

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

ILLEGAL TRADE IN TIBETAN ANTELOPE (*PANTHOLOPS HODGSONII*)

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.

Background

2. Resolution Conf. 11.8 (Rev. CoP17) on *Conservation of and control of trade in the Tibetan antelope* directs *inter alia* the Standing Committee as follows:

2. *DIRECTS [...]*

- b) *the Standing Committee to undertake a regular review of the enforcement measures taken by the Parties in eliminating the illicit trade in Tibetan antelope products on the basis of the Secretariat's report, and to report the results at each meeting of the Conference of the Parties.*

3. At its 17th meeting (CoP17, Johannesburg, 2016), the Conference of the Parties adopted Decisions 17.131 and 17.132 on *Tibetan antelope* (*Pantholops hodgsonii*), as follows:

Directed to Parties concerned by the illegal trade in specimens of Tibetan antelope

17.131 *All Parties concerned by the illegal trade in specimens of Tibetan antelope are encouraged to draw upon the offer of support from the CITES Management Authority of Switzerland, in particular with regard to identification methods and exchange of information and knowledge about this topic.*

Directed to the Standing Committee

17.132 *The Standing Committee shall review the results and outcomes of the workshop conducted by INTERPOL and Switzerland in July 2016 and make recommendations to the countries concerned by this trade based on that information.*

Implementation of Resolution Conf. 11.8 (Rev. CoP17)

4. In accordance with paragraph 3 c) of Resolution Conf. 11.8¹ (Rev. CoP17), Switzerland reported to the Secretariat that it had continued to detect illegal trade in shawls containing fibres of wool from Tibetan antelopes (shahtoosh), similar to what the Standing Committee had reported at CoP17 in document CoP17 Doc. 66.² Since CoP17, until 9 March 2017, Switzerland made 22 seizures involving a total of 69 shawls containing fibres of Tibetan antelope wool. The majority of the seizures were made following targeted inspections during the winter season and during controls by border officials specifically trained to detect products containing fibres of wool from Tibetan antelopes. The shawls were seized from private individuals

¹ <https://www.cites.org/sites/default/files/document/E-Res-11-08-R17.pdf>

² <https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/cop/17/WorkingDocs/E-CoP17-66.pdf>

travelling to Switzerland from other European countries, mainly from Italy and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, but single cases from Austria, France, Germany and the United States of America were also detected. Most of the travellers carried between one and four shawls, with the exception of one traveller who was carrying 14 shawls. Furthermore, one seizure involving four shawls were made from a traveller on a domestic flight. Inspections at commercial vendors within Switzerland resulted in four seizures involving a total of 32 shawls. Switzerland reported that it had been in contact with Italy and the United Kingdom, since there has been an increase of travellers carrying shahtoosh shawls from these countries.

Implementation of Decision 17.131

5. No information related to the implementation of Decision 17.131 has come to the attention of the Secretariat since CoP17. The Secretariat considers that it will be useful, if possible, to receive an update from Switzerland on any activities that might have been conducted in the context of Decision 17.131, at the present meeting.

Implementation of Decision 17.132

6. At the 26th meeting of the INTERPOL Wildlife Crime Working Group hosted in Singapore in November 2015, 'Operation Ring', which provides a platform for law enforcement cooperation between source, transit and destination countries to combat illegal trade in parts and derivatives of Tibetan antelope, was initiated. The first activity of 'Operation Ring' was to convene a workshop where countries affected by this trade could be brought together.
7. INTERPOL hosted this "Operation Ring" workshop in Lyon, France, from 30 June to 1 July 2016, in close cooperation with the CITES Management Authority of Switzerland and with funding made available through the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC). The workshop brought together representatives from CITES authorities and enforcement agencies from 10 Parties (China, Germany, India, Kuwait, Nepal, Pakistan, Spain, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America), various experts, and representatives from the CITES Secretariat and INTERPOL. The aim of the workshop was to exchange information, knowledge and experiences on illegal trade in parts and derivatives of Tibetan antelope, as well as to train participants in identification of shahtoosh shawls containing fibres of wool from Tibetan antelope. Subsequent to the workshop, a Project Ring Workshop Report was developed. The Secretariat would like to thank Hong Kong SAR for the generous funding it provided, which enabled the Secretariat to participate in the workshop.
8. The initiative taken by Switzerland and the INTERPOL Wildlife Crime Working Group to bring together source, transit and destination countries affected by illegal trade in Tibetan antelope specimens serves as an excellent example on how to strengthen enforcement cooperation at a global level concerning a particular species affected by illegal trade and to identify challenges that needs to be addressed for that species. The Secretariat encourage Parties to continue to work with Switzerland and INTERPOL in this regard.
9. The Secretariat would like to draw the attention of the Standing Committee to the following findings in the Project Ring Workshop Report.
 - a) Seizures of illegally traded shahtoosh shawls are increasing in Europe. Significant numbers of seizures have occurred in Switzerland, with a total of 159 shahtoosh shawls seized in the period 2010-2015.
 - b) A number of investigations on illegal trade in shahtoosh have been initiated in India and Nepal.
 - c) Several law enforcement operations have taken place in China between 1999 and 2016, which resulted in a decline in the illegal hunting of the Tibetan antelope, as well as in large scale seizures. However, a seizure of 25 bags of skins and 5 bags of horn of Tibetan antelope was made in China in 2014, which raises questions whether there may be a demand for skins and horns of Tibetan antelopes.
 - d) New trends in the appearance and quality of the shawls have been discovered.
 - e) The difference between Parties in levels of experience to combat this type of crime and the volume of incidents detected and investigated, as well as in the nature of challenges confronting source-, transit-, production- and destination countries, necessitate some country-specific recommendations.

