

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



Sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties
Bangkok (Thailand), 3-14 March 2013

Interpretation and implementation of the Convention

Enforcement matters

Species trade and conservation

ILLEGAL TRADE IN CHEETAHS

1. This document has been submitted by Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda*.
2. The attention of the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties is hereby drawn to the illegal trade in cheetahs (*Acinonyx jubatus*) which is a cause of increasing concern for the species' conservation in the wild (e.g. EWCA 2012, IUCN/SSC 2007a, 2007b, in prep., Kotze *et al.* 2008, Lindsey *et al.* 2009, Ogada 2011).

Background

3. The cheetah has experienced major reductions in its geographic range over the last century and the resident populations of East Africa are known to persist in just 6% of their estimated historical range (IUCN/SSC 2007a), 21% in southern Africa (IUCN/SSC 2007b) and 9% in North, West and Central Africa (IUCN/SSC in prep.).
4. Cheetahs range more widely, and therefore require larger areas, than almost any other terrestrial carnivore species in the world (Durant *et al.* 2010). Their vast area requirements mean that their population densities are naturally low and the removal of a few individuals can have a significant and detrimental impact on a local population.
5. The cheetah has been listed on Appendix I of CITES since 1975 and is listed as Vulnerable on The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (Durant *et al.* 2008) with two Critically Endangered subspecies – *A. j. venaticus* in Asia (Jowkaret *et al.* 2008) and *A. J. heckii* in north-west Africa (Belbachir 2008).
6. Since the 8th meeting of the Conference of the Parties held in 1992, Namibia, Zimbabwe and Botswana have been approved export quotas of 150, 50 and 5 cheetahs, respectively (via an annotation to its Appendix I listing).
7. The 12th meeting of the Conference of the Parties in 2002 approved the registration of two commercial cheetah captive breeding operations in South Africa [CoP12 Comm. I Rep. 7, in accordance with Resolution Conf 12.10 (Rev CoP15)].

The illegal trade in cheetahs

8. The Coalition Against Wildlife Trafficking publishes figures on its website, with a link to a spreadsheet of background data, showing that in 2011, 27 cases involving illegal trafficking of 70 cheetahs were reported

* The geographical designations employed in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the CITES Secretariat or the United Nations Environment Programme concerning the legal status of any country, territory, or area, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The responsibility for the contents of the document rests exclusively with its author.

to the Cheetah Conservation Fund (CAWT 2012). Instances of illegal trading in cheetahs are reported on websites of government institutions (e.g. UK Border Agency 2012), and by newspapers (e.g. The Addis Fortune 2011, The Jordan Times 2010, The National 2010), and environmental organisations (e.g. Born Free Foundation 2012, Wildlife Extra 2011).

9. The majority of unofficially reported cases of cheetah trafficking relate to cubs, and a high percentage of the cheetahs allegedly die either during transit or shortly after confiscation (CAWT 2012, Ogada 2011).
10. The CITES Trade Database records only 20 'live' cheetahs as 'confiscations / seizures' during 2009 and 2010.
11. The Middle East is reported to be an important destination for traded cheetahs (EWCA 2012, IUCN/SSC 2007a) stemming from the practice of keeping them as pets and of using them for sport hunting (Arab News 2011, Gulf News 2011, Ogada 2011).
12. The Horn of Africa, and especially Somalia, has been reported for several years to represent a commonly used transit route for the illegal trafficking of cheetahs (e.g. Amir 2006, CAWT 2012). The illegal wildlife trade is believed to have contributed significantly to the current situation in which wild cheetahs are very rare in the region and their continued existence there is thought to be threatened by the trade (IUCN/SSC 2007a, EWCA 2012).

Recommendation

13. The Proponent(s) would therefore like to recommend that the Conference of the Parties adopt the draft Decisions contained in the Annex to this document

COMMENTS FROM THE SECRETARIAT

- A. The Secretariat supports the suggestion from Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda to initiate a study of the legal and illegal trade in cheetahs.
- B. The Secretariat notes that, the population data cited in paragraph 3 of the present document date back to 2007. The Secretariat notes also that most of the illegal trade data that are presented in paragraph 8 refer to open source information not verified by law enforcement agencies. The background data on illegal trade in the document should therefore be interpreted with caution.
- C. Illegal trade in live cheetahs and skins was highlighted as a current problem by several country representatives (Djibouti, Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan and the Sudan) at a workshop on wildlife trafficking in the Horn of Africa, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 3-4 October 2012.
- D. The Secretariat supports in principle the adoption of the two draft decisions in Annex I to the present document but recommends that they be amended as follows (text to be deleted is crossed out; proposed new text is underlined):

~~Directed to the Standing Committee~~ Directed to the Secretariat

- 16.XX ~~The Standing Committee Secretariat shall, subject to external funding, commission and independent study, in accordance with UN rules, contract independent consultants to undertake a study of both the legal and illegal trade in wild cheetahs, and to assess the impact of this trade on the species' conservation in the wild. The study should aim to determine will research the source of cheetahs in illegal trade, and the transit routes of illegally trafficked cheetahs, and should will document the measures taken by Parties with regard to deal with or dispose of live confiscated specimens. All range States must will be fully consulted as stakeholders. The Secretariat shall make the results of the study available to the Animals and Standing Committees for its their consideration.~~

Directed to the Animals Committee

- 16.XX The Animals Committee should review the study undertaken in accordance with Decision 16.XX and make recommendations, as appropriate, to the Standing Committee.

Directed to the Standing Committee

16.XX The Standing Committee should consider the recommendations of the Animals Committee made in accordance with Decision 16.XX, and make its own recommendations, as appropriate, for communication to the Parties or for consideration at the 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

Directed to the Parties and donors

16.XX All relevant Parties are urged to assist those commissioned to undertake the above-mentioned study in any way possible including through the provision of necessary information about legal and illegal ~~and legal~~ trade in wild cheetah specimens.

16.XX Parties and donors are encouraged to provide funding to the Secretariat ~~for~~ to finance the study on cheetah trade.

~~Parties are further urged to provide reports concerning all detected illegal trade in cheetahs specimens to the 65th meeting of the Standing Committee and relevant Law Enforcement Agencies including Interpol Wildlife Crime Unit.~~

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DRAFT DECISIONS OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

Directed to the Standing Committee

- 16.xx The Standing Committee shall commission an independent study, in accordance with UN rules, of both the legal and illegal trade in wild cheetahs, and assess the impact of this trade on the species' conservation in the wild. The study will research the source of cheetah in illegal trade, transit routes of trafficked cheetahs, and will document the measures taken by Parties with regard to live confiscated specimens. All range States will be fully consulted as stakeholders, and the findings will be reported to the 65th meeting of the CITES Standing Committee.

Directed to the Parties

- 16.xx All relevant Parties are urged to assist those commissioned to undertake the above-mentioned study in any way possible including through the provision of necessary information about illegal and legal trade in cheetah.
- 16.xx Parties are further urged to provide reports concerning all detected illegal trade in cheetah specimens to the 65th meeting of the Standing Committee and relevant Law Enforcement Agencies including Interpol Wildlife Crime Unit.