

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



Seventy-eighth meeting of the Standing Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 3-8 February 2025

Species conservation and trade

Fauna

GREAT APES (HOMINIDAE SPP.):
REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RESOLUTION CONF. 13.4 (REV. COP18)

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat, in consultation with the Great Apes Survival Partnership (GRASP) and the Section on Great Apes (SGA) of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Species Survival Commission (SSC) Primate Specialist Group.

Background

2. Resolution Conf. 13.4 (Rev. CoP18) on *Conservation of and trade in great apes* directs the Secretariat in paragraph 2 e) to report to the Standing Committee on the implementation of the Resolution at each of its regular meetings. This document presents an update on activities concerning great apes since the report considered at the 77th meeting of the Standing Committee (SC77; Geneva, November 2023) (see document [SC77 Doc. 64](#)).
3. In paragraph 3 of Resolution Conf. 13.4 (Rev. CoP18), the Standing Committee is directed to:
 - a) review the implementation of the Resolution at each of its regular meetings on the basis of the Secretariat's reports; and
 - b) report at each meeting of the Conference of the Parties on the implementation of the Resolution, with any recommendations for further action.
4. Seven species of great apes (Hominidae spp.) are included in CITES Appendix I: *Gorilla beringei* (Eastern gorilla), *Gorilla gorilla* (Western gorilla), *Pan troglodytes* (chimpanzee), *Pan paniscus* (bonobo), *Pongo abelii* (Sumatran orangutan), *Pongo pygmaeus* (Bornean orangutan) and *Pongo tapanuliensis* (Tapanuli orangutan).
5. At SC77, the Standing Committee considered [SC77 Doc. 64](#) containing the Secretariat's report on its work with the Great Apes Survival Partnership (GRASP) and its associated initiatives, as well as seizures reported by Parties in their Annual Illegal Trade reports. Annex 3 to that document provided an update on the status of and threats to great apes since the last such report was presented at the 70th meeting of the Standing Committee (SC70; Sochi, October 2018) in the Annex to document [SC70 Doc. 52](#).
6. At SC77, the Committee:
 - a) recalled recommendations in Resolution Conf. 13.4 (Rev. CoP18) on *Conservation of and trade in great apes* and, considering the continued declines in great ape populations reported in document SC77 Doc. 64 and its Annexes, encouraged Parties, intergovernmental organizations, international aid agencies and non-governmental organizations to implement comprehensive enforcement controls to address illegal trade in great apes, including local and online sales of specimens, including live apes;

- b) encouraged all great ape range States to take urgent steps to develop, implement, or expand *in situ* great ape management and conservation programmes addressing the major drivers of great ape population declines and illegal trade, namely poaching for wild meat, or conflict, and deforestation of great ape habitats;
- c) encouraged great ape range States to coordinate action on known or suspected illegal great ape trade;
- d) urged all Parties to provide accurate and up-to-date information on illegal trade in great apes in the CITES Annual Illegal Trade report in a timely manner, following the guidelines developed by the Secretariat and, as appropriate, consider contributing to the GRASP Apes Seizure database and the IUCN SSC A.P.E.S. database as per Resolution Conf. 13.4 (Rev. CoP18); and
- e) encouraged Parties, intergovernmental organizations, international aid agencies and non-governmental organizations to consider any relevant actions or assistance to address illegal trade in great apes and support the conservation of great apes, and to bring any such actions or assistance to the attention of the Secretariat.

