

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

Fiftieth meeting of the Standing Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 15-19 March 2004

Interpretation and implementation of the Convention

TIBETAN ANTELOPE

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.
2. At its 12th meeting (Santiago, 2002), the Conference of the Parties adopted Decision 12.40:

Subject to available funding, the Secretariat shall undertake an enforcement-needs assessment mission to China to provide technical assistance regarding anti-poaching issues and combating the smuggling of wool, and organize a workshop in China to provide training for enforcement personnel involved in anti-poaching and anti-smuggling of Tibetan antelope wool in 2003.

3. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland had previously provided funds to the Secretariat for work relating to tigers. Because there was intelligence suggesting that tiger bones were being bartered for the wool of Tibetan antelope, the Secretariat suggested to the United Kingdom that remaining funds could be used for work on Tibetan antelope issues. The Secretariat is very grateful to the United Kingdom for having agreed to this.
4. A Secretariat staff member conducted a mission to China between 20 and 29 August 2003. He was accompanied for the majority of the mission by Mr Wan Ziming, Chief of the Division of Law Enforcement and Training of the CITES Management Authority, Beijing, China. The mission was conducted in two parts.
5. The first entailed a road journey, by 4x4 vehicle, from Xining in Qinghai Province to Lhasa, the capital of Tibet Autonomous Region. The distance involved was approximately 2,000 km, much of it at altitudes between 4,000 and 5,000 m. This enabled the Secretariat's staff member to spend time with managers of protected areas and national parks, and anti-poaching personnel and to visit patrol bases. Importantly, it allowed him to meet with law enforcement personnel and to experience the conditions under which they have to operate. He also had an opportunity to see the activities of non-governmental organizations that are operating in the area.
6. The second part was a training workshop, organized by the CITES Management Authority of China and the CITES Secretariat, which was held in Lhasa from 26 to 28 August 2003. This event, supported financially and logistically by a non-governmental organization, the International Fund for Animal Welfare, involved approximately fifty CITES, Customs, police, and reserve staff from around the area but also CITES officials from Beijing and Hong Kong SAR. This provided an opportunity for officials to exchange experiences, and presentations were made relating to international wildlife crime, enforcing CITES, intelligence, the use of informants and border controls. Each participant received a manual

containing training material, including presentations by speakers from abroad that had been translated into Chinese. The workshop also resulted in the signing of a memorandum of understanding between reserve management and enforcement officials in the autonomous regions of Tibet and Xinjiang and Qinghai Province.

7. The Secretariat wishes to express its appreciation to the CITES Management Authority of China for its assistance during the mission and workshop. It also wishes to place on record the very favourable impression it formed of the work being done by Tibetan antelope anti-poaching personnel, who operate in what must be one of the harshest environments of the world and display considerable bravery in tackling determined criminals who are invariably carrying firearms, which they do not hesitate to use in an effort to avoid arrest.
8. A report relating to the enforcement needs-assessment, incorporating a number of recommendations, was subsequently prepared and sent to the CITES Management Authority of China. Copies were also sent to the CITES Management Authorities of Bhutan, India, Nepal and Pakistan since it is believed that they either are affected by illicit trade in specimens of Tibetan antelope or can contribute to combating the trade. ICPO-Interpol and the World Customs Organization were also given copies of the report. The document was given a restricted-circulation classification by the Secretariat, since it contains information that could be exploited by those engaged in illegal activities should it enter the public domain.
9. However, the first of the Secretariat's recommendations in the report related to logistical support that it believes China may require donor assistance in implementing. The recommendation is not of a confidential nature and is reproduced below in the hope that governments, non-governmental organizations and other sources of funding may be encouraged to provide assistance to China:

"The following is recommended (**Recommendation 1**):

