



**MINISTRY OF FORESTRY OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA**  
**DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF FOREST PROTECTION AND NATURE CONSERVATION**

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To:

**Mr. Willem Wijnstekers**

Secretary General of CITES

International Environment House,

Chemin des Anemones, CH-1219 Chatelaine,

Geneva, Switzerland

Dear Sir,

I am writing in response to your letter ref. JMS/WWW dated 22 June 2006 concerning CITES/GRASP Orangutan Technical Mission. Please accept my apology for the long delay of the reply and unable to meet the requirement by the Resolution Conf.11.3 (Rev. CoP13).

I am surprised with the findings by the mission. However, realizing that the limited time the team had in its visit to Indonesia, there might be some areas that were overlooked. Law enforcement activity, despite the constraints we are facing, is among the highest priority taken by the current Government, undertaken in conjunction with the fight against corruption. However, maintaining viable population of wild orang-utan is the primary goal for orang-utan conservation. To fill the gaps, and/or provide information from our point of view, I would like to present the followings:

**1. Current situation and efforts of orang-utan conservation in Indonesia**

Orangutan is one of the most precious species of Indonesia. It has been confirmed that there are two species namely Bornean and Sumatran Orang-utan. The Bornean Orang-utan *Pongo pygmaeus* is confined to parts of the island of Borneo generally below altitudes of c.500m asl. There are three subspecies of the Bornean Orangutan, which are *Pongo pygmaeus pygmaeus*, *P.p. morio* and *P.p. wurmbii* (Groves, 2001). The Sumatran Orang-utan (*Pongo abelli*) lives and is confined in the northern part of Sumatra, mainly Aceh province. The Sumatran orangutans were estimated to be around 7500 animals in the wild (mostly in Aceh), while Bornean orangutans were estimated to number around 57,000 in numerous fragmented and scattered populations. The main threats to the species are continuing deforestation and increasingly, the forest fires associated with the El Nino Southern Oscillation Event. The number of wild orangutans has declined continuously over many years with the loss of lowland forests, but there has been a rapid increase in the rate of loss in recent years.

The orangutan conservation strategy is aimed at ensuring the long-term survival of both species by maximizing protection of sufficiently large populations, prioritized according to viability in the long term and their taxonomic and ecological uniqueness, via the establishment of new or extended conservation areas. This strategy is aiming at the importance of the protection of the wild population, coupled with enforcement to those that have been removed from the wild habitat.

As a result of the recent Population and Habitat Viability Analysis, PHVA (2004) we now have the most complete and accurate data ever available on the remaining orangutan populations of Borneo and Sumatra and a very good idea of precisely which are viable in the long term and which are not. This allows us to identify those populations in most urgent need of more effective protection. Furthermore, we are now seeking to safeguard the future of two species (Sumatran and Bornean) and 3 subspecies in Borneo meaning that conservation efforts need to be spread geographically across each of these.

Despite the difficulty to prioritise on key and/or viable populations, it is possible to identify key, currently unprotected areas, that would be valuable additions to the protected areas network. Thus it has been possible to increase the protected area network to include previously unprotected Orang-utan populations and we continue to explore additional options for this. Monitoring is an essential part of any conservation program. What we know today of the remaining orangutan populations is only possible through the hard work and dedication of field staff of both Government departments and NGOs.

With regard to law enforcement, it applies to both habitat conversion/destruction, and illegal hunting, capture and trade. Below are the situation, problems we are facing, and what we have done so far:

Illegal logging, Law Enforcement and Community Participation: Again, illegal logging associated with trade in illegally harvested timber and/or wildlifes, a difficult problem to solve. Nevertheless, the new government has already sent out some clear messages to perpetrators and a number of high profile arrests have begun to be made, the most notable recently involving timber being smuggled out of Papua. In addition, one rhino trader has been sentenced nearly 5 years in prison in Lampung province. Due diligence in support of the governments initiatives in this direction are needed to continue this fight against illegal logging.

Community based patrol teams (Orangutan Protection and Monitoring Units) consisting of community members and forest rangers (Police Forests) has already facilitated a more effective joint response to illegal logging in some key habitats for orangutans. Such a unit has been operating in the forests around the Gunung Palung National Park, West Kalimantan and has so far proven very effective in reducing illegal logging. The benefits of involving local communities in these protection units is that accurate information on illegal practices is often readily available. The improved data on the potential threats and perpetrators and other intelligence information provides the basis for more effective law enforcement.

