

In Attendance

AFCD

Mr Patrick C C LAI	Senior Endangered Species Protection Officer
Mr Alfred WONG	Endangered Species Protection Officer/Enforcement
Dr Azaria WONG	Endangered Species Protection Officer/Licensing 1

Customs and Excise Department (C&ED)

Mr KWONG Tze-ping, Jimmy	Senior Inspector, Boundary and Ports Branch
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Absent with Apologies

Ms Erica LO Lai-shan

Mr Thomas WONG Cheung-chi

Mr YU Koon-hing, CDSM, CMSM	Assistant Commissioner (Boundary and Ports), Customs & Excise Department
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OPENING REMARKS

42/12 The Chairman welcomed all members to the meeting, in particular, Mr Patrick C C LAI, Senior Endangered Species Protection Officer, and Mr KWONG Tze-ping, Jimmy, Senior Inspector, Boundary and Ports Branch of Customs and Excise Department, who attended the meeting for the first time.

43/12 The Chairman informed members that, as an established practice, to facilitate the taking of meeting minutes, sound recording would be made during the meeting. The audio records would be destroyed after the meeting minutes had been confirmed.

AGENDA ITEMS

I. Confirmation of Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 10 January 2012

44/12 The minutes of the last meeting held on 10 January 2012 were confirmed without amendments.

II. Matters Arising from the Last Meeting

(a) Update of Education and Publicity (Para. 27/12 to 29/12)

45/12 Dr Azaria WONG reported that 11 exhibitions on endangered species protection were held at schools and public libraries. A total of 39 educational talks on endangered species protection were conducted for school students, other CITES Management Authorities, various organizations and the general public. A total of nearly 5,000 visitors visited the Endangered Species Resource Centre during the reporting period. Two publicity events on endangered species protection at various land control points and Hong Kong International Airport were carried out in December 2011 and January 2012 respectively. An Endangered Species Protection Passport Holder Design Competition was launched in March 2012. The Competition was opened to all secondary school students and the general public with a view to raising the awareness on endangered species protection through creative and artistic designs of passport holder. The Competition was closed on 31 May 2012 and received more than 1,700 entries. The prize-presentation ceremony was held on 7 July 2012. The winning entries were printed on plastic passport holders for distribution to the public through education talks and guided tours in the Endangered Species Resource Centre to promote endangered species protection. They were also exhibited in public venues.

46/12 Dr WONG added that AFCD organized two training courses on CITES implementation for a total of 18 officials from the various branch offices of the Chinese CITES Management Authority. The training courses lasted for 3-5 days and included lectures, exercises on identification and visits to control points. Two pieces of press release to remind the general public not to bring in endangered species without licence were issued before major festivals during the reporting period.

47/12 The Chairman agreed to the comments of Mr Alan WONG Chi-kong, JP that a general survey should be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of AFCD's publicity and education on promoting the awareness of students and the general public on endangered species protection. He remarked that the general survey would facilitate AFCD to review its strategy of publicity and education.

48/12 A member also agreed to Mr Alan WONG's remarks. She pointed out that the general public generally supported endangered species protection; however, their knowledge of

endangered species was mainly confined to pets of endangered species. Hence, she proposed that the scope of the general survey should include the general public's knowledge on endangered species and whether there was change in attitude in favour of endangered species protection.

49/12 A member proposed that, apart from Endangered Species Resource Centre, the message of endangered species protection should also be promoted at other existing facilities.

50/12 A member opined that students would learn about endangered species more readily if such topic was included in papers of open examinations.

51/12 A member proposed that YouTube, video or hyperlink about the information of various endangered species, such as global population and classification under CITES Appendices, should be provided to students so as to enrich the profundity of their entries of Endangered Species Protection Passport Holder Design Competition. Echoing Mr Alan WONG's comments, he remarked that participants should be invited to complete questionnaires with a view to understanding how much they learned about endangered species protection through the Competition.

52/12 Mr Alan WONG Chi-kong, JP remarked that the general public and students should be educated on the species that should be protected and the reasons to protect them. He pointed out the general survey would not only enable AFCD to better understand the results of our education and publicity but also serve to promote awareness on endangered species protection.

(Professor Albert LEUNG Wing-nang attended the meeting at this juncture)

53/12 A member said that an exhibition area of specimens of endangered species seized by C&ED had recently been provided at Hei Ling Chau Correctional Institution and it had been visited by a lot of students. She suggested that the exhibition area would be an appropriate venue to educate students and the general public on endangered species protection.

54/12 The Chairman echoed Mr Alan WONG's remarks that the general public should be educated on the various threats to endangered species and the reasons to protect them. He

supplemented that efforts on education of endangered species protection should be made to cover the whole spectrum of students from primary school to university.

III. Disposal of Forfeited Ivory
(Committee Paper: CP/ESAC/7/2012)

55/12 Mr Alfred WONG presented Committee Paper CP/ESAC/7/2012.

56/12 A member expressed reservation on disposal of forfeited ivory by incineration. She suggested AFCD to explore other possible ways to dispose of the ivory, for example establishment of ivory museum and training in ivory carving for conservation education and publicity purposes.

57/12 Another member opined that disposal of ivory by destruction could be wasteful. Besides, he was concerned about the energy consumption in the incineration process and suggested that other destruction methods should be explored.

58/12 A member shared the view that it was wasteful to dispose of the ivory by destruction. She remarked that donation of ivory to schools for conservation education was preferable to disposal by incineration.

