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U.S. Delegates to CoP 15 in Doha, Qatar, discuss a position paper during a break, 2010

its preparation of observer registration forms—means that applications for observer status usually are not approved more than 4 or 5 months before a CoP.

However, U.S.-based NGOs can expect that once DMA receives their application, it will be reviewed and processed, and the NGO promptly notified of the Service's decision.

Any NGO that has attended a previous CoP and is applying to DMA for observer status needs to do only the following:

1. Send DMA a letter requesting observer status.
2. Provide a list of representatives it intends to send to the CoP.

Since its technical qualifications have been previously reviewed by the Service, the NGO may expect approval of its observer status to be automatic in most cases.

How will I know?

Once DMA approves an NGO, we will send a formal approval letter that includes links to the CoP registration form and the hotel booking information, as well as other information regarding attendance.

The NGO must complete the registration form and provide the CITES Secretariat with a copy of DMA's approval letter. The Secretariat's deadline for observer registration is 6 weeks prior to the

opening of the CoP.

The Secretariat charges each approved observer a registration fee, which may vary from CoP to CoP (the registration fee for CoP16 was set at a minimum of \$600 for the initial NGO representative and a minimum of \$300 for each additional representative). The Secretariat usually accepts the registration fee either by bank transfer to the CITES Secretariat or cash at the time of registration at the CoP. For any given CoP, the NGO observer should consult with the Secretariat about paying the registration fee.

Since all CoP documents can now be accessed online, the Secretariat will not provide hard copies of any documents before the CoP. However, documents prepared at the CoP will be provided in hard copy at the meeting.

Each observer approved by the Service will be added automatically to DMA's mailing list and, on a periodic basis, receive notification of the latest CITES-related information leading up to the CoP.

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