environment, Ocean Park was committed to connecting people with nature and inspiring conservation actions and behavior changes that would make the environment a better place to live both for people and animals. She then briefed members on the preliminary layout and design of the Waterfront and Summit under Ocean Park's Master Redevelopment Plan. In particular, Ms GENDRON advised that the Veterinary Hospital located in the Summit and the new Giant Panda Astounding Asia Complex located in the Waterfront were scheduled to open by end of 2008 or early 2009.

40/07 Ms GENDRON said that the new Veterinary Hospital would provide 6 pools totalled 5,000 cubic meters capacity for housing and breeding bottlenose dolphins as compared with the current Dolphin University which consisted of 5 pools with 1,600 cubic meters capacity in total. Besides, it would provide quarantine pools of 122 cubic meters in total for the temporary care of stranded cetaceans and dolphins requiring medical care. The captive breeding programme had produced 56% of the dolphin collection at Ocean Park through artificial insemination, natural mating and global collaboration. The new Veterinary Hospital would serve to further strengthen Ocean Park's capacity for conservation and caring of dolphins.

41/07 Ms GENDRON said that the Astounding Asia in the Waterfront would contain a new larger giant panda facility, goldfish pagoda and bird facilities. These new facilities would allow Ocean Park to relay a stronger conservation message by displaying a variety of precious animals. Ms GENDRON then briefed members on Ocean Park's Animal Collection Plan which included the following animals: Giant Panda, Red Panda, Golden Monkey, Asian Small-clawed otter, Chinese Giant Salamander, Chinese Alligator, Amur Sturgeon, Brown-eared Pheasant, Barking Deer, Eclectus Parrot, Amazon Parrot, African Crowned Crane, Toucan, Barn Owl, Blue & Gold Macaw, Hornbill and Military Macaw. Ms GENDRON said that these were the animals that Ocean Park would like to acquire through working with other zoological facilities and reserves. While some of these animals were available in the Park, pending finalization of the designs of the new exhibits and the list of

animals planned to be imported, Ocean Park would seek the Committee's permission to import new animals through collaboration with other zoos and aquariums.

42/07 A member pointed out that one of the major concerns of captive breeding programmes was how to prevent inbreeding. For instance, if the dolphins were housed in the same pool, they might naturally breed with themselves and result in inbreeding. Ms Suzanne M. GENDRON replied that Ocean Park had a controlled programme to maintain the most diverse genetic dolphin population. The current Dolphin University and Ocean Theatre each provided 5 pools to separate the dolphin population into different groups in order to avoid inbreeding. Besides, the marine mammal curatorial team had been closely monitoring the social aspects of bottlenose dolphins. In addition, Ms GENDRON informed that Ocean Park had successfully artificially inseminated dolphins with fresh and frozen semen. With these experiences, Ocean Park was now exploring with other zoological facilities to exchange semen in order to increase the genetic diversity of the captive dolphin population.

43/07 A member asked whether the new Veterinary Hospital would be open or semi-open to the public. Ms Suzanne M. GENDRON answered that their Resource Committee was considering how they could use the facility with other Units at Ocean Park. Besides, they planned to run the Veterinary Hospital along lines very similar to the current Dolphin University, such that people might be allowed to go inside or up to the windows to see what were going on inside the Veterinary Hospital. She believed that it would be interesting to the public.

44/07 A member said that he had read a newspaper article commenting that some sorts of animals had a higher mortality rate in captivity as compared to the wild. He wondered if it was true. Ms Suzanne M. GENDRON responded that the article was very misleading. It did not take into account the care and experience that had been accumulated throughout the world since people first started keeping marine mammals. With the great improvement in animal health, care, hygiene and nutrition over the years, the mortality rate was far lower than what it was prior to 1990s. Research studies also indicated that dolphins under human care were living as long as the wild dolphin population at Sarasota, Florida, USA.

45/07 A member noted that the list of animals and birds planned to be displayed in the new facilities were not native species. He suggested to incorporate local species into the exhibition, such as showing images of Black-faced Spoonbill through web cams. Ms Suzanne M. GENDRON responded that Ocean Park had been exploring ways to increase the number of birds in the show. The idea of having Black-faced Spoonbill via web cams would be an excellent addition to the show and Ocean Park would consider following up on the suggestion.