Great Apes Survival Partnership (GRASP)

7. In paragraph 4 of the Resolution, the Secretariat, the Standing Committee and the Animals Committee are urged to work closely with GRASP, which is an alliance of over 100 national governments, conservation organizations, research institutions, United Nations agencies and private companies, committed to ensuring the long-term survival of great apes and their habitats in Africa and Asia. An update on GRASP and SGA activities in 2023 and 2024 relevant to the implementation of Resolution Conf. 13.4 (Rev. CoP18) is attached as Annex 1 to the present document.
8. The CITES Secretariat attended the third GRASP Council meeting, which took place from 11 to 14 December 2023 at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, in conjunction with the Fourth Meeting of the Parties to the Agreement on the Conservation of Gorillas and their Habitats of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS Gorilla Agreement). This was the first meeting of the Council since 2012 and the agenda covered a range of topics including GRASP Strategic Review; management structure; business model and work plan; an update on the status of great apes and their habitat; updates on activities by range States; and great ape conservation. During the Council Meeting, discussions were held regarding key areas of great ape conservation including great apes and health, large-scale development and great apes and innovative finance strategies to benefit communities who live with great apes. The final report of the third GRASP Council meeting can be accessed [here](#).
9. New decisions on the operational aspects of the partnership emerged, including amendments to the Rules for the Management of GRASP to enable virtual meetings and voting to enhance partnership collaborations between Council meetings. Decisions were made to defer the inclusion of gibbons (*Hylobatidae* spp.; CITES Appendix I) in the GRASP mandate and postpone the consideration of hosting the CMS Gorilla Agreement, motivated by the recognition that additional resources would be necessary to strengthen the GRASP Secretariat's capacity before expanding its mandate. Additionally, CITES Secretariat's term on the Executive Committee came to an end, and a new Executive Committee was voted into place for 2024-2028. The new Executive Committee consists of the following members:

Category A (range States):

- West Africa – Côte d'Ivoire
- Central Africa – Democratic Republic of the Congo
- East Africa – Uganda
- Southeast Asia – Malaysia (Sabah and Sarawak on rotation)

Category B (non-range States):

- Germany
- United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Category D (intergovernmental organizations):

- International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)
- Secretariat of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of wild animals (CMS)

Category E (NGOs):

- International Gorilla Conservation Programme
 - Orangutan Information Centre
10. The establishment of working groups was also approved to create or update key documents, such as the Strategic Priorities 2024-2028; the GRASP Workplan 2024-2028; the Global Strategy for the Conservation of Great Apes and their Habitats; and exploring the inclusion of gibbons within the GRASP mandate.
 11. The third GRASP Council Meeting also established a working group dedicated to addressing the issue of illegal trade in great apes. The working group aims to bring together stakeholders from governments, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector to tackle challenges in law enforcement and cross-border trafficking. Despite legal advancements, practical application and enforcement of laws remain challenging, prompting a call for international collaboration to urgently address the ongoing loss of great ape populations.
 12. GRASP maintains the Apes Seizures Database, a collation of seizure data on great apes and great ape parts and derivatives that is validated by a panel of great ape experts to ensure the high quality of data being added into the system. Seizure data comes from GRASP's broad alliance of national governments, research institutions, conservation organizations and United Nations agencies. Those who want to submit data can access the database directly and use a bulk upload function, after which data are validated by an expert panel and finally added to the dataset. The database is updated continuously, with hundreds of new records received since the GRASP and SGA report to SC70 in the Annex to document SC70 Doc. 52. Illegal trade data are sensitive, and the database was thus created under the principle that raw data remain confidential. GRASP makes public only the results of a meta-analysis where events cannot be traced back to the data submitters. Parties are invited to submit data as urged in paragraph 1 d) of Resolution Conf. 13.4 (Rev. CoP18).
 13. The Secretariat, under the CITES Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants ([MIKE](#)) programme, is working closely with GRASP to implement Component 2 of the GEF-7 funded project "[Transformational Change in Sustainable Forest Management in Transboundary Landscapes of the Congo Basin](#)". The main objective of the project is to catalyse transformational change in sustainable forest management in transboundary landscapes by scaling best practices and innovations at a regional level. The component of the project that the CITES MIKE programme is implementing aims to improve the monitoring of illegal killing of elephants across the Congo basin and address key law enforcement needs at the national and subregional level, through focused training and capacity-building interventions. The project was initiated in April 2022 and will end in December 2025. Recent activities include training on elephant mortality data collection and the use of ranger-based Monitoring System and Real Time Operation, conducted in Gabon (Minkebe and Lope National Parks), enhancing rangers' skills in data collection and anti-poaching techniques. Through collaboration with the École de Faune de Garoua in Cameroon, additional trainings were provided, bringing together rangers from MIKE sites in central Africa, MIKE National Focal Points, and instructors from wildlife colleges across central Africa. Crime scene management trainings were conducted in collaboration with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Gabon aimed to strengthen judicial processes by improving evidence handling practices.
 14. GRASP also contributes to another GEF-7 project "[Congo Basin Sustainable Landscapes impact programme \(CBSLIP\)](#)" led by the United Nations Environment Programme through a study on illegal trade in great apes, as well as ivory, pangolins and grey parrots, which was conducted by UNODC and is available to government officials in the Congo Basin region.

