

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

OUTCOMES OF THE CITES BIG CATS TASK FORCE:
CONSULTATION ON A RESOLUTION ON BIG CATS (FELIDAE SPP.)

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.
2. At its 19th meeting (CoP19; Panama City, 2022), the Conference of the Parties adopted Decisions 19.92 and 19.93 on the *CITES Big Cats Task Force*, as follows:

Directed to the Secretariat

19.92 *The Secretariat shall subject to external resources:*

- a) *establish and convene, the CITES Big Cats Task Force (Task Force), in accordance with the terms of reference and modus operandi agreed by the Standing Committee as presented in Annex 2 to document CoP19 Doc. 67 on CITES Big Cats Task Force (Felidae spp.);*
- b) *provide support to the Task Force allowing it to effectively carry out its mandate as stated in the terms of reference, including to:*
 - i) *discuss enforcement and implementation issues related to the illegal trade in specimens of big cats;*
 - ii) *as deemed appropriate, exchange intelligence and other information on the illegal trade in big cats; and*
 - iii) *develop strategies and make recommendations to improve international cooperation regarding the enforcement of CITES concerning illegal trade in specimens of big cats; and*
- c) *report the findings and recommendations of the Task Force to the 77th and 78th meeting of the Standing Committee for its consideration, and for making its own recommendations as appropriate.*

Directed to the Standing Committee

19.93 *The Standing Committee shall:*

- a) *consider at its 77th meeting the reports submitted by the Secretariat, as per Decision 19.92, and make recommendations to the Secretariat and big cat source, transit, and destination countries, as appropriate.*
- b) *report on the implementation of the present Decision and any relevant recommendations as appropriate to the Conference of the Parties at its 20th meeting.*

3. As reported to the Standing Committee at its 77th meeting (SC77; Geneva, November 2023), in document [SC77 Doc. 39.3 on the CITES Big Cats Task Force](#), the Secretariat convened the [CITES Big Cats Task Force meeting](#) in Entebbe, Uganda, from 24 to 28 April 2023. The outcomes of the Task Force meeting were well received by the Standing Committee and the Committee encouraged all Parties affected by illegal trade in specimens of big cat species to make every effort to implement the strategies, measures and activities outlined in the [CITES Big Cats Task Force outcome document](#).

4. One element outlined in the outcome document required further consideration by the Standing Committee. The Task Force in paragraph 1.1 proposed the following:

To strengthen effective implementation and enforcement of the Convention with regard to illegal trade in big cat specimens, it was agreed to invite the CITES Secretariat to consider the merits of a resolution on illegal trade in big cats, including a possible revision of Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev. CoP19) on Conservation of and trade in tigers and other Appendix-I Asian big cat species to be applicable to all big cat species and include this in its report to the Standing Committee.

5. In its report to SC77, the Secretariat sought guidance from the Standing Committee regarding the proposal in paragraph 1.1. The Standing Committee requested the Secretariat to issue a Notification to the Parties to invite perspectives on a possible resolution on all big cats and to prepare an analysis of the merits and drawbacks of developing a resolution on all big cats, in consultation with the Animals Committee, and to submit its conclusions and recommendations to the Standing Committee at its 78th meeting (see summary record [SC77 SR](#)).

6. On 24 November 2023, the Secretariat issued [Notification to the Parties No. 2023/130](#) on *Invitation to provide comments on SC77 documents and agenda items*, including agenda item 39.3 regarding Parties perspectives on a possible resolution on all big cats. In response to this Notification, the Secretariat received responses from Brazil, the European Union and its Member States, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The Secretariat thanks these Parties for their responses and briefly summarizes the perspectives expressed by these Parties in paragraphs 8 to 10 below.

7. The Secretariat also received feedback from the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), which is briefly summarized in paragraph 11 below.

8. In its response to Notification to the Parties No. 2023/130, **Brazil** recalls the suggestion made during SC77 on behalf of the Central and South America and the Caribbean region that discussion on a potential resolution be postponed to the next meeting of the Standing Committee. It was suggested that jaguars (*Panthera onca*) be excluded from the revised resolution due to the ongoing work of the Standing Committee's intersessional working group on jaguars, which is in the process of considering a specific draft resolution on jaguars. Brazil suggested that the Secretariat issue a separate Notification to the Parties to invite perspectives on a resolution regarding all big cats, clarifying that it does not consider Notification No. 2023/130 serving this purpose.

