

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



Fifty-fourth meeting of the Standing Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 2-6 October 2006

Interpretation and implementation of the Convention

Species trade and conservation issues

Tiger

REPORT OF THE SECRETARIAT

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.

Background

2. At its 53rd meeting (SC53, Geneva, June – July 2005), the Standing Committee considered document SC53 Doc. 17, submitted by the United States of America, which raised concerns regarding the illicit trade in specimens of tiger. The committee agreed that all range States of Asian big cat species should be asked to submit reports describing their efforts to combat illicit trade including, where appropriate, what they had done to implement recommendations made by the CITES Tiger Missions Technical Team.
3. The Standing Committee also endorsed a proposal by the CITES Tiger Enforcement Task Force that an analysis of data relating to illicit trade in Asian big cats should be undertaken.

Reports from range States

4. To implement the decision of the Standing Committee, the Secretariat wrote to the following range States: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Uzbekistan and Viet Nam. It advised them of the request for reports and asked that they be submitted by 31 March 2006. A notice regarding the need for reports was also placed on the CITES website. The Secretariat did not have the resources to enable it to engage actively with States that did not submit reports.
5. The Secretariat has received reports from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Thailand and Viet Nam. In the main, the reports identify the legislative protection offered to Asian big cats, their distribution, conservation and management plans, and anti-poaching work. There are few references to particularly innovative or distinct approaches that the Secretariat believes are useful to publicize. The Secretariat will make available copies of the reports to any Party that requests them. The Secretariat believes, as it has said in the past, that such general requests for the submission of reports are of questionable value. However, the Secretariat does wish to highlight the following.
6. In Indonesia the authorities appear to continue to benefit from close collaboration with a number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which has led to the creation of specific anti-poaching units for tigers. A number of workshops have been held and emphasis has been placed on involving

prosecutors and the judiciary. One network of poachers and dealers has been disrupted and several persons have been sentenced to terms of imprisonment.

7. In Thailand the enforcement authorities have been successful in targeting illicit trade in tigers and a number of individuals have been imprisoned. Thailand appears to experience more trade in live tigers and trade in tiger meat than other range States. These enforcement successes in Thailand might seem to be at odds with the Secretariat's comments in document SC54 Doc. 38 in relation to enforcement matters. However, it should be noted that the tiger is an indigenous species in Thailand and, consequently, benefits from greater protection under domestic law than non-indigenous CITES species.
8. In some countries, the main motivation behind the poaching of Asian big cats appears to be to supply the skin trade, whilst in others the trade seems to be mainly in bones, meat and other body parts for traditional medicinal use. In most range States, there seems relatively little trade in live animals but there are some countries, such as the Russian Federation, Thailand and Viet Nam where a number of seizures involving live specimens have occurred. There seems no clear indication why these differences occur.

Analysis of illicit trade data

9. It was to gain a clearer picture and better understanding of the issues described in paragraph 8 above that the CITES Tiger Enforcement Task Force recommended at SC53 the undertaking of a professional crime analysis of data relating to the criminal activities related to tigers and other Appendix-I Asian big cat species. Following the Standing Committee's endorsement of this proposal, the Secretariat wrote to all range States and asked that they supply relevant data. They also invited NGOs to participate in this study. There was a good response from NGOs but the response from range States was very mixed.
10. The Russian Federation supplied interesting information relating to smuggling methods, routes and the nature of illicit trade. Bangladesh, China, the Republic of Korea, Thailand and Viet Nam all submitted seizure data. It was noticeable, however, that India, which remains the range State with probably the highest number of tigers in the wild, the State that probably suffers most from poaching and illegal cross-border activities, and which is also a member of the CITES Tiger Enforcement Task Force, did not supply any information for the analysis.
11. The intelligence section of the Canadian Wildlife Service volunteered to undertake the analysis and the Secretariat forwarded to it all the information it received. An initial draft report was supplied to the Secretariat in early 2006 but, following discussions between the Secretariat and the Canadian Wildlife Service, it was decided to conduct a further review and the final result is still awaited at the time of writing (July 2006). The Secretariat is very grateful for the work being conducted by Canada and is aware that the analysis has been hampered because of a lack of data, and so risks producing skewed results. It is because of this that the analysis has yet to be completed. If a useful analysis can be produced, a report will be distributed to relevant Parties (including all range States) but it is not expected to be made available to the public as it will contain enforcement-specific information.

