

CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA



Fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties
Doha (Qatar), 13-25 March 2010

GLOBAL TIGER FORUM

The attached document has been submitted by India*.

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Statement by the Global Tiger Forum to the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES

Established in 1994, the Global Tiger Forum remains the world's only inter-governmental organisation dedicated to tiger conservation. The GTF membership includes seven tiger range countries: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Cambodia, Myanmar, Nepal and Vietnam. The aim of the GTF is to become an effective umbrella organization to coordinate with governments, inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations, donors, and foundations, as well as scientists and global tiger experts to recover wild tigers across the range. Many Parties here will be aware of the contribution the GTF has made in a number of areas, such as providing capacity building and professional training that is valued by range state wildlife officials, and by compiling the various tiger national action plans of its membership.

However, the GTF also recognizes that these efforts appear to have had little impact upon the threats facing tigers. The GTF is keen to do much more to directly address the key threats facing tiger populations and to enlist the high-level support of decision-makers in all the tiger range States, which may foster a strong political commitment needed for all countries to address the threats to tiger.

At the 14th Meeting of the GTF Executive Committee in Kathmandu in October last year, GTF members decided that a new sense of urgency was needed in the GTF's work, and that the organization needed to be revitalized so that it could help catalyse a range-wide recovery of wild tiger populations. The meeting also noted the fresh impetus provided by international initiatives such as the Global Tiger Initiative and the need for the GTF to play a full and active role in such initiatives. The Global Tiger Initiative in particular has presented new opportunities to foster increased international cooperation and coordinated action, and we believe the GTF can be a significant player in working with national Governments and the international community to deliver the measures being promised by the GTI process.

At its 14th Executive Meeting in Hua Hin last January, there was a unanimous agreement that the GTF should become a more dynamic organization, assisting range State governments in enhancing regional cooperation, coordination and implementation of national tiger action plans. This aspiration was recognized in the Hua Hin Declaration on Tiger Conservation at the First Asia Ministerial Conference on Tiger Conservation, which recognized the Global Tiger Forum as an important platform for sharing knowledge amongst the Tiger range countries and facilitating cross-border cooperation on tiger conservation.

The GTF is committed to meet these growing expectations. It is in the process of recruiting a new Secretary-General and the Government of India's National Tiger Conservation Authority has stepped in by hosting the GTF Secretariat in the interim period before a new Secretary-General is in office. The GTF is developing a strategic roadmap for a revitalized organization that will plot a new course for tiger conservation efforts range-wide, and we hope to unveil this roadmap at the Global Tiger Summit in Vladivostock this year.

This roadmap may establish the GTF as a global clearing-house for innovative tiger conservation methods, mechanisms and solutions. In this regard, the GTF warmly welcomes the various amendments being proposed to Resolution Conf 12.5 to ensure accurate assessments for the effectiveness of measures taken by range States to curtail illegal trade in tigers and other Asian big cats. One of the main activities of the GTI in the past has been in compiling the various tiger national action plans of its member and assisting others with their development. The GTF therefore is well-placed to assist CITES and individual range States in measuring their progress in implementing this crucial Resolution and would welcome playing a lead role in this.

We will also seek to actively engage with new partners and other international and inter-governmental organisations involved in tiger conservation, particularly in the area of law enforcement, where we strongly agree with the CITES Secretariat that stronger linkages can be made with organisations such as the CITES Secretariat, Interpol, WCO and UNODC. We will also seek to actively support bilateral efforts, such as the India-China Protocol on tiger conservation) and regional enforcement initiatives such as ASEAN-WEN and the South Asia wildlife enforcement network.

Most importantly, we hope that a revitalised, strengthened and more inclusive GTF will encourage tiger range States who are not yet members of GTF to join us in creating a change that will transform the GTF into a significant global force for saving wild tigers in years to come.

We call on CITES Parties to extend their support to the GTF in these efforts, while we in the GTF will do all we can to ensure that this will be the year of the Tiger in which the international community will finally get a grip on what is a crisis situation for many vulnerable tiger populations.