

Conservation of and trade in tigers and other Appendix-1 Asian big cat species

Report submitted by CITES Management Authority of Thailand for the 57th meeting of the Standing Committee.

To comply with Resolution Conf. 12.5, Thailand has taken various steps on implementing conservation of and trade in tigers and other Appendix-1 Asian big cat. This report shows the progress made from 2007 until the end of March 2008.

1. Political Will

The Thai government has always, as shown in its policy, given the political commitment on natural resources protection and conservation. On January 22, 2008, the cabinet approved the CoP14 report which provided guidelines to all government sectors to curb illegal wildlife trade, including flagship and key stone species such as tigers and elephants. The cabinet also acknowledged the progress on implementing in conserving and protecting wildlife resources under the National Wildlife Master Plan approved previously by the Cabinet on October 25, 2005. This Master Plan guides a long term direction in wildlife management for Thailand.

To implement the government policy on wildlife protection and conservation, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment gave the policy to its departmental agencies in curbing illegal wildlife trade all over the country. The Ministry also focused on the illegal issues occurring along the borders with neighboring countries. With this policy, the National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation Department, as the focal point for CITES Management Authority of Thailand, takes this agenda as the highest priority. The department also urged related parties, i.e., private and the public, to support its work in fighting wildlife crimes. However, not only the National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation Department has strengthened its effort to fight this serious crime, the Royal Thai Police also takes illegal wildlife trade as one of 14 serious crimes for the police all over the country.

2. Progress in Implementation

2.1 Laws

As already known, Thailand uses the Wild Animal Reservation and Protection Act B.E. 2535 (1992) or WARPA to implement wildlife conservation in Thailand in conjunction with international agreements such as CITES and CBD. Since Tiger (*Panthera tigris*), Leopard (*Panthera pardus*), Clouded Leopard (*Neofelis nebulosa*) found in Thailand are protected species under WARPA, the species are prohibited to possess, hunt, or trade, except for scientific purposes. Besides these three species being fully protected under the provision of WARPA, they are also protected by National Park Act .B.E. 2504 (1961), which prohibits the same illegal actions as indicated in WARPA.

2.2 Enforcement

In order to curb illegal wildlife trade by enhancing the cooperation on the conservation and trade in CITES and endangered species, especially tigers and other Appendix-1 Asian big cat species, Thailand has put great effort into strengthening enforcement both at national and international levels.

At the national level, besides setting up a National Wildlife Law Network Committee, Thailand has also set up the National CITES Committee consisting of representatives from various organizations, such as National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation Department, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries Department, Royal Thai Police, Customs Department, Forestry Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Zoological Parks Organization. This committee provides a significant stage for agencies to discuss and seek cooperation on CITES issues. With this development resulting in cooperation among governmental enforcement units, an illegal tiger trade was intercepted on January 29, 2008 at Nakhon Panom province, located along the border between Thai-Laos.

To comply with the recommendation stated in Resolution Conf. 12.5 and to ensure that Thailand Wildlife Enforcement Network (Thailand-WEN) works effectively, the National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation Department in cooperation with the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries Department, the Royal Thai Police, and the Customs Department convened the cross border workshop on law enforcement networking along the border between Thai -Laos on March 3-4, 2008, at Nakhaburi Resort Hotel, Udon Thani Province in northeastern Thailand. Seventy three participants including the heads of 3 CITES Management Authorities and enforcement officers from the Customs Department, the Royal Thai Police (Natural Resources and Environment Crime Division, Petrol Border Police, Highway Police), enforcement staff from the provincial offices (Army, Provincial Governor Office) as well as staff from local governments attended this workshop. Participants discussed illegal cross-border movement of wildlife specimens such as Asian big cat species, pangolin and wild orchids. This Thailand Wildlife Enforcement Network (Thailand-WEN) is and will be the platform for anti-poaching and enforcement teams to work together by sharing information on illegal trade issues and smuggling routes as well as joint operations. Thailand will apply this model to curb illegal wildlife trade.

At the regional level, the office of the Programme Coordination Unit (PCU) of the ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network (ASEAN-WEN) was established. This PCU, which is funded by USAID, will be the center for information exchange and coordination of enforcement to support the ASEAN-WEN in the region. As the ASEAN-WEN is an intergovernmental initiative that is bringing ASEAN governments together to combat wildlife crime, WildAid and TRAFFIC via a cooperative partnership with USAID are providing technical assistance to government agencies that are implementing ASEAN-WEN. The ASEAN-WEN support program coordinated by TRAFFIC

Southeast Asia and Wildlife Alliance supports the PCU and will provide for bilateral and multilateral meetings between and among ASEAN Countries to discuss CITES issues. The upcoming bilateral meeting between Thailand–Laos which will be held in 2008 is one example.

