

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

asian big cats

REPORT OF THE SECRETARIAT

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.
2. As required in Decision 14.65, the Standing Committee reviewed this subject at its 57th and 58th meetings (Geneva, July 2008 and July 2009) (see documents SC57 Doc. 31.1 and SC58 Doc. 33). The Committee considered reports from the Secretariat describing its progress, and that of the Parties, in implementing the Decisions adopted at the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (The Hague, 2007).
3. The Standing Committee noted that there had been a poor response rate by range States in submitting the reports requested in Decision 14.65. At its 58th meeting (SC58), the Committee requested that range States submit reports that could be considered at the 59th meeting, immediately prior to the present meeting of the Conference of the Parties. On 22 July 2009, the Secretariat issued Notification to the Parties No. 2009/029 calling for reports in relation to Decision 14.65 and also Decision 14.69, which refers to captive-breeding of tigers. A deadline of 20 October 2009 was established for the submission of reports. At the time of writing (early October) no reports had been received.

Decision 14.70

4. The Standing Committee endorsed a suggestion by the Secretariat that the tiger trade enforcement meeting, requested in this Decision, should take the form of law enforcement intelligence training for officials from tiger range States. Such a training course, involving specialized staff from the CITES and Interpol Secretariats, will be held in Jakarta, Indonesia, from 30 November to 4 December 2009.
5. This Decision also called for a conservation strategy workshop. The Government of Nepal is hosting a tiger conservation workshop in Kathmandu from 27 to 30 October 2009, in which the CITES Secretariat will participate and hopefully all tiger range States. The Secretariat will report orally on the outcomes of this event at CoP15.

Global Tiger Initiative

6. As reported at SC58, the Secretariat has liaised with the World Bank and conservation organizations in relation to the Global Tiger Initiative. The workshop described in paragraph 5 above is being held in conjunction with the Initiative and a ministerial-level meeting is also expected to take place in Thailand in January 2010. The Secretariat will report at CoP15 on any matters emerging from the initiative that may be relevant to the CITES community.

Final remarks

7. The Decisions relating to Asian big cats that were adopted at CoP14 appear to have had little impact upon the threats facing these species. Conservation concern for tigers in particular continues to increase. The

Standing Committee is likely to have limited opportunity to discuss this subject in detail at its 59th meeting. Therefore, it will be for the Conference of the Parties to, once again, consider what can be done to safeguard the future of one of the world's best-known 'flagship' species. It is to be hoped that reports for SC59, and discussions in the Global Tiger Initiative process, may produce ideas or possible solutions that may help revitalize tiger conservation.

8. Many of the threats facing wild tiger populations, such as conflict between tigers, humans and livestock, habitat loss and reduction in prey base, are matters outside the scope of the Convention. Where CITES has a clear role is with regard to illegal trade issues. This document was prepared 10 years after the CITES Tiger Missions Technical Team's report was presented at the 42nd meeting of the Standing Committee (Lisbon, 1999). The report can be viewed at: <http://www.cites.org/eng/com/SC/42/42-10-4.pdf>.
9. Many of the Team's conclusions and recommendations remain valid and relevant today, despite a decade having passed. There is one significant difference, however. In 1999, countries in Europe, North America and far-east Asia were important consumer States for specimens of tigers. In 2009, it is some tiger range States that are now the most important consumer States and this is a very worrying development. Ten years ago, authorities in Europe and North America were regularly seizing tiger bone medicinal products and one country was still engaged in legal domestic trade of tiger products, which were marketed as aphrodisiacs. Today, the skin of the tiger is highly prized in some areas, its meat is offered for human consumption, its bones are distilled with alcohol to be drunk as a tonic and, whilst its bones are also still sought for medicinal products, this aspect of trade seems to be greatly reduced but more specialized and 'underground'. Captive-breeding of tigers is occurring in several range States but many of these facilities appear to be owned and operated in a manner that would conflict with the goals expressed in Decision 14.69. Intelligence suggesting that tigers, or their parts and derivatives, from some of these facilities entering illegal commercial trade is growing.
10. Good enforcement work is being conducted but obviously not enough. This is particularly frustrating if one acknowledges that illegal trade in tigers is not especially widespread. Much of it appears to be conducted by a relatively limited number of individuals or groups and is destined for specialized markets or consumers. Although some of these markets and consumers are clandestine in nature, they are nonetheless open to infiltration and targeting. The Secretariat believes that much of today's illegal trade in tigers could be markedly reduced, if concerted efforts were made by the law enforcement community.