

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



Fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties
Doha (Qatar), 13-25 March 2010

Interpretation and implementation of the Convention

Species trade and conservation

GREAT APES

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat and serves as the report of the Standing Committee to the Conference of the Parties.
2. As required in Resolution Conf. 13.4 (*Conservation of and trade in great apes*), the Standing Committee reviewed this subject at its 57th and 58th meetings (Geneva, July 2008 and July 2009) (see documents SC57 Doc. 30 and SC58 Doc. 32).
3. Illegal trade in great apes continues to present a considerable threat to these species. In Asia, orang-utans continue to be sought for the exotic pet trade but also for display and to engage in performances in facilities describing themselves as zoos or places of public entertainment. The Secretariat notes that it is not unusual for such animals to be openly on display and yet very few cases are discovered by enforcement authorities after animals have been smuggled into a country. Most incidents are brought to attention by members of the public or non-governmental organizations. There is clearly scope for much greater monitoring of such places by national authorities. The Secretariat is pleased to note, however, that international illegal trade in orang-utans does not appear to be taking place at the levels of the early 2000s.
4. The number of orang-utans that continue to be seized, albeit lower than in some years recently, indicates that increased protection of their habitats and increased efforts to combat their export from countries of origin are warranted. This is especially important as successful rehabilitation of orang-utans remains very limited, because of the difficulties in returning these animals to the wild and the lack of suitable locations for their release.
5. The very same need to deter and prevent illegal trade in great apes applies in Africa too. Unfortunately, illegal capture of animals is also motivated there by the demand for bushmeat.
6. One very disappointing feature of the trade in great apes, regardless of species, is that the majority of seizures do not appear to be followed-up by adequate investigations or prosecutions. This does not seem to result from any lack of relevant legislation but rather through a lack of will or interest on the part of enforcement and prosecution authorities, together with problems of corruption.

Future activities with GRASP

7. Resolution Conf. 13.4 directs the Secretariat to work closely with Parties and GRASP to develop measures, including enforcement measures, to halt or reduce and ultimately eliminate illegal trade in great apes. The Standing Committee previously endorsed joint technical missions by the CITES and GRASP Secretariats to examine illegal trade in orang-utans.
8. The Secretariat has noted that much of the research and also outcomes of workshops that have been conducted into the conservation of gorillas have identified enforcement as a matter of priority. It is also conscious that it is essential that these animals be protected effectively in their natural habitat, since the chance of successful reintroduction of animals that have been removed from the wild is very limited.

9. The Secretariat further notes that the Resolution identifies that measures such as technical missions could be organized in conjunction with appropriate partnerships, other than GRASP. For enforcement-related matters, the CITES Secretariat's main partners are Interpol and the World Customs Organization.
10. At a meeting of the GRASP Executive Committee, of which the CITES Secretariat is a member, in September 2009, the Secretariat proposed that technical missions be conducted to a select few gorilla range States, to identify ways in which law enforcement might be supported. However, it additionally suggested that the CITES and GRASP Secretariats be joined in such work by officers from Interpol and the World Customs Organization. It believed that the involvement of these organizations should help raise the profile of illegal trade in great apes in the Customs and police communities but also hopefully enable Interpol and the World Customs Organization to bring their expertise and resources to bear upon this problem. The Interpol and World Customs Organization Secretariats have indicated their willingness to participate in such work.
11. The GRASP Executive Committee endorsed this proposal and the Secretariat now seeks endorsement from the Conference of the Parties. If such endorsement is forthcoming, it recommends that the Conference adopt the draft decisions in the Annex to this document.

DRAFT DECISIONS OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

Regarding illegal trade in great apes

Directed to the Secretariat

15.XX The Secretariat shall seek external funding to undertake, in conjunction with GRASP, Interpol and the World Customs Organization, technical missions to a limited number of gorilla range States. The Secretariat shall report to the Standing Committee on the outcome of the missions.

Directed to the Standing Committee

- 15.XX The Standing Committee shall consider the report of the Secretariat and also consider:
- a) endorsing any relevant recommendation or measure that could be implemented prior to the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties; and
 - b) requesting the Secretariat to prepare a report for consideration at the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.