46/07 Ms Suzanne M. GENDRON stressed that as a member of the World Zoos and Aquariums Association and the accredited member of Association of Zoos and Aquariums and

The Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums, Ocean Park would continue to deliver the very best in animal care, conservation and education.

47/07 The Chairman thanked Ms Suzanne M. GENDRON and Mr Timothy NG for attending the meeting.

(Ms Suzanne M. GENDRON and Mr Timothy NG left the meeting at this juncture.)

IV. Education and Publicity Work in 2007-08
(Committee Paper: CP/ESAC/4/2007)

48/07 Miss CHAN Yu-nam presented Committee Paper CP/ESAC/4/2007 and briefed members on the education and publicity work on endangered species protection in 2007-2008. Among other things, she said that an Endangered Species Protection Logo Design Competition, co-organized with Sing Tao Daily, was launched in late August 2007. The activity received an overwhelming response, with over 100 schools taking part and more than 5,000 entries received. She invited members to attend the prize-presentation ceremony of the competition to be held on 24 November 2007.

49/07 The meeting noted that the department had stepped up education and publicity work to remind travelers not to bring endangered species into or out of Hong Kong without the required licences. Under the joint education and publicity programme between Guangdong and Hong Kong, a joint youth activity was proposed to be held in 2008 to enhance awareness on endangered species protection among Hong Kong and Guangdong students. Subject to availability of sponsorship, a summer camp would be organized for winners of the competition. Besides, a training course on identification of endangered species would be organized in 2008 for AFCDD's frontline enforcement staff.

50/07 Ms. KWOK Ngan-ping thanked AFCDD for providing briefings on the new Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance to Customs officers to familiarize them with the new legislation. She suggested that such briefings should be arranged again should there be further legislative amendments. To strengthen public awareness, Ms KWOK also suggested to distribute pamphlets to departure travelers via the airlines' check-in counters to remind them not to bring in endangered species on their return. Besides, she said that it might be useful to conduct a review to assess the publicity effects at different control points in order to identify if publicity of a particular endangered species should be strengthened at a particular control point.

51/07 Mr CHEUNG Chi-sun agreed that distributing pamphlets to departure travelers was an effective means to increase public awareness. He said that the department had once arranged to distribute pamphlets to departure travelers via airlines to remind travelers not to bring in

American Ginseng without a licence on return from overseas visits. To remind travelers about the controls on importing orchids, the department had also put up posters and broadcast voiceover at land borders. Mr CHEUNG said that the department would review the situation at different control points and arrange to strengthen publicity of a particular endangered species where necessary.

52/07 Addressing a member's enquiries, Miss CHAN Yu-nam advised that the Endangered Species Resource Centre (ESRC) was located on the sixth floor of AFCD Headquarters. With the implementation of the new "334" academic structure, the member suggested AFCD to liaise with Education Bureau to explore the possibility of including protection of endangered species into the curriculum of Liberal Studies. Miss CHAN replied that there were plans to develop different education programmes and teaching materials on protection of endangered species for kindergarten, primary and secondary students. Mr C.C. LAY added that the department would strengthen education on protection of endangered species in consultation with the Education Bureau.

53/07 A member anticipated that smuggling and illegal selling of orchids would become active as the Chinese New Year approached. He hoped that the Government would strengthen enforcement actions in this respect. Mr CHEUNG Chi-sun assured members that AFCD would step up patrolling at the Flower Market to watch out for illegal selling of wild orchids. Ms. KWOK Ngan-ping added that joint operations would be mounted by Customs and AFCD against illegal smuggling activities at control points during festive seasons.

**V. Report on CITES 14th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP 14)
(Committee Paper: CP/ESAC/5/2007)**

54/07 Mr Alfred WONG presented Committee Paper CP/ESAC/5/2007 and gave a brief report on CoP14 meeting which was held in The Hague, the Netherlands from 3 to 15 June 2007. At the meeting, the organizers stressed the importance of maintaining a balance between sustainable use of natural resources, including international trade, and an effective means of protecting biodiversity. A total of 70 agenda items and 37 proposals to amend the CITES Appendices were considered at the meeting. The proposals on listing timber species again had received much attention of member Parties, and their views were diverse. Though the three proposals involving timber species were withdrawn, it was very likely that the trade in timber species would be re-visited at the next CoP. The adopted proposals to amend CITES Appendices and annotations were summarized at Annex I to Committee Paper CP/ESAC/5/2007. Separately, Mr WONG was pleased to advise that Hong Kong was given the "Ecomessage Award" during the meeting period by the Interpol in recognition of Hong Kong's efforts in fighting the trafficking of endangered animals and plants.

