

# THE ADDIS ABABA DECLARATION FOR GLOBAL CHEETAH CONSERVATION

**Global Cheetah Summit, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 31 January 2024**

The cheetah, the world's fastest land animal, is under grave threat and rapidly heading towards extinction in much of its remaining range. It has disappeared from over 90% of its historic distribution and fewer than 7500 mature individuals remain in the wild, with key threats including habitat loss, conflict with people, poaching of prey, illegal killing and trafficking for the exotic pet trade. There is a clear and urgent need for effective conservation action.

The signatories to this Declaration - all of whom attended the 2024 Global Cheetah Summit, organized by the Cheetah Conservation Fund, Hosted by the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority and Sponsored by NEOM and the Royal Commission for AlUla - recognize the immense efforts invested by many stakeholders in cheetah conservation to date. These stakeholders include, but are not limited to, local communities, regional and national Governments, Intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations, IUCN Specialist Groups, ex-situ institutions, donors, and researchers, with some important successes. It is important to continue supporting and where possible expanding those efforts, particularly around resolving human-wildlife conflict, tackling illegal trade, law enforcement, supporting community-based conservation, and incentivising the conservation of cheetahs, their prey and habitats.

Yet despite these efforts, many cheetah populations continue to decline or go unmonitored. For more successful cheetah conservation, we need to do more, and do it differently. While change is needed in many areas, herein we focus on specific areas where tangible actions within the next two years could inform and enable more effective cheetah conservation.

The signatories recognize the Joint CITES-CMS African Carnivores Initiative (<https://www.cms.int/node/14630>) and the CMS Central Asian Mammals Initiative (<https://www.cms.int/cami/>) as platforms for conservationists and Range States to interact and jointly plan and implement activities to conserve cheetahs across their range. We recommend that wherever possible, those Initiatives are used to implement the below-mentioned key activities.

## **Need 1 - Strengthen conservation engagement beyond conservationists**

To date, most conservation action planning discussions have focused on the needs and views of conservationists and wildlife agencies, but effective responses to most threats are beyond the remit of those groups alone. Conservationists also often struggle to make a wider compelling case for cheetah conservation that specifically aids Governments, businesses, local communities and other groups to achieve their own desired goals.

In addition to supporting existing conservation initiatives, we support taking the following specific actions within two years:

- **Identify key stakeholder groups** which have been insufficiently included in cheetah conservation planning, such as indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLC), often in rural areas; land use planners; climate change vulnerability, adaptation and mitigation experts; human migration and humanitarian experts; conflict and peacebuilding experts; businesses and potential donors; and Government departments beyond wildlife agencies.
- Identify **key contacts** within those groups whom we could actively engage in dialogue and action.
- **Convene a summit** aimed at beginning a process to understand how the stakeholder groups above view cheetah conservation, and what opportunities could build bridges for more effective, integrated strategies that support conservation as well as human development.
- Initiate **regional top-level meetings**, based on each subspecies of cheetah, for top governmental decision-makers to discuss conservation priorities, harmonise activities, and commit to further cheetah conservation actions in that region.
- For at least two cheetah population complexes, work with business experts and other relevant stakeholders to develop a **strategic business case** for more effectively conserving those populations, in language that speaks to the priorities of groups beyond conservationists.

## **Need 2 – Agree on rangewide priorities and a collective strategic plan**

Regional and some national action plans for cheetahs exist, but they rarely seem to lead to sufficient action on the ground. There is no globally agreed species-level plan for prioritizing action with clearly agreed and measurable targets. Whereas many populations are well known, even basic information is lacking for some populations (e.g., in the Horn of Africa and North-West Africa). Species such as the tiger have benefited from joint approaches where NGOs and Governments have collectively identified key priorities and taken targeted action to achieve them. This approach would enable more strategic and impactful conservation of the cheetah and the ecosystems in which they occur.

In addition to supporting existing conservation initiatives, we support taking the following specific actions within two years:

- Conduct a **status/progress review** of all existing cheetah-related action plans to assess which action points have seen tangible progress, and which have not. This review should identify recommendations that seem hardest to implement, the specific barriers to implementation, and which actions could tackle those barriers.
- Conduct a **rangewide prioritization analysis**, similar to that conducted for African wild dogs, to identify conservation priority and conservation likelihood scores of each remaining cheetah population.

- Based on the prioritisation, identify at least one cheetah population with important conservation value but low levels of current investment, and collaborate to **improve conservation actions** in that population
- Convene discussions to learn from the [Tigers Forever](#) approach and assess the potential for a **Cheetahs Forever** model to identify and act upon the highest-priority threats.

### **Need 3 – Understand resource needs and identify potential opportunities**

Financial and human resources for cheetah conservation are currently limited. There is a need to consider where financial resources should best be allocated, how they can best incentivise Governments and local communities to conserve cheetahs and their habitats, and how they can best be used to leverage increased global funding for cheetah conservation. There is also a need to build conservation leadership and action capacity rangewide, particularly in and around priority cheetah populations.

In addition to supporting existing conservation initiatives, we support taking the following specific actions within two years:

- Conduct a **resource allocation analysis** for remaining cheetah populations, to identify which conservation outcomes would be realistic to achieve under different funding scenarios.
- Convene an inclusive working group to consider how **novel financing mechanisms**, such as biodiversity credits, could have potential for cheetah conservation, particularly by incentivising local communities to conserve wildlife.
- Invest in targeted conservation **capacity building and leadership** programmes in and around at least four key cheetah populations.
- Establish a **Cheetah Grant Programme**, similar to the Snow Leopard Network or Pallas’s Cat Small Grant, to support grassroot individuals/groups working on cheetah conservation across its range based on the conservation priorities outlined under Need 2.
- Conduct regular **knowledge exchange and/or training programmes** (online or in person), to develop an inclusive learning environment for conservationists, local communities and other stakeholders

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