- A. The acquisition of computer software for crime-recording and crime analysis, which should include incident-plotting and mapping to display graphically where poaching is occurring (such software could also be beneficial for species population monitoring and conservation planning and management);
- B. The use of global positioning system (GPS) equipment, already possessed by some teams, should be extended and its use encouraged. Such equipment can be used in conjunction with the software referred to in 'A' above;
- C. The acquisition of infra-red, heat-seeking equipment, which can be used (especially at night) to detect, over long distances, the presence of persons or vehicles in the open terrain of the Tibetan Plateau. Such equipment is available as hand-held devices or can be mounted in vehicles (including aircraft);
- D. The acquisition of night-vision equipment; and
- E. The acquisition of light aircraft. The use of light aircraft would require feasibility studies, especially since it would have to operate at high altitudes and perhaps in inclement weather. However, it is not necessarily suggested that aerial patrols should be conducted on a routine basis or even throughout the year. Light aircraft could be deployed for 'spotting' purposes at the most relevant times of the year and flights could be linked to poaching analyses and intelligence. The aircraft could be used to locate herds of Tibetan antelope, poaching gangs and could direct ground staff to relevant places. Light aircraft need not be excessively expensive to operate

and have proved their worth many times over in policing operations across the world. Several such aircraft have been donated for anti-poaching work in countries in Africa and the Tibetan Plateau's poaching problems are suited to this type of response. Very importantly, the use of aircraft substantially reduces the risk to ground staff. It is suggested that one or more aircraft should be a shared resource for the law enforcement personnel across the Plateau and should not be restricted to the control of just the autonomous regions of Tibet and Xinjiang or Qinghai Province (or any particular reserve or park)."

10. The Secretariat was delighted to learn that on 9 October 2003, Lhasa Customs and Public Security Bureau staff seized 32 tiger skins, 581 leopard skins and 778 otter skins and arrested five persons in an operation that appears to have uncovered a major criminal operation coordinating the illicit trade in wildlife. Although no specimens of Tibetan antelope were seized during the initial enforcement action, it is thought that the workshop conducted a few weeks earlier helped raise awareness of illicit trade in wildlife and encouraged local personnel to continue their efforts to combat it. The Secretariat also believes this illustrates very effectively that enforcement personnel in Tibet and neighbouring regions are well-motivated and deserve to be supported in the manner outlined in paragraph 9 above.
11. In the document (CoP12 Doc. 37) that it prepared for the 12th meeting of the Conference of the Parties, relating to the Conservation of and trade in Tibetan antelope, on behalf of the Standing Committee, the Secretariat suggested amending Resolution Conf. 11.8 (Conservation of and trade in Tibetan antelope). Its proposal was to add text calling on the State of Jammu and Kashmir in India to halt the processing of Tibetan antelope wool and the manufacture of shahtoosh wool products. At the time of the meeting of the Conference of the Parties, the Secretariat withdrew the proposal, having received information from India that Jammu and Kashmir had adopted new legislation effectively making such activities unlawful. However, it has since learned that the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir has declined to order enforcement of the legislation and that manufacturers are continuing to trade and wish compensation before agreeing to cease production.
12. The Secretariat is aware that the Government of India and non-governmental organizations in India are encouraging Jammu and Kashmir not to allow trade in specimens of Tibetan antelope. If such moves are not successful, the Secretariat will again propose an amendment to Resolution Conf. 11.8.

Recommendations and conclusions

13. The Secretariat proposes that the Standing Committee adopt the following recommendations:
 - a) Potential donors should consider funding or assisting in the acquisition of the equipment recommended by the Secretariat.
 - b) The Governments of Bhutan, China, India, Nepal and Pakistan should report to the Secretariat, by 30 April 2004, on their implementation of the recommendations made in its enforcement-needs assessment report.
14. The Secretariat believes that this document, updated with details of the implementation of the enforcement-needs assessment report's recommendations and any other new information, should form the basis of the Standing Committee's report for the 13th meeting of the Conference of the Parties on the implementation of Resolution Conf. 11.8 (Conservation of and trade in Tibetan antelope).