

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



Sixty-sixth meeting of the Standing Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 11-15 January 2016

Interpretation and implementation of the Convention

Compliance and enforcement

Enforcement matters

ILLEGAL TRADE IN CHEETAHS (*ACINONYX JUBATUS*)
REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP

1. This document has been prepared by Kuwait as Chair of the Standing Committee Working Group on illegal trade in cheetahs, with assistance of the Secretariat.*
2. At its 16th meeting (CoP16, Bangkok, 2013), the Conference of the Parties adopted a number of Decisions on *Illegal trade in cheetahs (Acinonyx jubatus)*, including the following:

Directed to the Secretariat

16.71 *The Secretariat shall, subject to external funding, contract independent consultants to undertake a study of the legal and illegal trade in wild cheetahs, and to assess the impact of this trade on the species conservation in the wild. The study should aim to determine the source of cheetahs in illegal trade, and the transit routes of illegally trafficked cheetahs, and should document the measures taken by Parties to deal with or dispose of confiscated live specimens. All range States must be fully consulted as stakeholders. The Secretariat shall make the results of the study available to the Animals and Standing Committees for their consideration.*

Directed to the Animals Committee

16.72 *The Animals Committee should review the study undertaken in accordance with Decision 16.71 and make recommendations, as appropriate, to the Standing Committee.*

Directed to the Standing Committee

16.73 *The Standing Committee should consider the recommendations of the animals Committee made in accordance with Decision 16.72, and make its own recommendations, as appropriate, for communication to the Parties or for consideration at the 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.*

3. At its 65th meeting (SC65, Geneva, July 2014), the Standing Committee established an intersessional Working Group on illegal trade in cheetahs with Kuwait as Chair and the following membership: Bahrain, Botswana, Kenya, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Uganda, United Arab Emirates,

* *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.*

Zimbabwe, Chair of the Animals Committee, Born Free Foundation, Elephant Action League, International Fund for Animal Welfare, IUCN, Panthera, Species Survival Network, Wildlife Conservation Society, WWF and Zoological Society of London. After the formation of the intersessional Working Group, the Chair agreed to include the Endangered Wildlife Trust and Cheetah Conservation Fund as additional members of the working group. The terms of reference for the Working Group as endorsed at SC65 is detailed in Annex 1 to Notification to the Parties [No. 2014/060](#) of 10 December 2014.

4. The Working Group on cheetahs has worked with the Secretariat as outlined in its terms of reference, to develop a questionnaire to assist Parties in compiling information on the status of the implementation and enforcement of CITES provisions relevant to the trade in cheetahs, and challenges experienced by cheetah range, transit and consumer States. The Secretariat made the questionnaire available to Parties as Annex 2 to Notification to the Parties No. 2014/060.
5. In response to the Notification, the Secretariat received responses from 29 countries: Austria, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Cyprus, Greece, Kenya, Kuwait, Latvia, Malta, Mauritania, Namibia, New Zealand, Nigeria, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Slovakia, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, United States of America, Yemen, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. These reports were subsequently submitted to the Chair of the Working Group on cheetahs. Further to these reports, Chad, Mali, Mozambique and Sudan submitted reports directly to the organizer of the workshop. All reports were included in the working group's analysis (see Annex to this document).
6. The Working Group coordinated with the Secretariat the organization of a workshop of range States and Parties implicated in the illegal trade in cheetah, and other relevant experts and organizations. For logistical reasons, it was not possible to convene this workshop prior to the 28th meeting of the Animals Committee (AC28, Israel, August 2015), as recommended in paragraph 3 of Annex 3 to document [SC65 Doc. 39 \(Rev. 2\)](#) on illegal trade in cheetahs (*Acinonyx jubatus*).

