

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



Nineteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties
Panama City (Panama), 14 – 25 November 2022

Species specific matters

CITES BIG CATS TASK FORCE (FELIDAE SPP.)

1. This document has been submitted by the Standing Committee.*
2. At its 18th meeting (CoP18, Geneva, 2019), the Conference of the Parties adopted Decisions 18.245 and 18.248 on *African lions (Panthera leo) and the CITES Big Cats Task Force*, as follows:

Directed to the Secretariat

18.245 *The Secretariat shall:*

- a) *draft terms of reference and a modus operandi for the CITES Big Cat Task Force prior to convening its first meeting and submit it to the 73rd Standing Committee for review and adoption, and*

subject to external resources:

- b) *establish and convene, in consultation with the Standing Committee, a CITES Big Cats Task Force (Task Force), focusing on big cat species from Africa, Asia and Latin America, and consisting of representatives from Parties most affected by the illegal trade in big cats, the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime partner organizations, other Parties and organizations, as appropriate, and experts who the Secretariat determines may contribute to the Task Force;*
- c) *provide support to the Task Force allowing it, inter alia, 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*
- d) *report the findings and recommendations of the Task Force to the 74th meeting of the Standing Committee for its consideration, and for making its own recommendations as appropriate.*

* *The geographical designations employed in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the CITES Secretariat (or the United Nations Environment Programme) concerning the legal status of any country, territory, or area, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The responsibility for the contents of the document rests exclusively with its author.*

Directed to the Standing Committee

18.248 *The Standing Committee shall:*

- a) *review and adopt the draft terms of reference, membership and modus operandi for the CITES Big Cat Task Force submitted by the Secretariat as per Decision 18.245, paragraphs a) and b) prior to convening the first meeting of the Task Force;*
- b) *consider at its 74th meeting the reports submitted by Animals Committee and the Secretariat, as per Decisions 18.244 to 18.247, and make recommendations to the Animals Committee, the Secretariat and African lion range States, as appropriate.*
- c) *recommend further actions to be taken, including the possible need for the development of a draft resolution, on the conservation of the African lion taking into consideration Decisions 18.244, 18.245 and 18.247; and*
- d) *report on the implementation of Decision 18.248, and formulate recommendations as appropriate, to the Conference of the Parties at its 19th meeting.*

Implementation of Decisions 18.245 and 18.248 – CITES Big Cats Task Force

3. The Secretariat prepared document [SC73 Doc. 23](#) on the CITES Big Cats Task Force for the 73rd meeting of the Standing Committee (SC73, online, May 2021). Due to the online nature of the meeting and limited time available, the Committee did not have time to discuss the document which included the draft terms of reference and *modus operandi* for the CITES Big Cats Task Force (Task Force). The Committee therefore requested the Secretariat to publish the draft terms of reference and *modus operandi* for the Task Force in a Notification to the Parties and invited Parties and observers to send comments to the Secretariat. The Committee further requested the Secretariat to revise the draft terms of reference and *modus operandi* based on those comments and to report back at its next meeting.
4. The Secretariat issued Notification to the Parties [No. 2021/0042](#) of 25 June 2021, inviting comments from Parties and observers and considered the comments received and revised the draft terms of reference and *modus operandi* accordingly. The revised draft terms of reference and *modus operandi* for the CITES Big Cats Task Force, presented in the Annex to document [SC74 Doc.69 \(Rev. 1\)](#), was considered, further revised and agreed by the Standing Committee at its 74th meeting (SC74, Lyon, March 2022) and is found in Annex 2 to the present document.
5. Further, the Committee noted the progress of Decision 18.248, agreed to propose an extension or update of Decision 18.248 and invited the Secretariat to assist the Chair of the Standing Committee in its preparation. To promote good coordination regarding the Decisions on African lions and the Big Cats Task Force, the Secretariat, with the advice of the Chair of the Standing Committee, produced document CoP19 Doc. 72 on *African lions*. For ease of implementation, the Chair of the Standing Committee, with the support of the Secretariat, suggests the unfinished aspects in Decision 18.248 related specifically to the Big Cats Task Force and their work on enforcement and illegal trade be addressed in new draft Decision 19.BB as proposed in Annex 1 to the present document. The Chair of Standing Committee, with the support of the Secretariat further recommends a second draft Decision 19.AA to include aspects of Decision 18.245 that had not yet been addressed, notably to direct the Secretariat to convene the Big Cat Task Force in accordance with the agreed terms of reference and *modus operandi*, to provide support, and to report the findings and recommendations of the Task Force to the next regular meeting of the Standing Committee. The elements of Decision 18.248 relative to the African lion (*Panthera leo*) are addressed in document CoP19 Doc. 72 on *African lions*.