9. **The European Union (EU) and its Member States** recognize the merit of a resolution aimed at strengthening Parties' commitment to addressing illegal trade in big cats and incorporating the various elements outlined in the outcome document of the CITES Big Cats Task Force in such a resolution. As a way forward, they propose revising Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev. CoP19) on *Conservation of and trade in tigers and other Appendix-I Asian big cat species* to make it applicable to all big cat species, and to include the various aspects outlined in the Task Force outcome document, as appropriate. The EU response noted that this is particularly relevant considering the substitution of different species in illegal trade. The EU further emphasized the importance of retaining species-specific measures, especially for tigers and other Appendix-I Asian big cat species, while considering inclusion of new species.

10. **The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK)** in its response supports further consideration at the 78th meeting of the Standing Committee, of the merits of a possible resolution on all big cats. The UK agrees that there is potential for such a resolution to help strengthen regional and international collaboration to address common issues such as illegal trade in big cat species, supporting better recognition of the relationship between illegal and legal trade in big cat species and helping identify potential demand shifts and drivers of these across the different types of illegal trade in big cats and their parts and derivatives. Further, the UK highlights that a resolution on all big cats may also have the benefit of coordinating related action and reducing overlap and duplication of work on common issues across different species and regions. However, the UK stresses that the threats facing Appendix-I big cat species vary according to species and regions and will continue to require targeted conservation actions. There will therefore be a continuing need to address and maintain species-specific measures for Appendix-I big cat species.

11. In its response, **the Wildlife Conservation Society** considered that the outcome document from the CITES Big Cats Task Force meeting contains important recommendations that should be considered by Parties in their implementation of CITES. However, WCS does not support revising Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev. CoP19) to include all CITES-listed big cat species. They argue that the issues facing these big cat species, and specifically the issues of international trade, are far too different to be folded into one resolution, and that such a resolution would become extremely lengthy and difficult to implement, whilst also potentially being confusing for Parties. Furthermore, WCS notes that any processes required to update or amend such a resolution would be complex undertakings, with little to no conservation benefit.

Preliminary findings

12. The Secretariat notes that only a limited number of responses were received to Notification to the Parties No. 2023/130 and that there was a lack of responses from range States. Nevertheless, the responses received show that perspectives on the merits of a resolution on all big cats remain divided.

13. Based on the responses to the Notification, the potential merits of a resolution on all big cats could be summarized as follows.

A resolution on all big cats could:

- a) strengthen regional and international collaboration to address common issues related to big cat species;
- b) facilitate coordination of actions concerning big cats and reduce overlap and duplication of work on common issues across different species and regions;
- c) strengthen commitment to address illegal trade in big cats, if the various elements outlined in the outcome document from the CITES Big Cats Task Force are incorporated in the resolution; and
- d) help identify potential demand shifts and drivers of these across the different types of illegal trade in big cats and their parts and derivatives.

14. Based on the views expressed in responses to the Notification, the drawbacks to developing a resolution on all big cats can be briefly summarized as follows:

- a) issues facing big cat species and specifically matters related to international trade in these species may be too diverse to address in a single resolution;
- b) such a resolution could become very lengthy and difficult to interpret and implement;
- c) revising a resolution of this nature would be complex, whilst potentially having little or no conservation benefit; and
- d) there may be disagreement amongst the Parties on which species should be part of a possible resolution on all big cats.

15. The Secretariat further notes that there are specific initiatives, such as the joint CITES-CMS African Carnivore Initiative (ACI) which addresses conservation and management measures identified by range States for *Panthera leo*, *Panthera pardus* and *Acinonyx jubatus*. A resolution on all big cats could potentially impact on such initiatives. The Secretariat also notes that developing a new resolution on all big cats, or revising Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev. CoP19) to make it applicable to all big cat species, must be carefully considered in the context of [Resolution Conf. 11.3 \(Rev. CoP19\)](#) on *Compliance and enforcement* which provides generic guidance applying to all CITES-listed species as well as other relevant Resolutions¹, to avoid duplication of efforts and ensure that any new or revised measures are complementary and effectively integrated with existing provisions.

