

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



Sixty-ninth meeting of the Standing Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 27 November - 1 December 2017

Species specific matters

ASIAN BIG CATS (FELIDAE SPP.):
REPORT OF THE SECRETARIAT

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.
2. In Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev. CoP17) on *Conservation of and trade in tigers and other Appendix-I Asian big cat species*, paragraph 2 a), the Conference of the Parties 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. At its 17th meeting (CoP17, Johannesburg, 2016), the Conference of the Parties adopted *inter alia* Decisions 17.228, 17.230 and 17.231 on *Asian big cats (Felidae spp.)*,¹ as follows:

Directed to the Secretariat

- 17.228 *Subject to external funds, the Secretariat shall, in consultation with range and consumer States, and in cooperation with partner organizations in the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICCWC) and, as appropriate, other experts and organizations, continue the review of implementation of Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev. CoP17) and associated Decisions and prepare a report in consideration of legislative and regulatory measures; national law enforcement; demand reduction, education and awareness; prevention of illegal trade in parts and derivatives from facilities for keeping Asian big cats in captivity; and management of national and privately-held stocks of parts and derivatives.*
- 17.230 *Subject to external funding, the Secretariat shall work with ICCWC partner organizations, in particular INTERPOL, to further build upon the work already conducted through initiatives such as Operation PAWS II, by supporting key Parties affected by trafficking in Asian big cat specimens, to initiate, plan and carry out joint intelligence-driven national and transnational investigations, to disrupt and dismantle the criminal groups involved in trafficking in Asian big cat specimens.*
- 17.231 *The Secretariat shall report to the Standing Committee on progress with regard to the implementation of Decisions 17.226, 17.228, 17.229 and 17.230, and on the basis of the report, formulate recommendations for consideration by the Standing Committee.*

¹ Decisions 17.226, 17.227 and 17.229 on Asian big cats (Felidae spp.) are reported upon in the SC69 document on Asian big cats in captivity prepared for the present meeting. Decisions 17.164 and 17.165 on Identification (tiger skins) are reported upon in the SC69 document on Tiger skins prepared for the present meeting.

Implementation of Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev. CoP17), paragraph 2 a)

4. The Secretariat has not had the resources to review the status of all Asian big cats in the wild, their conservation, and trade controls in place in Parties in accordance with the provisions of Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev. CoP17), paragraph 2 a), and in the present document, limits itself to reporting on the situation with respect to the snow leopard (*Uncia uncia*) and the cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*) population in Asia.

Snow leopard (Uncia uncia)

5. It is encouraging to note that a recent update to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (September 2017), shows that the conservation status of the snow leopard² has improved, moving from Endangered to Vulnerable. This reflects significant investments in conservation for this species, including anti-poaching efforts, initiatives to reduce conflict with livestock, and awareness-raising programmes. However the snow leopard population still faces many threats through habitat loss and degradation, declines in prey, competition with livestock, persecution, and poaching for illegal wildlife trade. It is therefore essential to continue and expand conservation efforts.
6. With the shared goal of conserving snow leopards and high mountain ecosystems of Asia, representatives of twelve snow leopard range States (Afghanistan, Bhutan, China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) and partner organizations, development partners, and donors met at the International Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Forum,³ held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, in August 2017. Participants reasserted their determination to conserve snow leopard populations in the wild, with the cooperation of relevant stakeholders as appropriate, including through the involvement of local communities. The Bishkek Declaration 2017 entitled *Caring for snow leopards and mountains – Our ecological future*,⁴ reaffirmed the commitment of participants to the goals of the Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Programme (GSLEP) which were endorsed at the Global Snow Leopard Conservation Forum held in Bishkek, in October 2013. The conference further discussed possible funding opportunities to fully implement the GSLEP. The Secretariat would like to thank Hong Kong SAR for the generous funding it provided, which enabled the Secretariat to participate in this meeting.