Workshop on illegal trade in cheetahs

7. The workshop was convened in Kuwait City, Kuwait, from 3 to 5 November 2015. Its objectives were to review and exchange information on the illegal trade in cheetahs, and formulate targeted recommendations to combat it, including recommendations concerning the disposal of confiscated cheetahs. The Working Group expresses its sincere appreciation to the Environment Public Authority of the State of Kuwait for generously hosting this workshop, and for the financial and human resources that were made available to support it. The Working Group further expresses its sincere appreciation to the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) and the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) for the co-funding it provided for this workshop.
8. The CITES Secretary General delivered a video statement to the workshop (see <https://youtu.be/KLs-G0IUT2M>), which was attended and supported by Secretariat staff. The Secretariat expresses its sincere appreciation to the Government of Kuwait for the generous funding it provided, which enabled the Secretariat to participate in the workshop.
9. The workshop brought together representatives from CITES authorities and enforcement agencies from 13 Parties (Algeria, Bahrain, Botswana, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, United Arab Emirates and Zimbabwe), the Chair of the Animals Committee, and cheetah experts from international and non-governmental organizations (Born Free USA, Cheetah Conservation Fund, Endangered Wildlife Trust, Global Eye, International Fund for Animal Welfare, IUCN Cat Specialist Group, Kuwait Environment Protection Society, Panthera, Wildlife Conservation Society, World Association of Zoos and Aquariums and Zoological Society of London).
10. Workshop participants reviewed recent information on the conservation status of cheetahs, the recommendations from the study commissioned by the Secretariat in accordance with Decision 16.71, the recommendations of the Animals Committee, the results of the questionnaire described in paragraph 4 of this report, the challenges and advances made by Party participants and the perspectives of the non-governmental organizations participating.
11. Based on this information, the workshop addressed a wide range of challenges that contribute to the ongoing illegal trade in cheetahs, with a focus on the supply of, and demand for illegal cheetahs, disposal of confiscated live cheetahs, and enforcement. The workshop participants acknowledged and commended the efforts by parties on implementation of the Convention on this issue, and recognized the need to

overcome these challenges by Parties. These were roughly categorized as challenges with: a) basic knowledge; b) public awareness and need for demand reduction; c) legislative and national policy ; d) the role of social media; e) capacity and resources; f) internal communication at a national level; g) international cooperation and communication; h) poverty and corruption; i) human-cheetah conflict; j) fraudulent captive-breeding; k) management of confiscated live specimens; and l) enforcement.

12. With respect to legislative challenges, most of the workshop participants recognized issues regarding weak supporting legislation or lack of compliance with legislation as an issue that is national in scope. The workshop encouraged Parties to review their existing legal instruments with a view to determine how they can be best applied to address illegal trade in cheetahs and particularly suggested that penalties for engaging in illegal cheetah trade could be examined to ensure they are proportionate to the conservation risk posed by this activity.
13. With respect to the lack of basic knowledge, the workshop in particular encouraged Parties to gather more information and report to the Secretariat on illegal trade in cheetah skins and derivatives in accordance with the illegal trade reporting requirements agreed by the CITES Parties, to better characterize the nature and scope of this trade, and better enable Parties to take appropriate action to address any illegal trade. NGOs were also encouraged to share information on illegal activities regarding cheetahs immediately with countries for further investigations. In cases where this proves to be challenging, such information can be provided to the Secretariat in accordance with Notification to the Parties [No. 2004/078](#) of 9 December 2004.
14. The workshop participants also discussed approaches towards urgently improving the control of captive-breeding operations for cheetahs to ensure that wild-sourced cheetahs are not fraudulently declared as captive-bred. It was recognized with appreciation that South Africa, as the source for most captive-bred cheetahs in international trade, has taken great strides to improve controls on captive-bred cheetah through regulatory amendments as well as newly requiring parental DNA as proof of captive-breeding for specimens to be exported as captive-bred. The workshop encouraged exporting Parties that have captive-breeding facilities to equally ensure appropriate controls are in place for preventing wild specimens being exported as captive-bred and encouraged importing Parties to request proof of lineage (e.g. DNA and studbook) when importing captive-bred cheetahs.
15. However, of the various challenges discussed by the workshop, clear priority was placed on addressing the need for public awareness and demand reduction schemes for illegally traded cheetah specimens, the need for capacity-building tools, the need to improve international cooperation and communication, the need to improve enforcement and cooperation on the disposal of confiscated specimens.
16. Accordingly, the workshop developed following draft recommendations and draft Decisions for consideration by the Standing Committee.