The Sumatran Orangutan Conservation Program (SOCP) and the Sumatran Tiger Conservation Program (STCP) have a very effective partnership in Bukit Tigapuluh National Park (Riau Province, Sumatra), including the management and support of 7 highly-trained Tiger & Orangutan Protection Units (TOPU). These units focus on protection of orangutan and tiger habitat, through prevention of illegal logging, and also on poaching and illegal trade. As standard Tiger and Orangutan Protection Unit (TOPU) is a four-man mobile team consisting of one Department of Forestry ranger and three members of the local community conducting foot patrols 20 days a month in the forest of Bukit Tigapuluh. This unique personal composition sets the TOPU system apart from all others demonstrating how local communities can be encouraged to take pride and actively participate in the stewardship of a conservation area. TOPU Team leaders, the Forest Police rangers represent the official law enforcement capacity of the Unit, authorised to carry fire arms and able to process suspects through usual legal channels. Equipped with portable satellite telephones, geographical information systems, compasses and four-wheel driven off road cars TOPUs are highly mobile and perfectly fitted to conduct intelligence and security operations. The sophisticated navigation equipment helps to establish a comprehensive wildlife field database for key species.

The recently established specially trained mobile Forest Police called SPORC (Quick Response Forest Police Unit) has now recruited and trained 300 personnel, currently distributed in 10 susceptible provinces (North Sumatra, South Sumatra, Lampung, Riau, Jambi, West Kalimantan, East Kalimantan, Central Kalimantan, East Papua, and West Papua). By the end of 2006, recruitment will be undertaken for 400 more personnel from those 10 provinces and Jakarta and East Java.

Illegal trade in orangutans: Forest degradation and other uses of forest land results in many orangutans being captured by local villagers and estate workers. In many cases these animals can effectively be regarded as refugees, since their habitat no longer exists.

They are often captured whilst raiding fruit gardens at the forest edge (in what was previously their home range) or from isolated trees or forest patches in areas being clear felled. In previous decades, these refugees were simply ignored and in many cases will have succumbed to malnutrition or bad conditions in someone's back garden. Nowadays, they are often kept alive by relocation to one of the existing orangutan rehabilitation centers, or in some cases they go to black market.

Considerable improvements in law enforcement concerning the illegal capture, keeping and trade in orangutans have been since the early 1990's. A number of specialist facilities (i.e. quarantine, rehabilitation, rescue centres and release/re-introduction facilities), that meet accepted national and international operating standards have been established to deal with the confiscated animals. In addition, at the moment the Government runs 8 Wildlife Rescue Centres, established to temporarily accommodate confiscated animals prior to the permanent disposal. Prior to the establishment of these new centers, which can now be found based in Jakarta, West Java, Yogyakarta, East Java, Bali, Maluku, North Sulawesi, East Kalimantan, Central Kalimantan and North Sumatra, confiscations of illegal pets were a relatively rare event, as there was simply nowhere suitable to place the animals. Nowadays, a lack of temporal disposal facilities is no longer a valid excuse. As such the government conservation department is now adept at confiscating such animals and a large proportion of these eventually find their way to entirely new populations in the wild (e.g. Meratus and Bukit Tigapuluh National Parks).

The current procedure for criminal prosecution has changed in principle. The Civil Investigators can now directly pursue the case of crime to prosecutor attorney, without having to go through Police Investigator. For the purpose of increasing the judiciaries' awareness on the magnitude of problems of wildlife crimes, a new judiciary guideline has been published in collaboration with WWF. This guideline consists of the elaboration of laws and acts relevant for the judiciaries to decide a proper penalty on certain wildlife crime.

Education and Awareness Program: Education and awareness programs ought to target the decision makers and offenders of today. There can be little doubt that law enforcement is the most effective means of educating people that they shouldn't do something. In most cases the perpetrators of wildlife and crimes know very well that they are acting illegally, and the law enforcers are aware of the laws. But, in many cases they do not know the reasons behind the legislation and this is often used as an excuse for either acting illegally, or for not arresting and prosecuting offenders. Education campaigns should therefore shift from an overemphasis on children, and focus for the time being on the very perpetrators and law enforcers themselves.

Rehabilitation: Rehabilitation simply means preparing/educating individuals for a life of independence in their 'normal' society. Most ex-captive orangutans require some form of rehabilitation before or during release, though some are only recently captured and still remain more or less truly wild animals.