Illegal trade in great apes as reported by CITES Parties

15. The Secretariat conducted an analysis of seizure data of great apes specimens covering the period 2016 to 2023, submitted by Parties and included in the CITES Illegal Trade Database, summarized in the table presented in Annex 2 to the present document. The data indicates that 19 Parties [Algeria, Bangladesh, Belgium, China (Hong Kong Special Administrative Region), Democratic Republic of the Congo, France, Germany, Guinea, Indonesia, Ivory Coast, Kuwait, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Nigeria, Thailand, Türkiye, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and United States of America] reported a total of 66 seizure records of great ape specimens between 2016 and 2023.¹ The number of seizure records reported was 10 in 2016; 10 in 2017; 12 in 2018; 8 in 2019; 7 in 2020; 5 in 2021; 6 in 2022, and 8 in 2023. The most seized specimens were *Pan troglodytes*, accounting for at least 58 out of the total 147 seized specimens,

¹ This excludes 4 records described as "Feathers" in 2019.

noting that 32 additional specimens were only recorded to the genus level (*Pan*). Other seized specimens included *Gorilla gorilla*, *Pan paniscus*, *Pan troglodytes*, *Pongo abelii* and *Pongo pygmaeus*. Several Parties did not report seizures to the species level, making it difficult to determine the impact of illegal trade on individual species. However, this may not always be possible, particularly when the specimens are traded as meat.

16. The data in the CITES Illegal Trade Database shows a slight increase in the number of seized specimens from 7 in 2022 to 8 in 2023. The reported seizures of great apes specimens in 2023 were all live *Pan troglodytes* and were seized in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (four seizures) and Nigeria (four seizures).

Seizure data from other available sources

17. [Operation Thunder 2023](#), a month-long global operation targeting wildlife crime led jointly by INTERPOL and the World Customs Organization in October 2023, brought together police, customs, financial intelligence units, wildlife and forestry enforcement agencies from 133 Parties, the largest number of Parties to take part in a Thunder operation since the series started in 2017. The Secretariat notes that seizures reported involved 53 live specimens and 1,856 pieces of primates but, as the seizures are not reported at the species level, it is not known if any of these seizures relate to great ape species or if they were intended for the illegal international market.

Recommendations

18. The Standing Committee is invited to:
 - a) note this report prepared by the Secretariat in accordance with paragraph 2e) of Resolution Conf. 13.4 (Rev. CoP18);
 - b) encourage all Parties to identify seized great ape specimens at species level and report the seizures at species level in their annual illegal trade reports in a timely manner following the *Guidelines for the preparation and submission of the CITES annual illegal trade report* and, as appropriate, consider contributing to the GRASP Apes Seizure database and the IUCN SSC A.P.E.S. database as per Resolution Conf. 13.4 (Rev. CoP18); and
 - c) encourage range States affected by illegal trade in great apes to address this issue as part of their implementation of the West Africa Wildlife Crime Strategy (WAWCS) adopted by the Economic Commission of West African States, as well as their respective National Wildlife Crime Strategies and action plans, where appropriate.

