

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



Seventy-first meeting of the Standing Committee
Colombo (Sri Lanka), 22 May 2019

Species specific matters

FACILITIES WHICH MAY BE OF CONCERN
KEEPING ASIAN BIG CATS (FELIDAE SPP.) IN CAPTIVITY

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.
2. Paragraph 1 g) of Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev. CoP17) on *Conservation of and trade in tigers and other Appendix-I Asian big cat species* URGES:

those Parties and non-Parties on whose territories tigers and other Asian big cat species are bred in captivity to ensure that adequate management practices and controls are in place to prevent parts and derivatives from entering illegal trade from or through such facilities;

3. At its 14th meeting (CoP14, The Hague, 2007), the Conference adopted Decision 14.69 on *Asian big cats*, which remains in effect, as follows:

Directed to the Parties, especially Appendix-I Asian big cat range States

14.69 *Parties with intensive operations breeding tigers on a commercial scale shall implement measures to restrict the captive population to a level supportive only to conserving wild tigers; tigers should not be bred for trade in their parts and derivatives.*

4. At its 17th meeting (CoP17, Johannesburg, 2016), the Conference of the Parties adopted a number of Decisions on *Asian big cats (Felidae spp.)*, including the following:

Directed to Parties

17.224 *All Parties identified as being of concern in Decision 17.229 are invited to welcome a mission from the Secretariat to visit facilities keeping Asian big cats in captivity.*

Directed to Parties with Asian big cat captive facilities

17.226 *All Parties in whose territory there are facilities keeping Asian big cats in captivity are requested to:*

- a) *review national management practices and controls that are in place for such facilities, to ensure that these management practices and controls are adequate to prevent Asian big cat specimens from entering illegal trade from or through such facilities;*
- b) *ensure strict application of all management practices and controls implemented to regulate the activities of facilities that keep Asian big cats in captivity, including with regard to the disposal of specimens from Asian big cats that die in captivity; and*
- c) *report to the Secretariat on progress with regard to the implementation of this Decision.*

Directed to the Standing Committee

17.227 *The Standing Committee shall review the report and recommendations of the Secretariat concerning the implementation of Decisions 17.226, 17.228, 17.229 and 17.230, and determine whether any further time-bound, country specific actions are necessary to ensure implementation of these Decisions.*

Directed to the Secretariat

17.229 *Subject to external funding, the Secretariat shall:*

- a) *conduct a review of the number of facilities keeping Asian big cats in captivity in the territories of Parties and the number of Asian big cats kept in these facilities;*
- b) *liaise with ICCWC and other partners, as appropriate, to review legal and illegal trade in Asian big cats from or through such facilities, identifying those which may be of concern; and*
- c) *undertake a mission to those Parties in whose territories there are facilities of concern with the purpose of gaining a better understanding of the operations and activities undertaken by them.*

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.*

5. At the 70th meeting of the Standing Committee (SC70, Sochi, October 2018), the Secretariat reported on the implementation of these Decisions in document SC70 Doc. 51. The replies received in response to Notification to the Parties [No. 2018/002](#) concerning the implementation of Decision 17.226 were included in Annex 1 to the document. A further response was received from China on 13 December 2018 and this can be found in the Annex to the present document in the language in which it was submitted. In reviewing the responses, the Standing Committee encouraged Parties in whose territory there are facilities keeping Asian big cats in captivity, to be vigilant in their implementation of Decision 17.226, paragraphs a) and b).
6. Concerning the implementation of Decision 17.229, the Secretariat reported in the same document that it had commissioned a review of the number of facilities keeping Asian big cats in captivity in the territories of Parties and the number of Asian big cats kept and provided a summary report of the findings. The estimated numbers were as follows:

	Number of facilities keeping the species in captivity	Number of specimens kept in these facilities	Number of Parties in which the facilities are found
Tiger <i>Panthera tigris</i>	1,038	12,574	68
Leopard <i>Panthera pardus</i>	369	1,208	59
Snow leopard <i>Uncia uncia</i>	179	438	33
Clouded leopard <i>Neofelis nebulosa</i>	93	315	29
Asiatic lion <i>Panthera leo persica</i>	71	383	23

7. In relation to the implementation of paragraph 1 g) of Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev. CoP17) and Decision 14.69, the Secretariat further reported that it had identified the number and location of facilities which may be of concern keeping Asian big cat species in captivity as follows:

Species	Party	Number of facilities
Tiger <i>Panthera tigris</i>	China	36
	Czech Republic	2
	Lao People's Democratic Republic	6
	Thailand	10
	South Africa	1
	United States of America	6
	Viet Nam	5
	Total	66
Leopard <i>Panthera pardus</i>	Total	0
Snow leopard <i>Uncia uncia</i>	Total	0

Clouded leopard <i>Neofelis nebulosa</i>	Total	0
Asiatic lion <i>Panthera leo persica</i>	Total	0

8. The Standing Committee took note of this progress report and requested the Secretariat to take into consideration the concerns expressed during the plenary session in its implementation of Decision 17.229.

Progress made since SC70

9. At SC70, the Secretariat stated that it planned to undertake the missions to affected Parties, referred to in Decision 17.229 c), to formulate recommendations in accordance with Decision 17.231 for consideration by the Committee at the present meeting. Regrettably, the Secretariat could not prepare the recommendations in time for the present meeting. The Secretariat will provide an oral report to the present meeting on progress that has been made.
10. Anticipating that there may be some delay in completing this work, the Secretariat has proposed to the Conference of the Parties in document CoP18 Doc. 71.1 on *Asian big cats (Felidae spp.)* that this work be continued.
11. As reported by the Secretariat in document SC71 Doc. 10.1 concerning the implementation of the Article XIII procedure in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic has decided that no new farms breeding Appendix-I listed species for commercial purposes should be established in the country. It has further decided that the existing tiger farms should be converted into safaris or zoos for conservation, tourism or scientific purposes only. The Lao People's Democratic Republic is currently undertaking a full audit of the tigers kept by the facilities at present with the first facility of 32 individuals already audited and the others to be audited in the coming months.