The Jambi reintroduction program is an excellent example of a program that meets all national and international guidelines and regulations. Orangutans here are re-introduced into 130,000 ha of suitable lowland forest (protected as Bukit Tigapuluh National Park) in which orangutans are reported to have occurred until at least the 1930s, but from which they subsequently became extinct due to hunting by indigenous peoples. To date

over 50 orangutans have been reintroduced into the area with only 4 confirmed deaths among them. At least 75 % (and possibly distinctly more) have survived the process and are now living freely in the forests. Two infants have also been conceived and born in the wild to reintroduced parents. This is a good example of a reintroduction program as it is establishing an entirely 'new' population in an area where they did occur as recently as 150 years ago. If breeding continues, even in the absence of additional releases, there is every likelihood that this population will be both numerically and genetically viable within a decade (remembering that all individuals come from wild stock scattered throughout Aceh and North Sumatra, and are therefore almost certainly all genetically unrelated).

Conservation orangutan outside protected areas: There are numerous very important populations of orangutans currently still residing in un-protected forests. These will be monitored closely and the protected area network will be expanded to include as many such populations that are considered potentially viable in the long term as is possible.

Provincial and national government will not grant further logging concessions (HPH) or Rights for conversion (HGU) to estates in such areas and in some particularly important areas, some HPH's and HGU's might even be revoked, especially if they can be shown to be operating in contravention of the regulations.

Repatriation: Refers to the return of Indonesian orangutans from other countries on being proven to have been illegally imported from Indonesia. At present we can give examples of about 140 individuals in Thailand (almost all of which are currently considered to be Bornean in origin), 48 of which will be repatriated shortly. At least 6 Sumatran orangutans in Malaysia have been repatriated to Sumatra. Two orang-utan have also been repatriated from Vietnam recently. Orangutans only come from Sumatra or Kalimantan, and there is no difficulty to know the sites of origin by using DNA test.

Networking: In following the establishment of ASEANWEN at the sub-regional level, Indonesia has prepared to establish National Committee on ASEANWEN, in order to increase effectiveness of wildlife law enforcement. The committee will consist of law enforcement officials at the national level, notably Customs, National Police Forest Police Officers and Quarantine. This will be established before the next meeting of ASEANWEN in Indonesia.

An MOU between CITES Management Authorities and the Customs and Quarantine has also been prepared at National Level, however, in some places at local level such as North Sumatra (Medan) and Jakarta a formal cooperation between these agencies has been initiated, especially in conducting joint inspection on wildlife shipment.

## **2. Challenges and Future Plan**

I would like, in this opportunity, to draw your attention on our future plans, which covers also challenges we are now facing, the opportunities and the actions to fulfill the objectives of the conservation of orang-utan.

The challenges facing the conservation include current transition on political shift from heavily centralised to decentralised government that put more authorities to the district level. During the transition process, there have been growing concerns over the sustainability of the natural resources utilization, including forest management of orangutan importance.

Another challenge is dealing with economic development to supply global market, e.g. from oil palm, mineral and timber. Indonesia and Malaysia currently account for 83% of global production and 89% of global exports of palm-oil and demand for the product is forecast to double by the year 2020. The development of palm-oil plantation involves the total clearance of all forests on estate lands and their replacement with a mono-culture that supports very little biodiversity. This is a major issue challenge to conservation in the region but one that is gradually starting to be examined and addressed.

Funding for conservation remains scarce, insufficient and both time consuming and costly to even attempt to obtain. A few larger funding sources have appeared in recent years, but since funding sources such as these are so few and far between, they fuel intense competition between agencies in order to get access to them. This is not

conducive to conservation. It wastes immeasurable precious resources in time, duplication of effort, secrecy and in some cases outright aggression and deceit. Some major donors also require much of the eventual donations to be repatriated to their country of origin, by purchasing goods or services from said country. Often, only a relatively small proportion ultimately benefits the destination country.

The human populations in all the Great Ape range states continues to grow exponentially and the encroachment into the forest estate happens at an alarming rate. The conservation concept must be integrated within all aspects of the general development process. The integration of conservation and development means that ecological principles and the existential rights of wild species are accepted as major guidelines, in all aspects of development planning and implementation. Successful integration requires that development must also serve the interests of wildlife conservation in order to keep the world habitable for humans too. The education of people in ethics and ecology may be most efficiently achieved through a participatory approach; people empowerment, economic alternatives for people who live near orangutan habitat, advocacy to avoid the potential dangers or health consequences of ape handling, consumption of their meat and the destruction of their habitat, and to encourage respect for law enforcement. These are just some examples to raise widespread public awareness of the need for protection of the apes.