Recommendations:

7. The Conference of the Parties is invited to:
 - a) adopt draft decisions 19.AA and 19.BB concerning the CITES Big Cats Task Force contained in Annex 1 to the present document; and
 - b) delete Decisions 18.245 and 18.248

COMMENTS OF THE SECRETARIAT

- A. The Secretariat worked in consultation with the Standing Committee as outlined in Decision 18.245 and paragraph 10 h) of Resolution Conf. 11.3 (Rev. CoP18) on *Compliance and enforcement*. The terms of reference and *modus operandi* for the CITES Big Cats Task Force is now finalized and the Secretariat recommends the adoption of the proposed draft decisions presented in Annex 1 to the present document.
- B. The Secretariat will proceed with arrangements to establish and convene a meeting of the CITES Big Cats Task Force as soon as possible, taking into consideration the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and mitigating its potential impacts on the meeting to the fullest extent possible.

DRAFT DECISIONS
ON THE *BIG CATS TASK FORCE*

For ease of reference, the Standing Committee has renumbered the draft decisions but has also indicated where the text of the CoP18 Decisions was kept. Change to existing Decisions are shown underlined (additions) or in ~~strikethrough~~ (deletions)

Directed to the Secretariat (former Decision 18.245, now draft decision 19.AA)

19.AA The Secretariat shall:

- ~~a) draft terms of reference and a *modus operandi* for the CITES Bigs Cat Task Force prior to convening its first meeting and submit it to the 73rd Standing Committee for review and adoption, and~~

subject to external resources

- ~~ba) establish and convene, in consultation with the Standing Committee, a *the* CITES Big Cats Task Force (Task Force), focusing on big cat species from Africa, Asia and Latin America, and consisting of representatives from Parties most affected by the illegal trade in big cats, the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime partner organizations, other Parties and organizations, as appropriate, and experts who the Secretariat determines may contribute to the 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.)*;~~

- ~~eb) provide support to the Task Force allowing it, *inter alia*, 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~~

- ~~ec) report the findings and recommendations of the Task Force to the 74th-77th meeting of the Standing Committee for its consideration, and for making its own recommendations as appropriate.~~

Directed to the Standing Committee (former Decision 18.248, now draft decision 19.BB)

19.BB The Standing Committee shall:

- ~~a) review and adopt the draft terms of reference, membership and *modus operandi* for the CITES Big Cat Task Force submitted by the Secretariat as per Decision 18.245, paragraphs a) and b) prior to convening the first meeting of the Task Force;~~

- ~~b)a) consider at its 74th 77th meeting the reports submitted by ~~Animals Committee~~ and the Secretariat, as per Decisions 18.244 to 18.247 19.AA, and make recommendations to ~~the Animals Committee~~, the Secretariat and African lion big cat range States, as appropriate.~~

- ~~c) recommend further actions to be taken, including the possible need for the development of a draft resolution, on the conservation of the African lion taking into consideration Decisions 18.244, 18.245 and 18.247; and [This element is addressed in draft decision 19.CC, paragraph b, in document CoP19 Doc. 72 on *African lions*]~~

eb) report on the implementation of Decision ~~18.248~~ 19.BB and any relevant ~~formulate~~ recommendations as appropriate to the Conference of the Parties at its ~~19th~~ 20th meeting.

CITES BIG CATS TASK FORCE (FELIDAE SPP.)

Terms of reference and *modus operandi*
for the CITES Big Cats Task Force
agreed by the Standing Committee at its 74th meeting (SC74, Lyon, March 2022)

Task Force activities

1. The Task Force will:

- a) discuss enforcement and implementation challenges and similarities between illegal trade in different species of big cats, including by considering national and regional wildlife enforcement efforts related to big cats and lessons that could be learnt from them, or by identifying gaps that may exist, as appropriate;
- b) identify opportunities to address illegal trade in big cat specimens, taking into consideration species-specific trade dynamics¹, and prioritize actions to better address this illegal trade;
- c) share information about the nature and scale of the illegal trade in specimens of CITES listed big cats and associated illegal trade routes, and identify knowledge gaps;
- d) provide a platform for the exchange of intelligence and other information relating to illegal trade in big cats, and identify mechanisms to do so on a regular basis;
- e) share information about techniques (including the use of forensic methods), tools and processes for identifying big cat specimens in trade, consider developing new and harmonizing existing approaches for better roll out and use of these techniques and tools across Parties, and identify needs and knowledge gaps;
- f) consider in its deliberations the findings of available verified and validated studies, such as those conducted in accordance with [Decision 18.246, paragraph a\)](#) on *African lions* (*Panthera leo*) and the *CITES Big Cats Task Force*, and Decision 18.251 on *Jaguars* (*Panthera onca*), as well as previous CITES studies on Asian big cats, cheetahs and lions, and the [2020 World Wildlife Crime Report](#).
- g) identify, consider and propose best practices to prevent and detect attempts to launder illegal specimens through legal trade, including trade originating from captive-bred sources;
- h) discuss demand for live big cats, big cat parts and derivatives and the implications it has for illegal trade in different big cat species, including areas of convergence and supplementing or substituting of one species with another; and
- i) develop strategies and propose actions to improve international cooperation and the enforcement of CITES to address illegal trade in specimens of big cats, to be presented to the Standing Committee in accordance with Decision 18.245, paragraph d), for its consideration.

