

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



Thirty-first meeting of the Animals Committee
Online, 31 May, 1, 4, 21 and 22 June 2021

Species specific matters

ADDENDUM TO AFRICAN LIONS (*PANTHERA LEO*)

1. This document has been prepared by the co-chairs of the working group on African lions.*

Intersessional lion working group report on the review of the *Guidelines for the Conservation of Lions in Africa*

2. At its 18th meeting (CoP18, Geneva, 2019), the Conference of the Parties adopted Decisions 18.244 to 18.250 on *African lions (Panthera leo) and the CITES Big Cats Task Force*.
3. In its work plan for 2020-2022, the Animals Committee identified a lead or co-leads for each of the instructions directed to it in Resolutions and Decisions. Three regional representatives, G. Mensah and P. Kasoma (Africa), and S. Ramirez (Central and South America and the Caribbean), were asked to co-lead the review of the *Guidelines for the Conservation of Lions in Africa (GCLA)*. The report from this group would then be considered by the Animals Committee at its 32nd meeting.
4. A request for comments on the version of the *Guidelines for the Conservation of Lions* that was reviewed and adopted at the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS COP) last year was sent out to members of the working group on lions on 10 March 2021. Comments were expected by 25 March 2021. Of the members who responded, 20 were able to send comments. Group members were expected to respond to the following questions:
 - 1) Do the Guidelines for the Conservation of the Lion in Africa cover all important aspects relevant to the conservation of lions in Africa?
 - 2) Is the information provided in the different chapters of the GCLA clear, complete, and/or sufficiently up to date?
 - 3) Do you have any further comments or suggestions regarding the GCLA?
 - 4) What recommendations(s) concerning the GCLA can be proposed to the Animals Committee?
5. Responses were received from the following members of the Working Group:
 - Born Free Foundation, Center for Biological Diversity, Humane Society International, and Pro Wildlife
 - Gerald Benyr [AC member, Europe]
 - TRAFFIC

* *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.*

- World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)
 - AZA/Columbus Zoo and Aquarium
 - Conservation Force
 - Vernon Booth, Independent Wildlife Management Consultant
 - Namibia + Botswana, Mozambique, South Africa, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe (Lion range states)
 - United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
 - Safari Club International
 - United States of America
6. A response was also received from IWCMC-World Conservation Trust but unfortunately the attachment with comments could not be opened.
 7. A quick assessment of the responses reveals that only one member gave unqualified support to the first question on whether the guidelines covered all important aspects relevant to the conservation of lions in Africa but even then, he had one suggestion for improvement. Most of the others agreed that the guidelines made a significant contribution to lion conservation but felt they needed certain additions, to be complete. A variety of suggestions for improvement were made by most members. Two thought that trophy hunting was not correctly addressed in the document. They also thought the document over focused on Southern Africa whereas the most urgent lion conservation issues were elsewhere. Three other members thought that there is need to address the impact of zoonotic diseases especially COVID-19 more emphatically. There was general agreement that the document is outdated having been worked on in the early 2010s and since there were numerous new developments in the research and conservation area, there was need to revise the guidelines. Some members felt that the issue of captive breeding as well as trade in lion parts needed a more comprehensive coverage to provide guidance where necessary. The Southern African range states and some other members could not even comment on the guidelines because they regarded them as redundant.
 8. With regards to question 2 on whether the information provided in the different chapters of the GCLA were clear, complete, and/or sufficiently up to date; most felt that there were significant changes that needed to be made especially in view of new information since the guidelines were developed. Research has continued since the guidelines were drafted on various issues including population status, conservation impacts of trade (legal and illegal), and lion harvests. All these new data need to be incorporated into the guidelines. New NDFs, national regulations and practices have been adopted in various range and non-range countries which also need to be incorporated. There are specific suggestions for improving the section on NDFs from a number of group members and one wondered why the International expert workshop on NDFs for hunting trophies of certain African species was not even mentioned. Some members felt that whereas the guidelines attempt to balance their discussion of contentious issues such as trophy hunting, there is no balance in the references cited especially in view of recent research. They also feel all references should have been peer reviewed to be admissible.
 9. In response to questions 3 and 4, all respondents had suggestions for improvement of the guidelines and whereas many members had specific recommendations to the AC on how the document could be pushed further, some members especially range states in Southern Africa and some observer members involved in consumptive use of lions felt strongly that the guidelines cannot be accepted in their current form especially since they felt the two weeks they had been given for the review were inadequate to establish whether the concerns they had raised earlier had been adequately addressed in the current version. There was also a suggestion that the revision should involve a broader spectrum of stakeholders involved in one way or another, in lion conservation.
 10. Due to the diversity of responses as well as the fact that there is a distinct divide between Southern African range States as well as members involved in consumptive use of lions and the rest of the working group members, the WG did not manage to conclude the matter of the Guidelines in its mandate within the available time. Due to lack of consensus and the fact that a significant section of the perceived beneficiaries of the guidelines had no faith in them, the working group is only providing information that can form the basis for a discussion on the best way forward.