¹ E.g. [Resolution Conf. 19.4](#) on *Materials for identification of specimens of CITES-listed species*; [Resolution Conf. 17.8 \(Rev. CoP19\)](#) on *Disposal of illegally traded and confiscated specimens of CITES-listed species*; [Resolution Conf. 17.6 \(Rev. CoP19\)](#) on *Prohibiting, preventing, detecting and countering corruption, which facilitates activities conducted in violations of the Convention*; [Resolution Conf. 17.4 \(Rev. CoP19\)](#) on *Demand reduction strategies to combat illegal trade in CITES-listed species* and the *Guidance for CITES Parties to Develop and Implement Demand Reduction Strategies to Combat Illegal Trade in CITES-listed species* endorsed at CoP19; [Resolution Conf. 11.17 \(Rev. CoP19\)](#) on *National reports*, and [Resolution Conf. 11.15 \(Rev. CoP18\)](#) on *Non-commercial loan, donation or exchange of museum, herbarium, diagnostic and forensic research specimens*.

16. The range and complexity of matters affecting conservation and international trade in species of big cats are also reflected by the numerous Resolutions and Decisions applicable to them. Conservation of and trade in Appendix-I Asian big cat species are covered by [Resolution Conf. 12.5 \(Rev. CoP19\)](#). In addition, the Conference of the Parties adopted several Decisions related to Asian big cats (Felidae spp.), Decisions [14.69, 18.100, 18.101, 18.102 \(Rev. CoP19\), 18.108 \(Rev. CoP19\), 18.105, 18.106, 18.107 \(Rev. CoP19\) to 18.109 \(Rev.CoP19\) and 19.109](#). Other Appendix I and II big cat species in Africa and Latin America that occur in illegal trade [cheetahs (*Acinonyx jubatus*), jaguars (*Panthera onca*), leopards (*Panthera pardus*), African lions (*Panthera leo*), and pumas (*Puma concolor*)] are not covered by Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev. CoP19). However, the Conference of the Parties has adopted Decisions [19.104 to 19.106](#) on illegal trade in cheetahs (*Acinonyx jubatus*), Decisions [19.110 to 19.114](#) on jaguars (*Panthera onca*), Decisions [19.211 and 19.212](#) on leopards (*Panthera pardus*) in Africa, Decisions [19.205 to 19.120](#) on African lions (*Panthera leo*), and Decisions [18.59, 18.60 \(Rev. CoP19\), 18.61, 19.24 and 19.25](#) on the joint CITES-CMS African Carnivores Initiative. A short analysis of the species, range and issues covered by these Resolutions and Decisions can be found in the Annex to the present document. The Secretariat notes that similar issues related to illegal trade can be found in the Resolutions and Decisions on illegal trade in Appendix-I big cats, while issues related to non-detriment findings and conservation and management plans have been addressed in separate species-specific Decisions.
17. The Secretariat considers that the responses to Notification to the Parties No. 2023/130 were too limited to make any firm conclusions regarding the need for a new resolution on all big cats or the possible revision of Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev. CoP19) to be applicable to all big cat species. The Secretariat would therefore welcome any feedback from the Animals Committee regarding its conclusions on the merits and drawbacks of developing a resolution on all big cats.
18. The Secretariat will then consolidate all feedback received to inform its reporting to the 78th meeting of the Standing Committee.

Recommendations

19. The Animals Committee is invited to review the conservation and management aspects of the responses to Notification to the Parties No. 2023/130 and the preliminary findings outlined in the present document, and advise the Secretariat about the merits and drawbacks of a new resolution on all big cats or the possible revision of Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev. CoP19) to be applicable to all big cat species.

