

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



Seventy-fourth meeting of the Standing Committee
Lyon (France), 7 - 11 March 2022

Species specific matters

CITES BIG CATS TASK FORCE (FELIDAE SPP.):
REPORT OF THE SECRETARIAT

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.
2. At its 18th meeting (CoP18, Geneva, 2019), the Conference of the Parties adopted, *inter alia*, Decisions 18.245 and 18.248, paragraphs a), c) and d) on *African lions (Panthera leo) and the CITES Big Cats Task Force*, as follows:

18.245 Directed to the Secretariat

The Secretariat shall:

- a) *draft terms of reference and a modus operandi for the CITES Bigs Cat Task Force prior to convening its first meeting and submit it to the 73rd Standing Committee for review and adoption, and*

subject to external resources:

- b) *establish and convene, in consultation with the Standing Committee, a CITES Big Cats Task Force (Task Force), focusing on big cat species from Africa, Asia and Latin America, and consisting of representatives from Parties most affected by the illegal trade in big cats, the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime partner organizations, other Parties and organizations, as appropriate, and experts who the Secretariat determines may contribute to the Task Force;*
- c) *provide support to the Task Force allowing it, inter alia, to:*
 - i) *discuss enforcement and implementation issues related to the illegal trade in specimens of big cats;*
 - ii) *as deemed appropriate, exchange intelligence and other information on the illegal trade in big cats; and*
 - iii) *develop strategies and make recommendations to improve international cooperation regarding the enforcement of CITES concerning illegal trade in specimens of big cats; and*
- d) *report the findings and recommendations of the Task Force to the 74th meeting of the Standing Committee for its consideration, and for making its own recommendations as appropriate.*

18.248 Directed to the Standing Committee

The Standing Committee shall:

- a) review and adopt the draft terms of reference, membership and *modus operandi* for the CITES Big Cat Task Force submitted by the Secretariat as per Decision 18.245, paragraphs a) and b) prior to convening the first meeting of the Task Force;

[...]

- c) recommend further actions to be taken, including the possible need for the development of a draft resolution, on the conservation of the African lion taking into consideration Decisions 18.244, 18.245 and 18.247; and

- d) report on the implementation of Decision 18.248, and formulate recommendations as appropriate, to the Conference of the Parties at its 19th meeting.

3. To implement Decision 18.245, paragraph a), the Secretariat presented in the Annex to document [SC73 Doc. 23](#), for consideration by the Standing Committee at its 73rd meeting (SC73, online, May 2021), the draft terms of reference and *modus operandi* for the CITES Big Cats Task Force (Task Force).
4. Due to the online nature of the meeting and limited time available, the Committee did not have time to discuss this agenda item at SC73. The Committee therefore requested the Secretariat to publish the draft terms of reference and *modus operandi* for the Task Force in a Notification to the Parties. The Committee invited Parties and observers to send comments to the Secretariat and requested the Secretariat to revise the draft terms of reference and *modus operandi* based on those comments and to report back to the Standing Committee.
5. The Secretariat issued Notification to the Parties [No. 2021/0042](#) of 25 June 2021, inviting Parties and observers to send their comments to the Secretariat. Comments were received from following Parties: Belgium on behalf of the European Union, Cambodia, China, India, Peru, South Africa, Thailand, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uganda and the United States of America. Comments were also received from following observers: Conservation Analytics on behalf of 22 organizations (Animal Advocacy and Protection, Animal Welfare Institute, Big Cat Rescue, Born Free Foundation, Conservation Analytics, Cheetah Conservation Fund, David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation, Defenders of Wildlife, Environment Investigation Agency UK and USA, Eurogroup for Animals, Fauna & Flora International, Fondation Franz Weber, Four Paws International, Humane Society International, International Fund for Animal Welfare, Pan African Sanctuary Alliance, Panthera, ProWildlife, Species Survival Network, Wildlife Conservation Society, World Wildlife Fund, and Zoological Society of London); and the World Wildlife Fund-UK. The Secretariat thanks these Parties and observers for the comments submitted.
6. The Secretariat in accordance with the mandate set out for the Task Force in Decision 18.245, paragraphs b) and c), considered the comments received and revised the draft terms of reference and *modus operandi* for the Task Force.
7. The revised draft terms of reference and *modus operandi* for the CITES Big Cats Task Force are presented in the Annex to the present document for consideration by the Standing Committee.