Recommendation

12. The Standing Committee is invited to note the present document and the oral update to be provided by the Secretariat at the present meeting.

A report on the management of Asian big cat captive facilities in China pursuant to Secretariat Notification 2018/002 from China CITES Management Authority

There are four kinds of captive facilities that keep Asian big cats in China: city zoos, wildlife parks, commercial farms (mainly for tigers), and rescuing and rehabilitation institutions. The native species of Asian big cats kept in captivity include tiger, leopard, snow leopard and clouded leopard, all of them are listed as State first class protected species and receive highest level of protection in China.

Legislation and administrative regulations are in place to regulate the management of those facilities and the trade in those big cats, their products and derivatives originated from them. The most important legislation is China's Wildlife Protection Law (WPL) which was enacted in 1988 and the revised version became effective as of 1 January 2017. According to its provisions, any facility that keeps Asian big cats is required to obtain a captive breeding license. The founder stock should come from captive bred individuals. The facility is required to maintain a complete record on pedigree, breeding and disposal of the animals. And transaction in the big cats and their products must be approved by the national wildlife authorities and accompanied with official wildlife product marks to ensure traceability.

The Wildlife Protection Law is supported by a number of administrative regulations (bylaws) that govern specific facets in regard to Asian big cats captive facilities and trade. A regulation on the management of wildlife rescuing and rehabilitation institutions was enacted in 1 January 2018 (SFGA 2017/47). It rules that the species, number and disposal of wildlife admitted into wildlife rescuing and rehabilitation centers must be recorded and reported to the forestry departments in the same jurisdiction on an annual basis. Furthermore, the disposal of State protected wildlife species died in rescuing and rehabilitation institutions and their products will be decided upon by provincial or national forestry departments in compliance of the provisions of the WPL. Those institutions or individual who engage in the trade of wildlife and their products under the disguise of rescuing and rehabilitation will be punished in accordance with the provision of the WPL.

Trade in tiger products has been under extremely strict control to curb illegal trade. In addition to the relevant provisions in the Wildlife Protection Law, the State Council of the Government of China stepped up control of use of tiger bone by issuing an executive decree that imposed on a categorically ban on the use of tiger bones in traditional Chinese medicine in 1993.

In 2003, an innovative marking system has been adopted by the State Forestry Administration (SFA, the national wildlife authorities in China and its name is changed to National Forestry and Grassland Administration, NFGA) that demand that all the legal wildlife and their products that are allowed to enter trade must be accompanied by an official wildlife product mark to approve its legality. Wildlife products manufactured from State protected wildlife species and products can only be processed at designated factories. The mark replaces the previous requirements for transport permits and sale permit and is regarded a valuable management tool to reduce administrative burden and facilitate legal trade in wildlife products, and enhances effectiveness and efficacy in fighting illegal wildlife trade.

There is a specific regulation on the administration of domestication and breeding licenses for State protected wildlife species (Executive decree of SFA 2015/37). This was first enacted in 1991 and was amended in 2011 and 2015 respectively. According to this regulation, any entity or individual must obtain a Domestication and Breeding License (DBL) to engage in the farming and breeding of state protected wildlife species in captivity. The sale and utilization of the State protected species and their products must be approved by the National Forestry and Grassland Administration or its designated

representative. It is prohibited for a DBL holder to sell captive bred State protected wildlife species or their products without prior approval. A DBL might be revoked if the holder engages in farming State protected species out of the scope of the DBL, or illegally sell or use captive bred wildlife or products bred from its operation.

Another notice issued by the SFA in 2009 (SFA 2009/298) to strengthen protection of wild tigers and control of illegal trafficking of tiger products. It requires that tiger bones, skins or other products derived from tigers died naturally in captivity must be registered and put under proper custody. In case it is not feasible to put them under secure custody, those tiger products might be destroyed under the in-situ supervision of provincial forestry department to prevent them from entering illegal trade. In addition, as a measure to fight illegal trade of tiger and leopard products, SFA has set up a hotline (010-62888606, savewildlife@caf.ac.cn) to collect information on illegal trafficking of tiger products.

In a notice issued by the SFA in 2007, the trade of skins from tiger and leopards and their products is allowed under strict scrutiny. Only those skins, that are pre-WPL (1988) or from legal captive or other legal sources can be registered as products from legal sources and processed and sold at designated venues after attachment of national wildlife product marks. Any skin or products not marked are not allowed to be sold or displayed in public. It came into effect after January 1, 2008.

A regulation from the State Food and Drug administration (2006/118) rules that since January 1, 2006, only the outstanding stockpile of leopard bones held by pharmaceutical factories and verified by the national forestry authorities can be used for medicinal purposes.

The Chinese government further announced on 12 November 2018 that “three strict bans” would be applied to the conservation of tigers, i.e., the import and export of tigers and their products will be strictly banned; the sale, purchase, transport, carrying and mailing of tigers and their products will be strictly banned; and the use of tiger bones in medicine will be strictly banned.

An adaptive approach underpins the management of captive facilities and trade in Asian big cat products in China. The implementation of those legislation and regulations are regularly reviewed and assessed to detect any problems so as to design prompt remedial measures. Public comments are compulsory before the development and implementation of any executive regulations. This legal framework proves effective in combating illegal trade in big cats and their products generated from the captive facilities so far.