FELIDAE RESOLUTIONS AND DECISIONS

Number and title	Species	App.	Range	Issues
Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev. CoP19) on <i>Conservation of and trade in tigers and other Appendix-I Asian big cat species</i>	<i>Acinonyx jubatus</i> <i>Neofelis diardi</i> <i>Neofelis nebulosa</i> <i>Panthera leo</i> <i>Panthera pardus</i> <i>Panthera tigris</i> <i>Panthera uncia</i>	I	Asia (but <i>A. jubatus</i> , <i>P. leo</i> (App.II), <i>P. pardus</i> are also present in Africa)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislation to address illegal trade [see Res. Conf. 11.3 (Rev. CoP19)] • Enforcement controls, information-sharing, cooperation and capacity-building [see Res. Conf. 11.3 (Rev. CoP19)] • Closure of domestic markets for specimens of tiger and other Asian big cats species that is contributing to poaching or illegal trade • Regulation, management and control of captive-breeding facilities, including disposal [see Res. Conf. 12.10 (Rev. CoP15) and Res. Conf. 17.8 (Rev. CoP19)] • Stockpiles • Conservation programmes • Education and awareness-raising • Identification (see Res. Conf. 19.4) • Demand reduction [see Res. Conf. 17.4 (Rev. CoP19)]
Resolution Conf. 10.14 (Rev. CoP19) on <i>Quotas for leopard hunting trophies and skins for personal use</i>	<i>Panthera pardus</i>	I	Africa (but also present in Asia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulation of trade in leopard hunting trophies and skins (role of different Authorities, markings, etc.)
Decisions 14.69, 19.109, 18.100, 18.101, 18.102 (Rev. CoP19), 18.103 (Rev. CoP19), 18.105, 18.106, 18.107 (Rev. CoP19), 18.108 (Rev. CoP19), 18.109 (Rev. CoP19) on <i>Asian big cats (Felidae spp.)</i>	<i>Acinonyx jubatus</i> <i>Neofelis diardi</i> <i>Neofelis nebulosa</i> <i>Panthera leo</i> <i>Panthera pardus</i> <i>Panthera tigris</i> <i>Panthera uncia</i>	I	Asia (but <i>A. jubatus</i> , <i>P. leo</i> (App.II), <i>P. pardus</i> also present in Africa)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulation, management and control of captive-breeding facilities of tigers [see Res. Conf. 12.10 (Rev. CoP15)] • Enforcement controls, information-sharing, cooperation and capacity-building [see Res. Conf. 11.3 (Rev. CoP19)] • Identification (see Res. Conf. 19.4) • Demand reduction [see Res. Conf. 17.4 (Rev. CoP19)]
Decisions 19.104 to 19.106 on <i>Illegal trade in cheetahs (Acinonyx jubatus)</i>	<i>Acinonyx jubatus</i>	I	Africa Asia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislation to address illegal trade [see Res. Conf. 11.3 (Rev. CoP19)] • Enforcement cooperation [see Res. Conf. 11.3 (Rev. CoP19)] • Wildlife crime linked to the Internet [see Res. Conf. 11.3 (Rev. CoP19)]
Decisions 19.110 to 19.114 on <i>Jaguars (Panthera onca)</i>	<i>Panthera onca</i>	I	Central and South America and the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislation to address illegal trade [see Res. Conf. 11.3 (Rev. CoP19)] • Enforcement controls and cooperation [see Res. Conf. 11.3 (Rev. CoP19)]

			Caribbean and Mexico	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring and reporting of illegal killing and illegal trade [see Res. Conf. 11.17 (Rev. CoP19)] • Conservation cooperation • Awareness-raising • Demand reduction [see Res. Conf. 17.4 (Rev. CoP19)]
Decisions 19.211 and 19.212 on <i>Leopards (Panthera pardus) in Africa</i>	<i>Panthera pardus</i>	I	Africa (but also present in Asia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation roadmap
Decisions 18.166, 18.168 (Rev. CoP19) and 18.169 (Rev. CoP19) on <i>Guidance on non-detriment findings for trade in leopard (Panthera pardus) hunting trophies</i>	<i>Panthera pardus</i>	I	Africa (but also present in Asia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-detriment findings [see Res. Conf. 16.7 (Rev. CoP17)]
Decisions 19.205 to 19.210 on <i>African lions (Panthera leo)</i>	<i>Panthera leo</i>	II	Africa (but also present in Asia (App. I))	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation guidance • Non-detriment findings [see Res. Conf. 16.7 (Rev. CoP17)] • Capacity-building (see Res. Conf. 19.2) • Enforcement efforts, identification, reporting and cooperation [see Res. Conf. 11.3 (Rev. CoP19)]
Decisions 18.59, 18.60 (Rev. CoP19), 18.61 19.24 and 19.25 on <i>Joint CITES-CMS African Carnivores Initiative</i>	<i>Acinonyx jubatus</i> <i>Panthera leo</i> <i>Panthera pardus</i>	I & II	Africa (but also present in Asia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperation between CITES and CMS to support range States' initiatives – Workplan (see Res. Conf. 13.3)