Outcomes

2. The Task Force will generate the following outcomes:

- a) a better understanding of enforcement priorities relating to illegal trade in specimens of big cats;

¹ Some big cat specimens may be trafficked as live animals and others as parts and derivatives.

- b) improved understanding and take-up of tools, techniques (including forensic methods) and best practices to identify big cat specimens in trade; their use for enforcement purposes to address illegal trade; and better knowledge of relevant forensic facilities, research institutions, and developments;
- c) enhanced exchange of intelligence and other information on illegal trade in big cat specimens via the existing official channels to the extent possible;
- d) a better understanding of the status, scale, and dynamics of illegal trade for different big cat species, including the convergence of big cat species in illegal trade chains;
- e) an enhanced understanding of the gaps in knowledge and capability that hinder efforts to tackle the illegal trade in big cat specimens;
- f) a better understanding of illegal trade dynamics to inform demand reduction strategies concerning big cat specimens illegally traded;
- g) improved understanding of the role of legal trade in big cat specimens on poaching of and illegal trade in big cat species, and the impact of legal domestic markets as a driver of illegal trade in big cat species.
- h) improved understanding of the role of legal trade in big cat specimens on combating poaching of and illegal trade in big cat species,
- i) improved understanding of trade in specimens originating from captive bred sources and the potential linkage with laundering of illegal specimens from and through such facilities.

Outputs

3. The Task Force will generate the following outputs:
 - a) proposals to facilitate strengthened collaboration and targeted activities that promote effective implementation and enforcement the Convention to address illegal trade in big cat specimens;
 - b) strategies and proposed actions to better deter, detect and address illegal trade in big cat specimens, to be presented to the Standing Committee in accordance with Decision 18.245, paragraph d), for its consideration; and
 - c) time-bound recommendations as appropriate.

MODUS OPERANDI

Prioritization of Parties and big cat species

4. To make the Task Force meeting as practical and constructive as possible, the Secretariat initiated a process of prioritization to identify Parties for participation in the Task Force, and to determine the big cat species most affected by illegal trade for the Task Force to focus on. The prioritization of Parties and big cat species are based on various sources of information and data, that included:
 - a) big cat species most significantly affected by illegal trade, based on available illegal trade data (e.g. seizure data from annual illegal trade reports);
 - b) Parties identified in document [SC70 Doc. 51](#) and the Annexes to it, Annex 4 to document [CoP18 Doc. 71.1](#) on *Asian big cats*, and concerned by [Decisions 18.100 to 18.102, and 18.105](#);
 - c) information on source, transit and destination countries most affected by illegal trade in specimens of big cat species, based on available documentation, studies and reports, for example documents [SC65 Doc. 39 \(Rev. 2\)](#), [SC66 Doc. 32.5 A1](#), [SC70 Doc. 43](#) and [CoP18 Doc. 60](#) on illegal trade in cheetahs; the Annex to document [SC70 54.1 on African lion](#); paragraph 47 in document [CoP18 Doc. 71.1](#) concerning illegal trade in jaguars; document [SC74 Doc 75](#) on *Jaguars* (*Panthera onca*); document [SC74 Doc. 36](#) on *Asian big cats (Felidae spp.)* and the Annexes to it, and the [2020 World Wildlife Crime Report](#);
5. Other sources that could be considered to facilitate further prioritization includes:

- a) the results of the study that the Secretariat is instructed to produce on legal and illegal trade in African lions and other big cats as per [Decision 18.246, paragraph a](#)), subject to its availability; and
 - b) any credible and verified information that may be presented in accordance with [Decision 18.246, paragraph e](#)) on *African lions (Panthera leo) and the CITES Big Cats Task Force* and from other credible data sources such as academic field research concerning illegal trade in big cat specimens.
6. Analysis of data and information primarily from the sources mentioned in paragraph 4 above, indicates that the following key big cat species are of priority concern: cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*), mainland clouded leopard (*Neofelis nebulosa*), Sunda clouded leopard (*Neofelis diardi*), lion (*Panthera leo*), jaguar (*Panthera onca*), leopard (*Panthera pardus*), tiger (*Panthera tigris*) and snow leopard (*Panthera uncia*).
 7. Analysis of data and information primarily from the sources mentioned in paragraph 4 above, identified the following Parties as Parties that may be affected by illegal trade in big cats: Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Botswana, Cambodia, China, Czech Republic, Ethiopia, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malawi, Malaysia, Mexico, Mongolia, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Peru, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Suriname, Thailand, Yemen, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, United Republic of Tanzania, Viet Nam, and Zambia. Participation of these Parties in the Task Force could facilitate and promote exchanges concerning possible best practices and solutions.
 8. Based on the findings of the CITES study on lions and other big cats as per [Decision 18.246, paragraph a](#)), still to be completed, and any new illegal trade data that may become available, additional Parties and big cat species may be added.

Membership of the Task Force

9. In accordance with the provisions of Decision 18.245 paragraph b), the Task Force will be established and convened by the Secretariat in consultation with the Standing Committee, and include representatives from:
 - Parties most affected by illegal trade in big cats;
 - big cat range States with the largest populations;
 - representatives from the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC) partner organizations;
 - other Parties and organizations, as appropriate; and
 - experts who the Secretariat determines may contribute to the Task Force.
10. To ensure that maximum benefit is derived from the Task Force, Parties most affected by illegal trade in big cat specimens and identified through the prioritization process described in paragraphs 4 to 8 above, are encouraged to make every effort to participate in the Task Force.
11. The Secretariat has limited funding available to support the participation of up to two representatives from eligible key Parties identified as affected by illegal trade in big cats, who are not in the position to cover their costs. These Parties may wish to nominate additional representatives at their own expense. Subject to the availability of funds, the Secretariat may on a case-by-case basis consider supporting the participation of a third representative. To ensure multidisciplinary representation, the representatives that these Parties nominate should be from CITES authorities, police, customs, wildlife agencies or prosecutorial authorities. The nominated representatives should have relevant expertise on the subject matter and be able to contribute to the activities and outputs of the Task Force.
12. As indicated in paragraph 9 above, other Parties, organizations and experts with relevant experience or knowledge, or that work actively on big cat related matters will be identified and engaged. This could for example include Parties that have shown a long-standing interest in big cat issues, civil society organizations and individual experts, and entities such as the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), referenced in the Decisions on *African lions (Panthera leo) and the CITES Big Cats Task Force*, and associated with the implementation of key aspects of these Decisions. They will be encouraged to fund their own participation. Subject to the availability of

funds, the Secretariat may be able to support the participation of one representative from some of these entities on a case-by-case basis.

13. Parties and organizations are encouraged to take into consideration gender diversity in the nomination of representatives.

Meeting agenda

14. The meeting agenda will be developed by the Secretariat in consultation with the Chairs of the Standing and Animals Committees.

Format and conduct of the Task Force

15. Ideally, the Task Force meeting should take place in a face-to-face setting. This will however be influenced by the developments concerning the COVID-19 pandemic and the related restrictive measures in place. If a face-to-face meeting will not be possible, online meetings may have to be contemplated.

**TENTATIVE BUDGET AND SOURCE OF FUNDING
FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF DRAFT RESOLUTIONS OR DECISIONS**

According to Resolution Conf. 4.6 (Rev. CoP18) on *Submission of draft resolutions, draft decisions and other documents for meetings of the Conference of the Parties*, the Conference of the Parties decided that any draft resolutions or decisions submitted for consideration at a meeting of the Conference of the Parties that have budgetary and workload implications for the Secretariat or permanent committees must contain or be accompanied by a budget for the work involved and an indication of the source of funding. The Secretariat proposes the following tentative budget and source of funding.

Draft decision 19.AA

The implementation of draft decision 19.AA is subject to external resources. The Secretariat notes that it secured external funding from the United States of America to convene the Big Cats Task Force. Organizing the Task Force and supervision of the work would require some time for the Secretariat but should be a core part of the Secretariat's work and accommodated within its regular work programme.

Draft decision 19.BB

The tasks allocated to the Standing Committee in draft decision 19.BB might require intersessional work by the Committee and time during its meetings but could be accommodated within the regular work programme of the Committee.

Tentative budget:

Decision	Activity	Indicative costs (USD) (excludes Programme Support Costs)	Source of funding
19.AA	Big Cats Task Force meeting. Terms of Reference and <i>modus operandi</i> adopted at SC74 is available in Annex 2 to the present document.	150,000	Extrabudgetary. <i>US Contribution</i>