



Terms of reference (TOR)

Name

1. The name shall be United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)/United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) Task Force on Electronic CITES Permit Exchange (hereinafter referred to as “Task Force”).

Objective

2. The objective of the Task Force is to support interested Management Authorities (MAs) of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora (CITES) and other relevant national stakeholders of CITES Parties in initiating and carrying out pilot-based and/or live electronic exchanges of CITES permits among them, which may contribute to the prevention of fraudulent use of CITES permits, facilitate legal trade and improve CITES annual report preparation and submission.

Role

3. The role of the Task Force will primarily focus on supportive and facilitating activities, including through providing a forum for discussion, information sharing and mutual technical assistance, while participating MAs shall be responsible for actual arrangement and execution of a pilot-based and/or live electronic exchange of CITES Permits, either bilaterally or multilaterally.

4. Activities of the Task Force shall initially focus on electronic exchange of CITES Permits between and among MAs of CITES parties who are members of UNECE and/or UNESCAP. They may be extended to other MAs at a later stage, as needed.

Participation

5. The Task Force is open to any interested MAs for participation. MAs may participate together with other relevant national stakeholders.

6. Primary focus is those MAs located in the UNECE and ESCAP regions and already have electronic CITES permit systems or envisage to implement such a system in the foreseeable future and also plan to integrate their system into a global electronic permit information exchange system.

7. MAs located other than in the UNECE and UNESCAP regions can also participate as observers by making participation request, either directly to UNECE and/or UNESCAP or through the CITES Secretariat.

8. The chair of the relevant CITES Standing Committee working group and the CITES Secretariat are invited to participate as observers.

9. Selected experts, representatives of related international organizations, and other entities may participate upon invitation.

Activities

10. The Task Force shall carry out the following activities to achieve its intended objective:
 - Regular physical and virtual meetings
 - Support to participating MAs on arranging and executing pilot/live electronic exchange of CITES Permits
 - Capacity building, in connection with events of UNECE, ESCAP, CITES and other partners
 - Sharing of practical lessons learned from implementation
 - Advocacy through development of guidelines, briefs, etc., in particular in connection with activities of UNNExT and UN/CEFACT
 - Studies and research on further advancing electronic exchange of CITES Permits among MAs as well as facilitation of electronic information exchange between MAs and other regulatory agencies
 - Contribute to the development of relevant standards and best practice through drafting of guidelines, recommendations and technical specifications. Such documents, if developed and when relevant, may be submitted to the CITES Working Group on electronic Systems and Information Technology and UN/CEFACT Agriculture Fisheries and Agri Food Domain for standardization.

Mode of operation

11. Participation in the activities of the Task Force is voluntary and on a self-financed basis.
12. The Task Force shall have both physical and virtual meetings in carrying out its activities. Meetings will be conducted in English only
13. The Task Force shall make its decisions on a consensus basis.
14. UNECE and UNESCAP shall serve as the secretariat of the Task Force and facilitate its activities, including moderating its meetings.

Cooperation with other groups

15. The Task Force shall closely cooperate with the relevant CITES working group(s), the UN/CEFACT Agriculture Fisheries and Agri Food Domain and the UNNExT Advisory Group on Agricultural Trade Facilitation, wherever it can build a synergy in its activities.
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