Cheetah (Acinonyx jubatus)

7. With regards to the conservation status of the last population of cheetahs in Asia, which occurs in central Iran (Islamic Republic of), a recent 2017 assessment by the Cat Specialist Group of the Species Survival Commission of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN/SSC) suggests that the Asiatic cheetah is now facing extinction. In view of its size (estimated in 2007 at 60-100 animals, but less than 50 now), the population is highly vulnerable to any illegal hunting or other pressures. The Secretariat reports in further detail on this issue in the document on *Cheetahs (Acinonyx jubatus)* prepared for the present meeting.

Implementation of Decisions 17.228, 17.230 and 17.231

8. Concerning Decision 17.228, the necessary external funds to implement this Decision have not been secured to date. Donors, Parties and relevant stakeholders are invited to provide financial support to the Secretariat to enable it to implement this Decision.
9. To progress the implementation of Decision 17.230, the Secretariat continued to collaborate with INTERPOL under the auspices of its Project Predator,⁵ to enhance law enforcement responses to crime involving Asian big cats. This was possible through generous funding support from the European Union. Such funds were used by INTERPOL to host a workshop in Yangon, Myanmar, from 28 to 30 March 2017, to enhance transnational cooperation on investigation of Asian big cat crime between China, India and Myanmar. The workshop promoted information sharing and intelligence-led joint enforcement efforts in the region and was attended by representatives from police, customs and wildlife authorities of these three countries. More work needs to be done in this region to crack down on illegal wildlife trade. To implement additional activities in

² <http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/22732/0>

³ https://cites.org/enq/news/sq/CITES_SG_remarks_International_Snow_leopard_ecosystem_conservation_forum_24082017

⁴ http://forum.globalsnowleopard.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Declaration_EN.pdf

⁵ <https://www.interpol.int/Crime-areas/Environmental-crime/Projects/Project-Predator>

support of Decision 17.230, the Secretariat is, at the time of writing (September 2017), working with ICCWC partners to secure additional funds through the ICCWC Strategic Programme 2016-2020.

Asian Big Cat Field Pocket Guide

10. As was reported at CoP17,⁶ the Secretariat worked with the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) in the implementation of Decision 16.70. EIA, under contract for the Secretariat, worked to develop a field pocket *Guide for law enforcement agencies to combat illegal trade in Asian big cat specimens*. This guide, available in English and Chinese, has since been completed and is available on the CITES Virtual College restricted site⁷ and on Environet⁸. Parties that would like to receive hard copies of the guide are invited to request it from the Secretariat.

World Wildlife Day 2018: Protecting big cats

11. Protecting big cats is the theme for next year's UN World Wildlife Day⁹ on 3 March 2018. This event will present a unique opportunity to raise awareness of the importance of protecting big cats, including Asian big cats. The Secretariat encourages Parties, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations to take the opportunity of World Wildlife Day 2018 to initiate or enhance public awareness campaigns to promote the conservation of Asian big cats, and reduce illegal offer of, and demand for illegally traded Asian big cat specimens. World Wildlife Day 2018 will also provide an excellent opportunity to showcase activities conducted to progress the implementation of Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev. CoP17), for example any activities conducted in accordance with paragraphs 1 f), 3 b) and c), 5 a) and c), and 6 of the Resolution.

Recommendation

12. The Secretariat recommends that the Standing Committee encourage all Parties, in particular Asian big cat range States and Parties affected by illegal trade in Asian big cats, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations to, in accordance with Resolution 17.1, use World Wildlife Day 2018 to initiate or enhance public awareness campaigns to promote the conservation of Asian big cats, and reduce illegal offer of, and demand for illegally traded Asian big cat specimens, and to showcase any activities conducted to progress the implementation of Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev. CoP17).

⁶ See CoP17 Doc. 60.1 on Asian big cats: report of the Standing Committee (<https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/cop/17/WorkingDocs/E-CoP17-60-01.pdf>).

⁷ <https://cites.unia.es/login/index.php>

⁸ <https://cites.org/sites/default/files/notif/E-Notif-2015-039.pdf>

⁹ https://cites.org/eng/protecting_big_cats_is_the_call_of_World_Wildlife_Day_2018