ONGOING GRASP AND SGA ACTIVITIES
(provided by GRASP and SGA)

1. The IUCN SSC SGA's ARRC Task Force (Avoid, Reduce, Restore, Conserve <https://www.arrctaskforce.org/>) addresses the growing impacts to apes from energy, infrastructure and extractive industry projects. Often these projects open up new roads that bring in international and local workers, new settlements and, along with them, commercial bushmeat trade and disease, providing fertile ground for the illegal wildlife trade. For the lending banks that support these projects and the companies that buy the minerals, reducing the associated threats to great apes has become a priority. In 2018, the SGA was successful in moving the World Bank's International Finance Corporation (IFC) to change their lending guidance and require all companies seeking loans in areas that overlap with great ape habitat to consult with the SGA. This process was formalized through the creation of the ARRC Task Force, which strengthens capacity in the range States and advises lending banks, such as the IFC, to ensure that their clients not only avoid ape habitat where possible, but also minimize their impacts on great apes. Through the ARRC Task Force, the SGA is reducing the threats to great apes associated with development projects, especially loss of habitat and illegal trade.
2. GRASP developed and manages the global repository of great ape seizure data, the Apes Seizure Database. GRASP is seeking new funding to include new forensic tools to trace confiscated great apes back to their likely source population. Understanding the origin of confiscated apes would allow to analyse drivers and co-drivers of illegal trade.
3. GRASP partnered with the ARRC Task Force to assess risks associated with large-scale development projects, including illegal trade along new development corridors.
4. The IUCN SSC A.P.E.S. database (<https://www.iucngreatapes.org/apes-database>) enables monitoring of changes in great ape population trends and meta-analysis of species/subspecies distribution and abundance. The closely linked A.P.E.S. Wiki (https://wiki.iucnapesportal.org/index.php/The_A.P.E.S._Wiki), provides complementary information on ape population status, threats, conservation activities, and research activities.
5. Collaborators of the IUCN SSC A.P.E.S. database regularly produce an Ape Abundance Annex to accompany the *State of the Apes* book series. The Ape Abundance Annex lists the most recent surveys of each great ape taxon by country with an abundance class for each site surveyed (Sop et al. 2020).

SUMMARY OF SEIZURES OF SPECIMENS OF GREAT APE SPECIES
AS REPORTED BY CITES PARTIES IN THEIR ANNUAL ILLEGAL TRADE REPORTS (2016 TO 2023),
[CITES ILLEGAL TRADE DATABASE, ACCESSED 19 NOVEMBER 2024]

Year	Reporting Party ISO country code	Scientific Name (as reported)	Description of specimen	Original quantity	Original unit
2016	FR	<i>Gorilla</i>	SKULL	1	NUM
2016	US	<i>Gorilla gorilla</i>	SPECIMEN	1	NUM
2016	BD	<i>Pan</i>	CLAW	1	NUM
2016	CI	<i>Pan troglodytes</i>	LIVE	1	NUM
2016	CI	<i>Pan troglodytes</i>	LIVE	1	NUM
2016	US	<i>Pan troglodytes</i>	SKULL	1	NUM
2016	US	<i>Pan troglodytes</i>	SKULL	1	NUM
2016	US	<i>Pan troglodytes</i>	SKULL	1	NUM
2016	KW	<i>Pongo pygmaeus</i>	LIVE	1	NUM
2016	US	<i>Pongo pygmaeus</i>	SKULL	2	NUM
2017	US	<i>Gorilla gorilla</i>	SPECIMEN	1	MLT
2017	NP	<i>Pan</i>	BODY	2	NUM
2017	GB	<i>Pan troglodytes</i>	BODY	2	NUM
2017	GN	<i>Pan troglodytes</i>	BODY	3	NUM
2017	GN	<i>Pan troglodytes</i>	LIVE	1	NUM
2017	GN	<i>Pan troglodytes</i>	LIVE	30	NUM
2017	US	<i>Pan troglodytes</i>	SPECIMEN	1	MLT
2017	TH	<i>Pongo</i>	LIVE	2	NUM
2017	TH	<i>Pongo</i>	LIVE	2	NUM
2017	GB	<i>Pongo</i>	SKULL	2	NUM
2018	FR	<i>Gorilla gorilla</i>	SKULL	1	NUM
2018	GB	<i>Gorilla gorilla</i>	SKULL	2	NUM
2018	TR	<i>Pan paniscus</i>	LIVE	1	NUM
2018	TR	<i>Pan paniscus</i>	LIVE	1	NUM
2018	GN	<i>Pan troglodytes</i>	LIVE	1	NUM
2018	GB	<i>Pan troglodytes</i>	SKULL	3	NUM
2018	MY	<i>Pongo abelii</i>	LIVE	1	NUM
2018	MY	<i>Pongo abelii</i>	LIVE	1	NUM
2018	MY	<i>Pongo abelii</i>	LIVE	2	NUM
2018	MY	<i>Pongo abelii</i>	LIVE	3	NUM
2018	DE	<i>Pongo pygmaeus</i>	SKULL	1	NUM
2018	GB	<i>Pongo pygmaeus</i>	SKULL	3	NUM
2019	FR	<i>Gorilla gorilla</i>	FOOT	1	NUM
2019	FR	<i>Gorilla gorilla</i>	SKULL	1	NUM