Other recent activities

12. Following on work it conducted to produce a film (distributed on CD-ROM) designed to help raise awareness of illegal trade in ivory, an NGO, the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA), offered to produce similar material regarding illegal trade in Asian big cats. Working with the Secretariat, and assisted by funds from the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, EIA has now produced such a film.
13. The film includes interviews with several experienced wildlife law enforcement officers, describes the illicit trade and offers excellent advice on targeting poachers, dealers and smugglers. It has been produced in English, Hindi, Mandarin, Nepali and Tibetan and copies have been made available to relevant countries, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Wildlife Enforcement Network (ASEAN-WEN), ICPO-Interpol and the World Customs Organization. The Secretariat is also using the film at relevant workshops, etc. The Secretariat is grateful to EIA and believes the film is of a very

high standard. Because the film contains enforcement-specific information, it is not available to the public.

14. At SC53, considerable concern was expressed regarding the status of tiger populations in India. India assured the Committee that it was responding to apparent increases in poaching and illicit trade. In particular, it referred to the creation of a National Wildlife Crime Control Bureau and a national tiger population census.
15. The Secretariat has maintained a dialogue with the Government of India since SC53 and has encouraged India to report progress at the present meeting. It notes, however, that the National Wildlife Crime Control Bureau, which was expected to become operational in 2005, has yet to be established. It understands that the results of a national tiger census, which was apparently started in late 2005, are unlikely to be published until 2007.
16. The Secretariat acknowledges that many of the problems faced by India, and other neighbouring range States, are caused by a demand beyond its borders. In particular, it has noted the demand in the Tibet Autonomous Region and neighbouring provinces of China. The Secretariat's activities in response to this are described in document SC54 Doc. 38 regarding Enforcement matters.

Recommendation

17. If the number of tigers (and other Asian big cats) in the wild is used as a performance indicator, it seems that the efforts of governments, NGOs, the international community and CITES over recent decades have failed. Whilst there has been, and continues to be, good work taking place, the desired results of increases in population numbers and reductions in illicit activities have, overall, not been achieved and the Secretariat sees little room for optimism at present.
18. It appears that the necessary political will, combined with law enforcement priority, has yet to be achieved. The Secretariat believes it may be timely to address this matter at the highest levels of government. It has submitted a proposal to a foundation seeking funding to organize a meeting to which those tiger range States most affected by illicit trade would be invited. The Secretariat's application to the foundation, if successful, would only result in less than one quarter of the total funds likely to be needed.
19. It is intended to invite the Ministers of Environment and Justice and the Police Commissioner and Director General of Customs from these States to a two-day event, which would be chaired by the Secretary-General of CITES. The aim would be to have these officials sign a declaration, committing their countries to achieving the necessary political will and law enforcement priority to safeguard the future of these species and others and to significantly reducing poaching and illicit trade. In advance of the event, the Secretariat would work with relevant Permanent Missions in Geneva to lay the groundwork for such a ministerial conference. Other Parties and organizations willing to support efforts by range States would also be invited to participate and sign the declaration.
20. It is hoped to convene such a meeting in early 2007, so that progress could be reported at the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties. The Secretariat is at the time of writing in discussions with a non-range State that is considering hosting the event.
21. Whilst the focus of the meeting would be primarily tigers, the Secretariat believes that such an approach, if successful, could set an example for other Parties to the Convention with regard to achieving political will and enforcement priority (although without necessarily having to result in a declaration). The Secretariat also believes that the measures required to safeguard tigers are, essentially, the same as for all species.
22. The Secretariat requests that the Standing Committee endorse this proposal and encourage relevant Parties and organizations to provide support, especially as substantial funding will be required.