

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



Eighteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties
Colombo (Sri Lanka), 23 May – 3 June 2019

Species specific matters

African lion (*Panthera leo*)

CONSERVATION OF AND TRADE IN AFRICAN LIONS

1. This document has been submitted by Nigeria and Togo.*

Background

2. African lions (*Panthera leo*) are classified as 'Vulnerable' on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's Red List of Threatened Species. Its 2016 assessment inferred that lion populations across the continent had reduced by 43% over the previous 21 years (or 3 lion generations), and that just 23,000-39,000 mature individuals remain across the continent, occupying as little as 8% of their historic range.
3. Across all but 4 southern African countries, lions have declined by an average of approximately 60%, and populations in West Africa are regionally classified as Critically Endangered. *Panthera leo* is considered to be a conservation dependant species, and researchers predict that without concerted action further significant declines are likely across the continent in the coming decades.
4. The reasons for the decline are complex. However, both the IUCN Red List assessors and lion range States have agreed that habitat degradation, reductions in prey animals, human-lion conflict, and trade in lion products (particularly bones), are major contributing factors. Trophy hunting is also identified as a potential threat in the IUCN Red List assessment, depending on how it is regulated and managed.
5. African lions were included on Appendix II of the Convention with other Felids at the inaugural Conference of the Parties in 1975. At the 17th Conference of the Parties (CoP17, Johannesburg, 2016), an annotation to the Appendix II listing was adopted, establishing a zero annual export quota for specimens of bones, bone pieces, bone products, claws, skeletons, skulls and teeth removed from the wild and traded for commercial purposes. Under the annotation, annual export quotas for trade in bones, bone pieces, bone products, claws, skeletons, skulls and teeth for commercial purposes, derived from captive breeding operations in South Africa, will be established and communicated annually to the CITES Secretariat.
6. At its 17th meeting, the Conference of the Parties also adopted Decisions 17.241-17.245 on the African lion. Decision 17.243 b) instructed the Standing Committee, at its 69th and 70th meetings, to recommend further actions to be taken, including the possible need for the development of a Resolution on the conservation of African lions.
7. At its 69th meeting the Standing Committee established a Working Group on African lions, whose mandate included consideration of further actions to be taken, including the possible development of additional

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specific guidance on trade in and conservation of African lions by amending existing Resolutions or through a dedicated Resolution.

8. Niger chaired the SC69 Working Group, and submitted its recommendations to the 70th meeting of the Standing Committee in SC70 Doc. 54.2. These recommendations were further discussed at the joint CMS/CITES African Carnivores Initiative Range State meeting held in Bonn, Germany, from 5-8 November 2018.
9. The Traffic report entitled 'The Legal and Illegal Trade in African Lions', compiled in fulfilment of Decision 17.241 e) and appended to the Secretariat's report in SC70 Doc 54.1, acknowledges that poaching of lions for trade in body parts is an emerging threat, and that increasing demand for lion bone and other products in Asia may have an impact on wild lion populations across their range, as well as on other big cat populations. The report also identifies Lao PDR's role as a possible transit country for lion products destined for Vietnam and China. It indicates that organised criminal groups may be involved in lion bone trade, that the perception of increasing value and demand in Asia will lead to increased lion poaching, and that illegal trade may present a magnified risk to small sub-populations, for example those in West Africa.
10. The Traffic report also identifies major discrepancies in the data obtained from the CITES Trade Database on trade in lion specimens, including errors in the transfer of data from South African permit applications to CITES annual reports, with the incorrect destination country identified for significant bone and skeleton exports.
11. More broadly, concerns exist that ongoing legal trade in lion specimens from captive breeding operations may result in product legitimisation in the eyes of consumers, demand stimulation, opportunities for laundering illegal products into trade, and enforcement challenges, which could in turn impact on wild lions through increased poaching for international trade. These concerns have heightened since South Africa substantially increased its export quota to 1,500 skeletons from captive-bred lions during 2018. The Traffic report to SC70 notes that research is ongoing in an attempt to evaluate these concerns.
12. Without DNA analysis, legal lion bone exports could be providing a cover for illegal trade in products derived from tigers and other big cats, although its impact is currently difficult to quantify.
13. While a number of CITES Resolutions have relevance to African lions, no CITES provisions currently provide specific guidance to Parties on the enforcement of the CoP17 annotation to the lion's Appendix II listing. However, CITES represents a mechanism by which close monitoring of international trade in lions can be achieved. Decisions agreed at CITES CoP17 also provide opportunities to utilise the CITES framework to enhance collaborative lion conservation activities in order to mitigate the negative impacts of trade and other threats to lions and other big cats.
14. The adoption of a dedicated Resolution on African lions will facilitate:
 - a) the encouragement of Parties and stakeholders to increase public awareness of the plight of lions, their importance to African ecosystems, and the damaging conservation and societal impacts of lion population declines, necessitating closer monitoring of domestic and international trade in lion products;
 - b) the establishment of formal processes by which range States and other Parties (including in particular transit and consumer States) should review policies on trade in lion specimens, prioritise enforcement of international restrictions on trade in lion products, enhance associated regulatory and enforcement activities, and share information on seizures, arrests, prosecutions and sentences with the CITES Secretariat, any relevant CITES Task Force, other Parties and law enforcement agencies as appropriate;
 - c) efforts to enhance cooperation among law enforcement agencies at national and international levels, and between enforcement agencies and CITES Authorities, concerning control of trade in lion specimens, for example through targeted intelligence-led collaborative enforcement operations designed to proactively detect, investigate, prosecute and dismantle the criminal networks involved in the transnational illegal trade;
 - d) recognition of the potential risk that legal trade in lion specimens from captive-bred lions will act as a stimulus and cover for illegal trade in wild lion specimens, the difficulties for enforcement authorities in distinguishing between lion specimens from captive-bred and wild populations, and the need to adopt