- f) A strategic analysis of illegal trade data could serve as a basis for a joint strategy to combat illegal trade in parts and derivatives of Tibetan antelope, and enable more targeted and joint operations.
- g) Awareness-raising among national enforcement agencies, development of a hands-on and comprehensible identification guide for enforcement officers, as well as national training for law enforcement officers on identification of fibres of Tibetan antelope wool could be useful measures to increase the detection of illegally traded parts and derivatives of Tibetan antelope.
- h) Awareness-raising activities directed to consumers could reduce the demand for Tibetan antelope products.
- i) A population viability analysis could estimate the impact of illegal trade in Tibetan antelope on the current Tibetan antelope population and its future development.

Advice of the Secretariat

10. At CoP17, China drew attention to the improving conservation status of Tibetan antelopes [see document CoP17 Com. II Rec. 10 (Rev. 1)]. China also highlighted that more resources should be allocated to local communities for Tibetan antelope conservation. It is encouraging to note that according to the IUCN Red List, the conservation status of the species has improved from 'Endangered' in 2008 to 'Near Threatened' in 2016. This reflects significant effort by range and consumer States to address illegal killing of, and trade in, specimens derived from Tibetan antelopes.
11. Notwithstanding the above, further actions could be undertaken to combat the illegal trade in Tibetan antelope specimens. In order to contribute to the implementation of Decision 17.132, and based on the findings of the workshop held in Lyon, France, from 30 June to 1 July 2016 in particular, the Secretariat offers the following guidance for consideration by the Standing Committee.
12. The benefits of border officials specifically trained to detect products containing fibres of wool from Tibetan antelopes is evident from the successes achieved by Switzerland as described in paragraph 4 of the present document. It is of great importance that Parties affected by illegal trade in Tibetan antelope specimens conduct national trainings for front-line officers on identification of Tibetan antelope parts and derivatives. In addition, the development of a hands-on identification guide for enforcement officers as recommended in the workshop report could hold significant benefits in assisting officials in their daily work. The Secretariat believes that the development of such guide should be considered. Any identification guide developed, can be shared with the Secretariat to make it available on the CITES website and on Environet, as appropriate. The Secretariat takes this opportunity to remind Parties of the generous offer of support from the CITES Management Authority of Switzerland to Parties concerned by illegal trade in specimens of Tibetan antelope, in particular with regard to identification methods as outlined in Decision 17.131.
13. The Secretariat encourages Parties affected by illegal trade in Tibetan antelope specimens to strengthen the exchange of intelligence and to conduct analyses with the aim to enable targeted joint operations, as appropriate. In this regard, the Secretariat reminds Parties of Resolution Conf. 11.3 (Rev. CoP17) paragraph 13 sub-paragraphs j) and p) which recommends that Parties, whenever appropriate and possible, liaise closely with the CITES Management Authorities and law enforcement agencies in destination, source and transit countries to help investigate, detect, deter and prevent illicit trade in wildlife through the exchange of intelligence, technical advice and support; and as appropriate, initiate intelligence-driven operations, and participate in the operations initiated at international level by organizations such as INTERPOL and the World Customs Organization, to mobilise resources and initiate targeted activities to combat wildlife crime.
14. Regarding awareness raising and strategies to reduce the demand of Tibetan antelope parts and derivatives, the Secretariat would particularly like to draw the attention of the Parties to the species in their implementation of Resolution Conf. 17.4³ on *Demand reduction strategies to combat illegal trade in CITES-listed species*.

³ <https://cites.org/sites/default/files/document/E-Res-17-04.pdf>

Recommendations

15. To implement Decision 17.132, the Standing Committee may wish to establish an in-session working group with the following mandate:
 - a) review the Workshop Report resulting from the “Operation Ring” workshop held in July 2016 taking account the comments of the Secretariat in the present document; and
 - b) prepare draft recommendations for consideration by the Standing Committee.