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Unit.F.3 – Global Environmental Cooperation and Multilateralism
Head of Unit

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Dr Lynn Johnson
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E-Mail: lynn@natureneedsmore.org

Subject: EU-wide CITES electronic permitting system

Ref.: your Email of 23 July 2022, our ref Ares(2022)5434916

Dear Dr Johnson,

Thank you for your email of 23 July 2022. Executive Vice-President Frans Timmermans has asked me to reply on his behalf.

The European Commission is conscious that the EU-wide implementation of CITES electronic permitting systems will definitely have a positive impact on supply chain transparency for the legal trade in endangered species. If having such electronic systems is a necessary condition, developing their interconnection to exchange the permits electronically is also mandatory to avoid any intermediary paper versions and the inherent risks.

With this in mind, the CITES Guidelines and specification for electronic permit information exchange (EPIX) of CITES permits and certificates is a very good base on which the European Commission has started to design an EU-wide solution. However, these guidelines do not fully account for the specificity of the EU where, for example, species can be introduced in other EU countries than those where they are actually imported.

The Commission is working on developing an EU-wide solution (“EU CITES”), which would allow all Member States to either: (i) use a free & fully electronic permitting solution with the only need of an internet connection and a web browser, or (ii) connect existing electronic permitting systems to this EU-wide system. Both solutions would allow Member States to exchange permits with any authorized EU Customs, via the EU Customs single windows.

Finally, non-EU Management authorities with an existing electronic system (or using the eCITES BaseSolution) will also be able to connect to the EU CITES system and exchange permits electronically without the need of any printed paper versions. With regards to capacity-building for the creation of electronic permitting systems in non-EU countries, we

will be reaching out to the CITES secretariat to determine the most effective and appropriate solutions.

The EU CITES solution is currently in development and testing by a number of EU Management and Customs authorities as well as and one non-EU country. It will be presented in a side event of the 19th Conference of the Parties to CITES, in Panama in November. The first version of the system, which will support the exchange of import electronic permits and certificates of specimen listed in Annex B of the Council Regulation (EC) No 338/97, will be operational in 2023, and extended to other types of permits in later versions. Member States will be encouraged to develop their interconnection to EU CITES as soon as possible.

It is our hope that, as you point out in your email, the effective implementation of the EU CITES system could be the tipping point to trigger a global rollout of an electronic permit system.

Yours sincerely,

e-signed

Jorge RODRIGUEZ ROMERO