a precautionary approach (and where appropriate establish a zero quota) with respect to any trade in lion products from any source;

- e) the regulation and monitoring of the activities of captive breeding facilities in order to prevent commercial trade in lion products that might impact wild lion populations;
 - f) the development and implementation of demand reduction/consumer behaviour change campaigns, making use of the strategies outlined in CITES Resolution Conf. 17.4, by Parties in whose territories a demand for lion specimens exists;
 - g) the establishment of strict and precautionary quotas for lion trophy exports; and
 - h) the provision of clear direction to Parties and the Secretariat on regular reporting requirements with respect to trade in lion specimens.
15. Decision 17.243 also instructed the Standing Committee to establish a Task Force on African Lions, provide it with Terms of Reference, and consider the establishment of an associated multi-donor technical trust fund. As a result of the 1st Meeting of Range States for the Joint CMS – CITES African Carnivore Initiative, CITES Decisions will be submitted to establish a Task Force under the auspices of the joint CMS/CITES African Carnivores Initiative. Provisions included in the draft Resolution in Annex 1 of this document should serve as guidance when developing the terms of reference and modus operandi for the Task Force.

Recommendation

16. The Conference of the Parties is invited to adopt the draft Resolution presented as Annex 1 of this document.

COMMENTS OF THE SECRETARIAT

- A. In Decision 17.243, paragraph b), the Standing Committee was directed to *recommend further actions to be taken; including the possible need for the development of a Resolution on the conservation of African lion*. It established an intersessional working group at SC69 to examine these and other elements directed to it. At SC70, Niger, as Chair of the Standing Committee's intersessional working group on the African lion, reported in document SC70 Doc. 54.2 that participation in the working group had remained extremely limited. There had been almost no feedback from working group members to Niger's proposal for a draft resolution dedicated to the African lion. Noting that Decision 17.243 had not yet been implemented, the Standing Committee recommended that it be further discussed at the First Meeting of Range States for the Joint CITES-CMS African Carnivores Initiative (ACI1; Bonn, November 2018).
- B. At ACI1, Niger introduced a draft resolution on African lions very similar to the version in Annex 1 to the present document. As indicated in document CoP18 Doc. 76.1, the 26 African lion range States attending ACI1 did not reach consensus concerning the need to develop a CITES resolution dedicated to the African lion, as is being proposed by Nigeria and Togo in document CoP18 Doc. 76.2.
- C. Regarding the draft resolution presented in Annex 1, the Secretariat has the following observations:
- i) The proposed preambular language seems overstated, for example "acknowledging the unprecedented crisis facing Africa's lions" and does not recognize the evidence that the species is stable or increasing in parts of its range in Africa.
 - ii) With regard to recommendations in paragraphs 1 and 2 relating to enforcement priorities, controls of trade in African lions, and a CITES Task Force, the Secretariat considers them premature, and conflicting or overlapping with the draft decisions on these matters in document CoP18 Doc. 76.1.
 - iii) The proposals in paragraph 3 seem to call into question the breeding of African lions in range States, and *de facto* would request range States to make it similar if not more restrictive than if the species were included in Appendix I, for example, by requesting 'registration and regular monitoring of such facilities', demonstration of 'non-detrimental acquisition of stocks', ensuring 'robust traceability systems... for any movement of specimens to, from or between such facilities', providing 'a report to any relevant Task Force', and 'restricting the captive breeding to circumstances that benefit *bone fide* lion conservation efforts'.

