

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



Sixty-first meeting of the Standing Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 15-19 August 2011

Interpretation and implementation of the Convention

Species trade and conservation

ASIAN BIG CATS

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.

Background

2. Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev. CoP15) (*Conservation of and trade in tigers and other Appendix-I Asian big cat species*) instructs the Secretariat to report to the Standing Committee and the Conference of the Parties on the status of Asian big cats in the wild, their conservation, and trade controls in place in Parties, using information provided by the range States on measures taken to comply with this Resolution and related relevant Decisions and any relevant additional information provided by relevant countries.
3. To encourage submission of information, the Secretariat issued Notification to the Parties No. 2011/014, of 10 February 2011. It requested that relevant information be submitted by 29 April 2011. Information documents received by the Secretariat are annexed to this document.
4. At its 15th meeting (CoP15, Doha, 2010), the Conference of the Parties adopted the following Decisions:

Directed to Parties, especially tiger range States

- 15.46 *All Parties, but particularly tiger range States, should submit, by 30 June 2010, information relating to incidents of poaching of and illegal trade in tigers that have occurred within their territory since the beginning of 2007. Information should be submitted using the Ecomessage format distributed in Notification to the Parties No. 2009/028 of 22 July 2009. Ecomessage forms for each incident should be submitted to the CITES Secretariat or to the General Secretariat of ICPO-INTERPOL via INTERPOL National Central Bureaus.*

Directed to the Secretariat

- 15.47 *The Secretariat shall collaborate with ICPO-INTERPOL to undertake an analysis of the information received from Parties. Two reports, one for public consumption and the other solely for the law enforcement community, should be prepared. The public document will be posted on the CITES website, whilst the other will be circulated in a restricted fashion to relevant enforcement agencies. The Secretariat shall report on this matter at the 61st meeting of the Standing Committee and make any relevant recommendations as a result of the analysis.*
- 15.48 *The Secretariat shall seek funds to convene, as soon as possible, a seminar involving senior-level Customs and police officers from tiger range States, to brief them on the threatened status of this species, particularly the impact wildlife crime has upon it. The officials shall also be briefed by the Secretariat regarding the Global Tiger Summit, planned under the Global Tiger Initiative, so that the law enforcement community throughout tiger range States is prepared to engage in efforts to safeguard this species and respond to*

measures adopted at the Summit. The Secretariat shall collaborate with ICPO-INTERPOL, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the World Customs Organization in preparing the seminar. The Secretariat shall report on the outcomes of the seminar at the 61st meeting of the Standing Committee.

Directed to the Standing Committee

15.49 At its 61st meeting, the Standing Committee shall consider the report of the Secretariat and determine what actions are necessary as a result of the analysis and the seminar. This could include instructing the Secretariat to convene the CITES Tiger Enforcement Task Force or CITES Enforcement Expert Group to consider further action.

5. The CITES Secretariat has worked with INTERPOL to implement Decision 15.47. A joint report is attached as Annex 1. Whilst some very detailed information was submitted by some Parties, overall the response was relatively poor. Consequently, this exercise, intended to provide an international overview of poaching of and illegal trade in tigers, cannot be regarded as having been particularly successful.
6. With regard to Decision 15.48, difficulties have been encountered in identifying an appropriate venue for the seminar and work on this issue is currently ongoing. It is intended that the seminar will be convened under the auspices of the recently-established International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICCWC). INTERPOL is undertaking the logistical arrangements and the Secretariat notes with appreciation that funding support is being provided by the European Commission and the World Bank. It is hoped that the seminar will take place before the autumn of 2011.
7. Aside from the seminar referred to above, it is expected that several of the activities that ICCWC has planned for 2011 will be of benefit to Asian big cat range States. These are described in document SC61 Doc. 30 on Enforcement matters. Illegal trade in big cats, not only in in Asia but also in other parts of the world, is also bound to feature in the Consortium's longer term plans.

Global Tiger Initiative

8. The Secretariat has reported previously to the Standing Committee and Conference of the Parties on the Global Tiger Initiative. The CITES Secretariat has taken the lead in providing enforcement-related guidance to the Initiative.
9. The Secretariat participated in a side-event on tiger conservation, which took place during the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity in Nagoya, Japan, in October 2010. The speech by the CITES Secretary-General can be viewed at:

http://www.cites.org/eng/news/SG/2010/SG_remarks_tiger_nagoya.shtml

10. What might be regarded as the first or strategic phase of the Initiative culminated in the International Tiger Forum in November 2010. This was held in St Petersburg and was hosted by H.E. Prime Minister Vladimir Putin of the Russian Federation. The event was an unprecedented gathering of heads of state, senior politicians, international and intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, and experts from the conservation community to address the conservation of a single species.
11. The Forum adopted The St Petersburg Declaration on Tiger Conservation and the Global Tiger Recovery Program. These documents can be viewed (in English only) at:

http://www.tigersummit.ru/eng/forum_documents

12. The CITES Secretariat was honoured to be elected as chair of the drafting committee which prepared the Declaration at a pre-Forum meeting that was held in Indonesia. It was similarly honoured to be elected chair of the same committee during the Forum itself. The Secretary-General of CITES addressed a plenary session of the Forum and also a session devoted to illegal trade matters. His remarks can be viewed at:

http://www.cites.org/eng/news/SG/2010/20101122_sg_statement_tiger_forum.shtml

13. The Forum also provided an opportunity to formally launch ICCWC.

14. There is no doubt that the Global Tiger Initiative has generated very substantial political will for tiger conservation at the highest levels. It has also helped in alerting the international community to the perilous state of this species and how close many of its populations are to extinction. Tiger range States deserve to be commended for their preparation of national recovery programmes, which are complemented by the global Program. The Secretariat, in its close involvement in Initiative activities, has noted an enthusiasm and level of commitment for tiger conservation that it has not seen previously. The President of the World Bank and his project team have done sterling work in facilitating the Initiative.
15. There is, however, no room for complacency and the national and global recovery programmes require considerable sums of money for their implementation.