2.2 Public Awareness and Capacity Building

To build up public awareness on tiger conservation, the National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation Department has continuously carried out education and awareness campaigns. Below are some examples:

(1) Distributed the printed materials, brochures, and leaflets on the wildlife trade campaign at airports, tourist spots, local markets, and hotels, as well as at wildlife check points of National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation Department and border check points of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries Department, Royal Thai Police, and Customs Department.

(2) Set up signs in cooperation with the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries Department to campaign illegal wildlife trade along the borders between Thai–Laos.

(3) Joined the wildlife conservation campaign at Fashion Island in Bangkok in October 2007 and Rose Garden in Nakhon Prathom Province in November 2007 to build awareness on wildlife illegal trade to the Thai public.

(4) Participated in the National Wildlife Preservation Day on December 26, 2007, to raise awareness and campaign to conserve wildlife.

To increase awareness of wildlife crime, including the illegal tiger trade and tiger conservation–related messages, in the public and related governmental organizations, the National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation Department organized or participated in the following trainings, workshops and meetings:

(1) CITES Annual meeting on September 4–7, 2007 at Krangkrachan National Park, organized by CITES Management Authority of Thailand.

(2) Laws and CITES Implementation on September 24–28, 2007, at Quality Suite Hotel, Bangkok, organized by CITES Management Authority of Thailand.

(3) Cross Border Workshop on Law Enforcement Networks along the Border between Thai – Laos on March 3–4, 2008, at Nakhaburi Resort Hotel, Udon Thani Province, organized by the National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation Department, the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries Department, the Royal Thai Police, and the Customs Department.

(4) Judiciary Workshop on wildlife Crime and Prosecution on March 11–14, Greenery Resort Hotel, Nakhon Rachasima (Khao Yai), organized by the ASEAN–WEN Support program (TRAFFIC Southeast Asia).

3. Management Direction

As a country commitment to protect key habitat is a high priority for tiger and other Appendix-1 Asian big cat species, as of March 2008, 148 National Parks, 61 Wildlife Sanctuaries, and 47 Non-hunting areas are in place throughout the country. Watershed areas and national forests are also managed to protect these key species. Thailand now has two Natural World Heritage sites: Hua Kha Keng – Tung Yai Wildlife Sanctuary located in Western Forest Complex, and Dong Phrayayen Forest Complex. With these two Natural World Heritage sites located at the west and east of the country, Thailand is now heading to apply Transboundary Protected Area Management working with neighboring countries such as Myanmar and Cambodia to stop illegal tiger trade.

To help protect key species such as tiger and other Appendix-1 Asian big cats in fragmented or non-protected areas at the landscape scale, Thailand has been conducting corridor projects through the Greater Mekong Sub-regional Biodiversity Conservation Corridor initiatives since 2006. Two sites were designed as the pilot sites for the project: (1) a corridor between Western Forest Complex and Khang Krachan Forest Complex; (2) a corridor inside Khao Yai Forest Complex.

To guide Thailand management strategy to protect tigers and other Appendix-1 Asian big cat species, several projects, i.e., population studies and long-term ecological research projects have been conducted in Thailand:

(1) Ecology and Distribution of Indo-Chinese Tiger (*Panthera tigris Corbeti*) conducted in Hua Kha keng and Tung Yai and Khang Krachan Wildlife Sanctuaries in western Thailand by the staff of National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation Department.

(2) Distribution and Habitat Utilization of Marbled cat (*Pardofelis marmoratai*) conducted in Khang Krachan National Park and Klongsang Wildlife Sanctuary.

(3) A population estimate of *Pantera tigris* using Photographic Capture-Recapture Sampling conducted in Huai Kha Khaeng Wildlife Sanctuary by the staff of National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation Department, Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) Thailand and WCS India, and US geological Survey.

(4) Building a Monitoring System for Tiger Conservation in the Western Forest Complex, Thailand conducted in Huai Kha Khaeng and Thung Yai Wildlife Sanctuaries by WCS Thailand with funding from US Fish and Wildlife Service and Rhino Tiger Conservation Fund.

Thailand will continue its monitoring and research projects to apply to other key protected areas for tigers. The draft ‘A tiger and tiger prey management plan in Huai Kha Khaeng and Thung Yai Wildlife Sanctuaries’ is expected to be formulated in the near future. To spread out the message of tiger conservation, the distribution of nature education material based on scientific

findings will be made to NGOs, schools, and the public. However, Thailand still needs cooperation in a research project on DNA testing for tigers to apply on enforcement issues.

The government commitment, included in the National Wildlife Master plan approved by the Cabinet on October 25, 2005, and acknowledged again by the Cabinet on January 22, 2008, on the progress of implementation will guide a long term direction in conserving, protecting, and managing the countries wildlife resources. Also, the National Tiger Action Plan comprising of four topics (1) direct conservation and enforcement; (2) capacity building; (3) information acquisition, management, and analysis; and (4) education and public participation, will be the roadmap for Thailand to protect tigers and other Appendix-1 Asian big cat species.