Recommendations

8. The Standing Committee is invited to:
 - a) in accordance with Decision 18.248, paragraph a), review and adopt the revised terms of reference and *modus operandi* for the CITES Big Cats Task Force presented in the Annex to the present document; and
 - b) request the Secretariat to report to the 75th meeting of the Standing Committee on the implementation of Decision 18.245.

Revised terms of reference and *modus operandi* for the CITES Big Cat Task Force

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Task Force activities

1. The Task Force will:

- a) discuss enforcement and implementation challenges and similarities between illegal trade in different species of big cats, including by considering national and regional wildlife enforcement efforts related to big cats and lessons that could be learnt from them, or by identifying gaps that may exist, as appropriate;
- b) identify opportunities to address illegal trade in big cat specimens, taking into consideration species-specific trade dynamics¹, and prioritize actions to better address this illegal trade;
- c) share information about the nature and scale of the illegal trade in specimens of CITES listed big cats and associated illegal trade routes, and identify knowledge gaps;
- d) provide a platform for the exchange of intelligence and other information relating to illegal trade in big cats, and identify mechanisms to do so on a regular basis;
- e) share information about techniques, tools and processes for identifying big cat specimens in trade, consider approaches for better roll out and use of these techniques and tools across Parties, and identify needs and knowledge gaps;
- f) consider in its deliberations the findings of available studies, such as those conducted in accordance with Decision 18.246, paragraph a) on *African lions (Panthera leo) and the CITES Big Cats Task Force*, and Decision 18.251 on *Jaguars (Panthera onca)*, as well as previous CITES studies on Asian big cats, cheetahs and lions, and the [2020 World Wildlife Crime Report](#).
- g) identify, consider and propose best practices to prevent and detect attempts to launder illegal specimens through legal trade, including trade originating from captive-bred sources;
- h) discuss demand for big cat parts and derivatives and the implications it has for illegal trade in different big cat species, including areas of convergence and supplementing or substituting of one species with another; and
- i) develop strategies and propose actions to improve international cooperation and the enforcement of CITES to address illegal trade in specimens of big cats, to be presented to the Standing Committee in accordance with Decision 18.245, paragraph d), for its consideration.

Outcomes

2. The Task Force will generate the following outcomes:

- a) a better understanding of enforcement priorities relating to illegal trade in specimens of big cats;
- b) improved understanding and take-up of tools, techniques and best practices to identify big cat specimens in trade; their use for enforcement purposes to address illegal trade; and better knowledge of relevant forensic facilities, research institutions, and developments;
- c) enhanced exchange of intelligence and other information on illegal trade in big cat specimens;

¹ Some big cat specimens may be trafficked as live animals and others as parts and derivatives.

- d) a better understanding of the status, scale, and dynamics of illegal trade for different big cat species, including the convergence of big cat species in illegal trade chains;
- e) an enhanced understanding of the gaps in knowledge and capability that hinder efforts to tackle the illegal trade in big cat specimens;
- f) a better understanding of illegal trade dynamics to inform demand reduction strategies concerning big cat specimens illegally traded; and
- g) improved understanding of the role of legal trade in big cat specimens on poaching of and illegal trade in big cat species, and the impact of legal domestic markets as a driver of illegal trade in big cat species.

Outputs

3. The Task Force will generate the following outputs:
 - a) proposals to facilitate strengthened collaboration and targeted activities that promote effective implementation and enforcement the Convention to address illegal trade in big cat specimens; and
 - b) strategies and proposed actions to better deter, detect and address illegal trade in big cat specimens, to be presented to the Standing Committee in accordance with Decision 18.245, paragraph d), for its consideration.

