DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

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SECRETARY MORTON ANNOUNCES INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE TO RESTRICT TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES

Secretary of the Interior Rogers C. B. Morton announced today the long awaited plenipotentiary conference to conclude an international convention on trade in endangered species of wildlife and plants. More than 140 countries have been invited to participate in the conference to be held February 12 to March 3, 1973, in the Department of State's conference suite in Washington, D.C.

"This conference is of the utmost importance to the future of the world's wildlife," said Morton. "Man has driven some 125 species over the brink of extinction since 1600 A.D. Unless drastic action is taken, we may quadruple that number by the end of this decade. Today, an estimated 700 species of vertebrate animals and thousands of lower animal and plant forms face imminent extinction."

"This appalling trend must be reversed," Morton said, "and this conference is the necessary first step."

The Interior Department, along with the Department of State, was charged with developing the conference by the Endangered Species Act of 1969.

The basic purpose of the conference is to establish an international system that will enable nations to assist one another in controlling the exploitation of wild animals and plants. It will call upon participating countries to acknowledge management principles that will allow these natural resources to renew themselves for the benefit of future generations.

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A model convention has been circulated to all invitees as the basic working paper of the conference. It was developed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources and the Governments of Kenya and the United States, working with private organizations.

To facilitate development of controls needed over the import, export and transit of wildlife and plants, the working paper calls for three lists of animals and plants as appendices to the convention.

The first appendix would list all animals and plants threatened with extinction for which international commerce should be banned.

The second would list those species for which there must be control of international trade to prevent them from becoming threatened with extinction.

The third appendix would include any species within a nation's jurisdiction which needs some regulation to prevent or restrict its exploitation.

The convention would enter into force 180 days after the date of deposit of the tenth instrument of ratification with the depository government. This is expected to be sometime in 1973 or early 1974.

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