Recommendations

17. The Working Group invites the Standing Committee to note the report of its activities, particularly the outcomes from the workshop outlined in paragraphs 13-16.
18. The Working Group invites the Standing Committee to adopt the following recommendations:

Regarding public awareness and education

- a) Cheetah range States and Parties implicated in the illegal trade in cheetahs are encouraged to urgently develop and launch national public awareness campaigns to reduce illegal offer of, and demand for illegally traded cheetahs, using the communication tools and approaches most effective for their communities and by, *inter alia*: publicizing law enforcement outcomes; explaining the conservation impacts of the illegal trade; mobilizing social media; using key occasions (e.g. World Wildlife Day) and engaging key influencers; and establishing partnerships with NGOs as appropriate.
- b) Where appropriate, the CITES Secretariat is requested, subject to available resources, to engage with relevant social media platforms, search engines and e-commerce platforms to address illegal international trade in cheetah through these platforms, and raise awareness of the conservation plight of cheetahs.

Regarding enforcement

- c) Range states of cheetahs and countries involved in the illegal trade chain are encouraged to:
 - i) Further strengthen national and regional enforcement actions concerning the illegal trade in cheetahs involving all relevant enforcement agencies, and take them into account when developing work programmes and undertaking law enforcement operations;
 - ii) Make use of existing systems for exchange of information provided by INTERPOL and the World Customs Organization, or as appropriate, establish mechanisms to ensure regular, timely and effective communication between these countries regarding illegal trade in cheetahs;
 - iii) Immediately bring information on poaching and illegal trade in cheetahs, including parts and derivatives, to the attention of relevant authorities in source, transit and destination countries for appropriate enforcement actions and follow-up; and
 - iv) Request support from ICCWC partners and subject to available funding, conduct joint operations between East Africa and the Middle East, targeting known or suspected smuggling routes.

Regarding cooperation and information exchange

- d) The Secretariat, subject to available resources and in cooperation with the World Customs Organization, is invited to explore the establishment of a closed cheetah user group for relevant national competent authorities in order to facilitate the exchange of non-nominal information on illegal trade in cheetah specimens.
- e) The Secretariat, subject to available resources, is invited to assess the feasibility of creating a forum on the CITES website for Parties, experts, NGOs and other stakeholders to exchange and share information on cheetahs.

Regarding disposal of confiscated live cheetahs

- f) Range, transit and destination countries involved in the illegal trade in live cheetahs are encouraged to collaborate on the humane disposal of confiscated live cheetahs through the use of existing and, where required and as appropriate, the establishment of national or regional rescue centres, paying particular attention to maximizing the contribution of the specimens to conservation of the species in the wild.
- g) Parties are requested to inform the Secretariat of facilities available for the disposal of confiscated live cheetahs to be published in the CITES cheetah toolkit and on the website.

19. The Working Group invites the Standing Committee to adopt the following Decisions for transmission to the 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

Regarding capacity building tools concerning the illegal trade in cheetahs

Directed to the Secretariat

- 17.xx The Secretariat shall, pending the availability of external funding and in consultation with the Standing Committee and relevant experts, commission the development of a CITES cheetah trade resource kit that compiles relevant information and tools, and addresses *inter alia*: identification of live cheetahs and parts and derivatives thereof; monitoring and controlling trade in cheetahs; protocols to be followed in case of seizures (e.g. handling, DNA sampling, reporting for data collection such as studbooks); guidance on the immediate and long-term disposal of live animals (e.g. decision trees based on relevant CITES Resolution, veterinary care, contact details of experts or potential rescue centres, advice on procedures, reporting on disposal activities); lists of suitable housing facilities for live cheetahs; and other relevant materials.

- 17.xx The Secretariat shall submit a draft CITES cheetah trade resource kit to the Standing Committee at its 69th or 70th meeting for its review and recommendations. The Secretariat shall make the final version of the kit available in relevant languages and various forms (e.g. hard copy, electronic, smart phone application, web-based), and regularly revise the web-based version to ensure that it remains accurate, up to date and reflecting best practice.

Directed to the Standing Committee

- 17.xx The Standing Committee shall review the draft CITES cheetah trade resource kit produced in compliance with Decision 17.xx at its 69th or 70th meeting, and formulate comments and recommendations to the Secretariat for its finalization and dissemination.

Directed to the Secretariat

- 17.xx. The Secretariat shall report on the implementation of Decisions 17.xx and 17.xx, including its findings and recommendations, as appropriate, at the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.
- 17 xx. The Secretariat to report to the Standing Committee on progress on all of the recommendations, and progress in halting illegal trade in cheetahs.