59/12 In response to the member's enquiries, Mr Alfred WONG advised that security concern was not the main reason for destructing the ivory as they had been stored in AFCD premises equipped with adequate security measures. He informed that the ivory, being specimens of CITES Appendix I species, could be disposed of for scientific, enforcement, identification and education purposes but not for sale according to international guidelines. However, only small quantities of forfeited ivory could be used for such purposes. Most of the recipients of ivory were local schools and each of them could only take up small amount of ivory for conservation education. He pointed out that about 3 tonnes of forfeited ivory came under the custody of AFCD in recent years. It was anticipated that the stockpiled quantity would continue to accumulate since the quantity of forfeited ivory far exceeded what was donated. He supplemented that one CITES Party had dumped forfeited ivory in deep sea with the assistance of navy. Other countries that intercepted large quantity of ivory would have encountered the same problem, and these countries were mostly storing forfeited ivory at this time. As regards the amount of energy consumed in incineration, he explained that the ivory

were mixed with other chemical and clinical wastes that could generate energy in incineration and so the incineration process consumed small amount of fuel only.

60/12 A member also expressed reservation on disposal of forfeited ivory by incineration. Since the population of wild elephants would be decreasing in the future, he advised that disposal of forfeited ivory by incineration would draw the attention of the general public. He suggested that forfeited ivory might be worked into sculptures and exhibited for conservation education. Returning forfeited ivory to the exporting country or the country of origin should also be considered.

61/12 Mr Y K CHAN thanked members for their views. He explained that through enforcement actions taken by AFCD and other enforcement agencies in the past years, a significant quantity of elephant ivory had been forfeited and come under the custody of AFCD. Given the high value of the ivory, AFCD had been keeping them securely and in the same time exploring appropriate means of disposal. It was believed that many population of elephants were now protected through global efforts which should help minimize the threat of extinction.

62/12 Mr CHAN elaborated that, since elephants are highly endangered species, disposal of ivory in connection with commercial elements could be politically sensitive and would not be considered a viable option. Exhibition of ivory sculptures made of forfeited ivory might stimulate the demand and trade in the species, and could arouse concerns of the international community. There were only a few disposal options in accordance with the CITES guidelines. Over the years, AFCD had been endeavouring to make good use of forfeited ivory for scientific, enforcement, identification and education purposes. AFCD readily donated ivory to local schools with secured keeping facilities for conservation education. He also advised that many African countries were in possession of large quantity of ivory, including those legally collected from elephants which died naturally and others of illegal origin confiscated in enforcement actions. While CITES once allowed a one-off sale of the legal stock of ivory, those stockpiled ivory of illegal origin was not allowed to enter into trade. Returning forfeited ivory to exporting countries simply resulted in further accumulation of illegal stock in those countries.

63/12 Mr CHAN remarked that AFCD was committed to the safe custody of the forfeited ivory. Given the anticipated accumulation and limitation on the use of forfeited ivory, AFCD was obliged to explore other appropriate means of disposal including destruction.

64/12 Mr Alan WONG Chi-kong, JP thanked members for their views and suggestions. He pointed out that AFCD considered the issue of disposal from operational and cost-effectiveness perspectives while members from conservation perspective. He agreed that more efforts could be made to donate forfeited ivory for education purposes, for example, to local schools. AFCD would take members' view into consideration and review the means of disposal.

65/12 A member expressed that traditional crafts, like ivory carvings, would be an active way for conservation education.

66/12 A member advised that AFCD should handle the issue of disposal of forfeited ivory with care since the public would not easily comprehend AFCD's decision. She highlighted that incinerating ivory might be extensively reported by the media.

67/12 After thorough discussion, the Chairman concluded that members held other views than incineration on the disposal of forfeited ivory. He agreed to the member's views that AFCD should handle the issue of disposal of forfeited ivory with care and expected the department to review its proposal. Mr Alan WONG Chi-kong, JP responded that AFCD would handle the issue with prudence.

IV. Summary Progress Report of CITES Work (Committee Paper: CP/ESAC/8/2012)

68/12 Mr Alfred WONG presented Committee Paper CP/ESAC/8/2012 on AFCD's work in relation to CITES implementation in Hong Kong from 1 December 2011 to 30 June 2012. He highlighted the significant cases involving import, possession and re-export of endangered species without licences. Members noted the Paper.

69/12 In response to a member's enquiry about the deterrence of penalty for cases involving import or transit of ivory, Mr Alfred WONG advised that an offender would suffer significant pecuniary loss from the fine and forfeiture of the ivory. There were fewer tourists from African countries bringing in ivory in recent years, which could be due to the deterring effect of sentences in imprisonment terms.

V. Serving the Community – Service Standards Committee 34th Monitoring Report
(Committee Paper: CP/ESAC/9/2012)

70/12 Dr Azaria WONG presented Committee Paper CP/ESAC/9/2012 on AFCD's performance in relation to issuance of certificate/license in respect of endangered species during the period from 1 October 2011 to 31 March 2012. Members had no comment on the Paper.

VI. Any Other Business

(a) Vote of Thanks by DAFC

71/12 Since this was the last meeting of the current term which would end on 30 September 2012, Mr Alan WONG Chi-kong, JP, Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation, thanked the chairman and members for their enthusiastic support to the work of the Committee. The Chairman also expressed his gratitude to members for their contribution to the Committee and to AFCD subject officers for their support to the Committee.

72/12 There was no any other business to be discussed.

VII. Date of Next Meeting

73/12 The Chairman advised that members would be informed of the date of next meeting in due course.

74/12 The meeting was adjourned at 4:35 p.m.

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