Those are some of the important challenges we are now facing and which need to be properly addressed. The following opportunities, however, provide some ways and may facilitate the problem solving.

Decentralization, in the transition years, has created some concerns over the forest sustainability. However, we are all optimistic that greater accountability and transparency, combined with the freedoms granted and their subsequent responsibilities under regional autonomy legislation will produce a regional political environment that is far more conducive to conservation.

Greater international support is naturally welcome, and needed, if we are to stand any chance of conserving the orang-utan in the coming decades. It is well known that the vast Indonesia remains so-called "developing" country, and does not have large expendable resources that can be steered towards conservation and law enforcement. If international bodies are able to assist with generation of funds and resources, and identifying to where and how such resources should best be directed, then it should be a great help. Unfortunately, few donors are willing to direct their supports for law enforcement activities on the ground.

At the site level, management, including responsibility in the management, of protected areas and wildlife is now more opened and distributed to many stakeholders through the enactment of Ministerial Decree, called "Collaborative Management". A number of collaborative programmes in several National Parks have been initiated. These developments are seen as potentially extremely positive, opening the door to new ideas and new ways of funding and managing protected areas. It is clear that Indonesian government funding and management of protected areas, if carried out alone, has so far failed to meet expectations. The Government of Indonesia is therefore far more open to non-governmental bodies to take far more active and influential role in conservation management than has been previously possible. Collaboratively managed, designed and funded projects however, seem to have considerable potential and should be fully explored and tested, and if necessary refined further to improve their effectiveness. Indonesia has organized two Orangutan Action Plan workshops, in both Sumatra and

Borneo, to examine in detail the threats to orangutans and their habitat with a view to producing a comprehensive and achievable strategy to offset or eliminate the threats. A key to the successful implementation of these action plans will be agreement and supports from multiple stakeholders, including business interests and local, regional, and national governments and international bodies such as IUCN and GRASP.

The following areas are those that we need supports:

With regard to the habitat protection, the area under protection will be expanded to include all viable but previously unprotected populations of orangutans. This is in line with CBD's Decision and Program of Works on Protected Areas. Much stricter law enforcement

conservation could be solved simply by more effective law enforcement. Awareness promotion to local politicians, local government and judiciaries is very important. In addition, the law enforcement officers and civil investigators need to be well trained to deal with the illegal trade in Orang-utan. With the current simplified procedures on investigation and prosecution by Civil Investigators, it is hoped that prosecution on illegal traders of Orang-utan would be more productive.

Monitoring and surveillance of habitat and population of orangutan need also particular attention. We all know that foot patrols are extremely difficult and inadequate in many Indonesian protected areas and that staffing levels are very low. Greater access to high resolution satellite imagery and regular fly-overs would be a significant improvement. A central database of remote sensing imagery with free and easy access to it for conservation managers, would go a long way to reducing duplication of efforts and improving efficiency and information sharing.

Capacity building is required for law enforcement officers and rescue centres in handling the confiscated animals. Research and monitoring skills for park managers and rangers will also be essential to increase capability in the management of protected areas.

Networking, especially with regard to the resource availability and allocation, is also of a great concerns. GRASP and other networking devices (e.g. SEAPA) have considerable potential for improving allocation of limited funds and reducing competition between NGOs and other agencies for these funds. By improving networking and ensuring greater and more streamlined science-based advice reaches both governments and donors alike will solve some problems on resource access and allocation.

### 3. Conclusion

In conclusion, Indonesia is still facing problem with law enforcement. However, law enforcement is only one element of the management of orang-utan or wildlife in general. While keeping the high intensity of the law enforcement outside the habitat, Indonesia would focus resources to protect wildlife in the habitat.

Finally, Greater accountability within government, both national and local, improves prospects for better law enforcement and reduced levels of corruption. Already within Indonesia, a number of high profile corruption cases have been prosecuted and the perpetrators imprisoned and there are signs that this has led to remaining suspects being much more careful than in the past. There are indeed reasons to be optimistic that things are beginning to improve in this direction.

I hope you find this useful. Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

**Ari Susmianto**

Director

Biodiversity Conservation-  
CITES Management Authority for Indonesia

Cc: Director General of Forest Protection and Nature Conservation