MODUS OPERANDI

Prioritization of Parties and big cat species

4. To make the Task Force meeting as practical and constructive as possible, the Secretariat initiated a process of prioritization to identify Parties for participation in the Task Force, and to determine the big cat species most affected by illegal trade for the Task Force to focus on. The prioritization of Parties and big cat species are based on various sources of information and data, that included:
 - a) big cat species most significantly affected by illegal trade, based on available illegal trade data (seizure data from annual illegal trade reports);
 - b) Parties identified in document [SC70 Doc. 51](#) and the Annexes to it, Annex 4 to document [CoP18 Doc. 71.1](#) on *Asian big cats*, and concerned by [Decisions 18.100 to 18.102, and 18.105](#);
 - c) information on source, transit and destination countries most affected by illegal trade in specimens of big cat species, based on available documentation, studies and reports, for example documents [SC65 Doc. 39 \(Rev. 2\)](#), [SC66 Doc. 32.5 A1](#), [SC70 Doc. 43](#) and [CoP18 Doc. 60](#) on illegal trade in cheetahs; the Annex to document [SC70 54.1 on African lion](#); paragraph 47 in document CoP18 Doc. 71.1 concerning illegal trade in jaguars; document SC74 Doc 75 on *Jaguars* (*Panthera onca*); document SC74 Doc. 36 on *Asian big cats (Felidae spp.)* and the Annexes to it, and the [2020 World Wildlife Crime Report](#);
5. Other sources that could be considered to facilitate further prioritization includes:
 - a) the results of the study that the Secretariat is instructed to produce on legal and illegal trade in African lions and other big cats as per Decision [18.246, paragraph a](#)), subject to its availability; and
 - b) any credible and verified information that may be presented in accordance with [Decision 18.246, paragraph e](#)) on *African lions* (*Panthera leo*) and the *CITES Big Cats Task Force* and from other credible data sources such as academic field research concerning illegal trade in big cat specimens.
6. Analysis of data and information primarily from the sources mentioned in paragraph 4 above, indicates that the following key big cat species are of priority concern: cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*), mainland clouded leopard (*Neofelis nebulosa*), Sunda clouded leopard (*Neofelis diardi*), lion (*Panthera leo*), jaguar (*Panthera onca*), leopard (*Panthera pardus*), tiger (*Panthera tigris*) and snow leopard (*Panthera uncia*).
7. Analysis of data and information primarily from the sources mentioned in paragraph 4 above, identified the following Parties as Parties affected by illegal trade in big cats: Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan,

Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Botswana, Cambodia, China, Czech Republic, Ethiopia, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malawi, Malaysia, Mexico, Mongolia, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Peru, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Suriname, Thailand, Yemen, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, United Republic of Tanzania, Viet Nam, and Zambia. Some of the Parties included in the list were identified through analysis of illegal trade data and are included because they have made large numbers of big cat seizures, suggesting efficiency in their detection of illegal trade in big cat specimens. Participation of these Parties in the Task Force could facilitate and promote exchanges concerning possible best practices and solutions.

8. Based on the findings of the CITES study on lions and other big cats as per Decision [18.246, paragraph a\)](#), still to be completed, and any new illegal trade data that may become available, additional Parties and big cat species may be added.

Membership of the Task Force

9. In accordance with the provisions of Decision 18.245 paragraph b), the Task Force will be established and convened by the Secretariat in consultation with the Standing Committee, and include representatives from:
 - Parties most affected by illegal trade in big cats;
 - representatives from the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC) partner organizations;
 - other Parties and organizations, as appropriate; and
 - experts who the Secretariat determines may contribute to the Task Force.
10. To ensure that maximum benefit is derived from the Task Force, Parties most affected by illegal trade in big cat specimens and identified through the prioritization process described in paragraphs 4 to 8 above, are encouraged to make every effort to participate in the Task Force.
11. The Secretariat has limited funding available to support the participation of up to two representatives from eligible key Parties identified as affected by illegal trade in big cats, who are not in the position to cover their costs. These Parties may wish to nominate additional representatives at their own expense. Subject to the availability of funds, the Secretariat may on a case-by-case basis consider supporting the participation of a third representative. To ensure multidisciplinary representation, the representatives that these Parties nominate should be from CITES authorities, police, customs, wildlife agencies or prosecutorial authorities. The nominated representatives should have relevant expertise on the subject matter and be able to contribute to the activities and outputs of the Task Force.
12. As indicated in paragraph 9 above, other Parties, organizations and experts with relevant experience or knowledge, or that work actively on big cat related matters will be identified and engaged. This could for example include Parties that have shown a long-standing interest in big cat issues, civil society organizations and individual experts, and entities such as the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), referenced in the Decisions on *African lions (Panthera leo)* and the *CITES Big Cats Task Force*, and associated with the implementation of key aspects of these Decisions. They will be encouraged to fund their own participation. Subject to the availability of funds, the Secretariat may be able to support the participation of one representative from some of these entities on a case-by-case basis.
13. Parties and organizations are encouraged to take into consideration gender diversity in the nomination of representatives.

Meeting agenda

14. The meeting agenda will be developed by the Secretariat.

Format and conduct of the Task Force

15. Ideally, the Task Force meeting should take place in a face-to-face setting. This will however be influenced by the developments concerning the COVID-19 pandemic and the related restrictive measures in place. If a face-to-face meeting will not be possible, online meetings may have to be contemplated.