55/07 A member expressed concerns on protection of timber. To protect endangered species, the member opined that it was essential to protect forests which were the habitat of various plants and animals. She hoped that Hong Kong would vote in favour of timber protection at the coming CoP meeting. Mr CHEUNG Chi-sun clarified that Hong Kong was not a Party to CITES but was part of the Chinese delegation. He said that we had all along liaised closely with the Central People's Government on issues related to the protection of endangered species including timber species. Mr C.C. LAY supplemented that the Parties to CITES supported conservation of forests and emphasized very much on legal trade of timber. Indeed, the three proposals involving timber species were withdrawn by proponent countries at the CoP14 meeting and no vote had been called for. Mr LAY assured members that the Mainland and Hong Kong were very actively involved in CITES Conferences and were committed to conserving species and ensuring sustainable utilization of natural resources.

56/07 A member noted that it was remarked at the CoP14 meeting that CITES had been successful in combating illegal trade in wild animals and plants in its some 30 years history, and that CITES needed to evolve to take livelihood into consideration by promoting the sustainability of wildlife trade. He asked about its implications. Mr CHEUNG Chi-sun replied that the new direction might have a positive impact on developing countries. CITES focused primarily on control and enforcement of illegal trade in wild animals and plants in the past. In view that most developing countries relied heavily on wildlife trade, CITES stressed the importance of maintaining a balance between sustainable use of natural resources and international trade to cater for livelihood of these countries. Mr C.C. LAY cited bird nests as an example. Consideration had once been given to put bird nests on the CITES Appendix for control. Yet, the producing countries had attempted to implement effective measures to collect bird nests in an environmental friendly and sustainable way. It had proved to be effective and a balance between international trade and sustainability of bird nests was attained. As a result, bird nests were no longer on the agenda of CoP meeting.

VI Summary Progress Report of CITES Work (Committee Paper: CP/ESAC/6/2007)

57/07 Miss Pauline TONG presented Committee Paper CP/ESAC/6/2007 which reported AFCD's work in relation to CITES during the period 1 November 2006 to 31 August 2007. She also highlighted a number of significant cases involving the import and transit of endangered species without licences for members' attention.

VII. Serving the Community - Service Standards Committee 25th Monitoring Report (Committee Paper: CP/ESAC/7/2007)

58/07 Miss CHAN Yu-nam reported that, for the quarter ending March 2007, 103 applications representing 3% of the total number of licence/certificate applications could not be issued within two working days as pledged. This was mainly due to the longer processing time required under the new legislation. For the quarter ending June 2007, 1,140 applications (23%) could not meet the performance target due to the surge in the number of application for licences/certificates upon the expiry of the grace period under the new Ordinance in May 2007. Miss CHAN said that the department would continue to monitor the situation and redeploy more manpower resources to handle the applications where necessary.

59/07 Mr C.C. LAY supplemented that while there were no licensing requirements in respect of Chinese medicines containing ingredients of endangered species under the repealed Animals and Plants (Protection of Endangered Species) Ordinance, the trade was required to apply for a licence for the possession of the stockpile of Chinese medicines containing ingredients of endangered species prior to the enactment of the new Ordinance. As a result, more than 2,000 applications were received within the last month prior to the expiry of the 6-month grace period. Because of the sudden influx of applications, the licences could not be issued within two days. He said that the trade was aware of the above situation and appreciated the reasons of the delay.

VIII. Any Other Business

60/07 Members had no other business to discuss.

IX. Remarks by DAFC

61/07 Miss CHEUNG Siu-hing, JP said that she was pleased to meet the Chairman and members of the Committee. Having joined AFCD for around four months, she had learned much about the interesting and challenging tasks handled by the department. As endangered species protection was a complex issue, apart from the professional AFCD staff, the department counted on the support and advice of the trade and the Committee. She thanked the Chairman and members for their valuable advice and comments given at the meeting and looked forward to the continued support from them in the future. With the support of the Committee, she was confident that CITES would be effectively implemented in Hong Kong.

X. Date of Next Meeting

62/07 The Chairman said that members would be informed of the date of the next meeting in due course.

63/07 The meeting was adjourned at 4:20 p.m.

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