Year	Reporting Party ISO country code	Scientific Name (as reported)	Description of specimen	Original quantity	Original unit
2019	MM	<i>Pan</i>	FEATHER	48 ²	BAG
2019	HK ³	<i>Pan</i>	FEATHER		
2019	HK	<i>Pan</i>	FEATHER		
2019	HK	<i>Pan</i>	FEATHER		
2019	ID	<i>Pongo</i>	LIVE	1	NUM
2019	ID	<i>Pongo</i>	LIVE	2	NUM
2019	ID	<i>Pongo</i>	LIVE	3	NUM
2019	ID	<i>Pongo</i>	LIVE	3	NUM
2019	ID	<i>Pongo</i>	LIVE	3	NUM
2019	BE	<i>Pongo pygmaeus</i>	SKULL	1	NUM
2020	FR	<i>Gorilla gorilla</i>	SKIN PIECE	1	NUM
2020	FR	<i>Gorilla gorilla</i>	SKULL	1	NUM
2020	FR	<i>Pan</i>	BONE PIECE	2	NUM
2020	TR	<i>Pan</i>	LIVE	17	NUM
2020	FR	<i>Pan</i>	SKULL	1	NUM
2020	CD	<i>Pan paniscus</i>	SKIN PIECE	4	NUM
2020	FR	<i>Pongo pygmaeus</i>	SKULL	3	NUM
2021	CD	<i>Pan troglodytes</i>	LIVE	1	NUM
2021	CD	<i>Pan troglodytes</i>	LIVE	1	NUM
2021	CD	<i>Pan paniscus</i>	MEAT	4	NUM
2021	FR	<i>Pan</i>	MEAT	4	KIL
2021	FR	<i>Pan</i>	MEAT	1	NUM
2022	FR	<i>Gorilla gorilla</i>	FOOT	1	NUM
2022	CD	<i>Pan troglodytes</i>	LIVE	1	NUM
2022	CD	<i>Pan troglodytes</i>	LIVE	1	NUM
2022	FR	<i>Pan</i>	SKULL	1	NUM
2022	FR	<i>Pan</i>	SKELETON	1	NUM
2022	DZ	<i>Pan</i>	LIVE	2	NUM
2023	CD	<i>Pan troglodytes</i>	LIVE	1	NUM
2023	CD	<i>Pan troglodytes</i>	LIVE	1	NUM
2023	CD	<i>Pan troglodytes</i>	LIVE	1	NUM
2023	CD	<i>Pan troglodytes</i>	LIVE	1	NUM
2023	NG	<i>Pan troglodytes</i>	LIVE	1	NUM
2023	NG	<i>Pan troglodytes</i>	LIVE	1	NUM
2023	NG	<i>Pan troglodytes</i>	LIVE	1	NUM
2023	NG	<i>Pan troglodytes</i>	LIVE	1	NUM

² This is likely to be an incorrect entry as FEA refers to Feathers

³ HK refers to Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China.