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

Thirty-third meeting of the Animals Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 12 – 19 July 2024

Species conservation and trade

Terrestrial species

CONSERVATION ASPECTS OF CAPTIVE-BREEDING OF ASIAN BIG CATS (FELIDAE SPP.)

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.

2. At its 77th meeting (SC77; Geneva, November 2023), the Standing Committee considered document SC77 Doc. 41.2 on *Asian big cats in captivity* and agreed a general recommendation as follows (SC77 SR):

   i) The Committee requested the Secretariat, in consultation with the Animals Committee, to develop guidance to Parties on how to evaluate the conservation aspects of tiger captive breeding facilities, subject to external funding.

3. During the discussions at SC77, observer organizations (Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), Born Free Foundation, European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA), Environmental Investigation Agency, Four Paws, TRAFFIC, Wildlife Conservation Society, Wildlife Justice Commission, WWF and the Zoological Society of London) suggested that the Standing Committee consider a definition of the meaning of "breeding for conservation purposes" and suggested that the *Guidelines on the use of ex situ management for species conservation* developed by the Species Survival Commission (SSC) of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) could form the basis of these considerations.

4. The Secretariat reached out to the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) to enquire about other potential sources of information that could assist Parties in evaluating conservation aspects of tiger captive breeding facilities. WAZA also referred the Secretariat to the IUCN SSC *Guidelines on the use of ex situ management for species conservation* as well as the IUCN SSC Position Statement *On the role of botanical gardens, aquariums, and zoos in species conservation* that includes defined roles for *ex situ* management. The Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) shared its Tiger Care Manual that includes not only information relating to tiger management and care for tigers in captivity, but also information relating to AZA institutions' contribution to tiger conservation programmes.

5. The IUCN SSC *Guidelines on the use of ex situ management for species conservation* outline five steps to evaluate the appropriateness of ex situ management as part of a comprehensive species conservation strategy:

   - Step 1: Compile a status review of the species, including a threat analysis (aim is to assess the viability of the population and to identify and understand threats that affect the species.

   - Step 2: Define the role that *ex situ* management will play in the overall conservation of the species (the *ex situ* management strategies proposed should address one or more specific threats / constraints to the species viability and conservation as identified in Step 1).

   - Step 3: Determine the characteristics and dimensions of the *ex situ* population needed to fulfil the identified conservation role (nature, scope and duration of *ex situ* programme).

- Step 4: Define the resources and expertise needed for the *ex situ* management programme to meet its role and appraise the feasibility and risks.

- Step 5: Make a decision that is informed and transparent (weighing the potential conservation benefit to the species against the likelihood of success and overall costs and risks of not only a proposed *ex situ* programme but also alternative conservation actions or inaction).

6. The Secretariat is of the view that the IUCN SSC *Guidelines on the use of ex situ management for species conservation* provides useful guidance that could assist Parties in evaluating the conservation aspects of tiger captive breeding facilities.

Recommendations

7. The Animals Committee is invited to consider whether the IUCN SSC *Guidelines on the use of ex situ management for species conservation* provides adequate guidance to Parties on how to evaluate the conservation aspects of tiger captive breeding facilities.