Other matters

16. As can be seen from the reports submitted by range States, national governments are very active in the field of tiger conservation and in combating illegal trade in the species. The Secretariat is also aware that several range States have expanded relevant protected areas that are the habitat of big cats and, in some cases, created whole new national parks.
17. At the time of writing (late May 2011) only two range States had responded to the request for information in Notification to the Parties No. 2011/014: China and Thailand. Information was also submitted by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Whilst this might be regarded as disappointing, the Secretariat is conscious that tiger range States have, in the past two years, been preparing very detailed reports and action plans for the Global Tiger Initiative. The most recent case of such reporting was in relation to an Initiative event that took place in India in March 2011. It is wary, therefore, that range States will become reporting-fatigued and believes this should be taken into account when considering submission rates for the present meeting.
18. ICCWC wrote to all tiger range States, seeking their guidance as to the forms of support they required and this will be taken into account as the Consortium develops its work plans and project proposals, as it has no operating budget at present. However, as mentioned above, the Secretariat believes that several of ICCWC's short-term plans will have direct benefit to Asian big cat range States.
19. In relation to Decision 15.49, the Secretariat does not believe there is a need to convene the CITES Tiger Enforcement Task Force or CITES Enforcement Expert Group at this time with regard to illegal trade in Asian big cats. It is, however, eagerly looking forward to the senior-level Customs and police seminar taking place. To date, the involvement of enforcement officials in, for example, meetings of the Global Tiger Initiative has tended to be confined to those from parks or wildlife authorities. Whilst their presence is, of course, welcome and the work they conduct in relation to anti-poaching activities is vital, the involvement of the wider law enforcement community is needed if trafficking in big cat specimens is to be combated effectively.
20. The Secretariat commends Thailand for making available in its report to the Standing Committee details of big cats that are in captivity. It encourages all range States, and other relevant Parties, to register such possession. In doing so, it has in mind that it appears to be increasingly common for whole, or dismembered, carcasses to feature in seizures related to illegal trade in big cats, especially tigers. This trade appears to be driven by a demand in some places for tiger meat for human consumption. The circumstances of some of these seizures indicate that the specimens in question have not been poached from the wild. It is important, therefore, that captive-breeding facilities or other facilities where big cats are kept in captivity are monitored to ensure that no 'laundering' into illegal trade takes place.
21. The Secretariat notes that Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev. CoP15) contains the following text at paragraph j) under URGES:

"all range and consumer States that are not party to CITES to accede to the Convention at the earliest possible date in order to improve control of international trade in parts and derivatives of tiger and other Asian big cat species"
22. The Secretariat believes that the only range State of Asian big cats that is not party to the Convention is the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. As has been reported previously, during correspondence with the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in 2007, the Secretariat was advised that tiger pawmarks were seen during a survey in a mountain region of the country in 2006. The Secretariat noted that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was represented at the International Tiger Forum.

23. The Secretariat, as a matter of routine, reaches out to non-Parties and encourages their accession to the Convention. It suggests, however, that Asian regional representatives to the Standing Committee be asked to assist in encouraging the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to accede, especially so that it can play a part in CITES activities related to Asian big cat conservation.

Enforcement-related guidance

24. Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev. CoP15) was amended at CoP15 to include guidance that was prepared by the CITES Tiger Enforcement Task Force when it met first in New Delhi, India, in April 2001. The guidance includes: a specimen form, which could be used at the national level for the reporting and recording of wildlife crime; guidance for reporting and intelligence analysis; and guidance for specialized wildlife law enforcement units. These were first communicated via a Notification to the Parties.

25. The following Decision was adopted at CoP15:

Directed to the Standing Committee

- 15.70 *The Standing Committee shall review and update the form and guidance contained in Annexes 1 to 3 in Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev. CoP15) and report on this matter at the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.*

26. Whilst the guidance was prepared by a species-specific CITES Enforcement Task Force, the Secretariat believes that it relates to wildlife law enforcement in general. Indeed, the guidance contains no tiger-specific matters. Consequently, if the form and guidance is to be reviewed and updated, it would seem sensible for it to thereafter be incorporated as annexes to Resolution Conf. 11.3 (Rev. CoP15) (*Enforcement and compliance*), rather than in the resolution on Asian big cats.
27. With regard to the review itself, the Secretariat suggests that the Committee may wish to establish a working group to work by email. Alternatively, the Committee may wish to request the Senior Experts Group of the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime to conduct the review. The latter approach would seem to offer a potentially more extensive input from the law enforcement community than a Standing Committee working group might.

Recommendations

28. Aside from the suggestions in paragraphs 23 and 25, the Secretariat has no specific recommendations at this time and the Committee is asked to note this report.