- iv) Paragraphs 4, 5 and 6, under the heading *Regarding demand for African lion products*, do not distinguish between trade in, and demand for, legal specimens of African lion, and the demand for illegally sourced African lion specimens. As such, the measures being proposed seem not in line with Resolution Conf. 17.4 on *Demand reduction strategies to combat illegal trade in CITES-listed species*.
 - v) Paragraphs 7, 8 and 9 on trophy hunting and the making of non-detriment findings seem unnecessary as they refer mostly to provisions in existing Resolutions. They are also duplicative or overlapping with draft decisions on these issues proposed in document CoP18 Doc. 76.1.
 - vi) The reporting obligations in paragraphs 10 to 13 seem excessive where they concern Parties having to communicate 'export quotas for Africa lion' and reporting by the Secretariat to 'each regular meeting of the CITES Standing Committee'; and redundant where they ask Parties to submit information on legal and illegal trade in African lions in their regular annual reports.
 - vii) The issues proposed in paragraphs 14 and 15 are fully addressed in documents CoP18 Doc. 76.1 and CoP18 Doc. 96.
- D. The Secretariat considers that the draft decisions presented in document CoP18 Doc. 76.1, if adopted, will address the concerns expressed by the authors of document CoP18 Doc.76.2 in a more timely, targeted and measured manner, *inter alia* through decisions concerning a CITES Big Cats task force, African lion trade management, and research to examine linkages between trade in specimens of African lion and those of other big cats, which may lead to better informed recommendations applicable to trade in big cats, and not only African lions. The Secretariat therefore does not support the development of a resolution dedicated to the African lion and recommends that the draft resolution in Annex 1 of document CoP18 Doc.76.2 not be adopted.

DRAFT RESOLUTION CONF. 18.XX ON CONSERVATION OF AND TRADE
IN AFRICAN LIONS (*PANTHERA LEO*)

ACKNOWLEDGING the unprecedented crisis facing Africa's lions with the 2016 IUCN Red List assessment suggesting that only 23,000-39,000 wild lions remain across the continent, occupying just 8% of their historic range, and with scientists predicting that, without concerted action, further declines will follow over the coming decades;

AWARE that the increasing use of lion bones and body parts and derivatives for traditional medicine, and the increasing associated international trade in such products, is considered a major threat to lion conservation by both the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, and by African lion range States;

ALSO AWARE that trophy hunting can represent a threat to lions, depending on how it is regulated and managed;

RECOGNISING the possible link between the trade in lion products and trade in parts and products derived from other big cat species;

ALSO RECOGNISING the enforcement challenges in distinguishing between products derived from captive bred and wild lions, and between different big cat species;

CONCERNED that ongoing legal international trade in lion skeletons and other products from captive bred lions may increase the risk to wild lions through product legitimisation, demand stimulation, and opportunities for laundering illegal products into trade; and

NOTING the annotation to the Appendix II listing of African lions adopted at the 17th Conference of the Parties, and the African Carnivores Initiative adopted by both CITES and the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals as part of the joint programme of work of the two Conventions;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION

Regarding trade in African lion specimens

1. INVITES range States and other Parties to:
 - a) review national policies on trade in lion specimens (taking into account the recommendations in CITES Resolution Conf. 15.2);
 - b) prioritise enforcement of international restrictions on trade in lion parts and products;
 - c) undertake targeted intelligence-led enforcement operations in cooperation with transit and consumer countries and appropriate enforcement agencies as necessary, to dismantle the criminal networks involved in the transnational lion trade (and trade in other big cat products); and
 - d) share information on seizures, arrests, prosecutions and sentences with any relevant CITES Task Force with a mandate to consider African lions.
2. URGES range States, transit and consumer countries to enhance cooperation among law enforcement agencies at national, regional and international levels, and between enforcement agencies and CITES Authorities, concerning the control of illegal trade in African lion specimens.
3. REQUESTS range States that have captive-breeding facilities for lions in their territories to:
 - a) consider the potential for legal trade in lion specimens from captive-bred lions to act as a stimulus and cover for illegal trade in wild lion specimens, the difficulties for enforcement authorities in distinguishing between lion specimens from captive-bred and wild populations, and to adopt a highly precautionary approach to any trade in lion products;
 - b) establish registration and regular monitoring of such facilities;

- c) ensure that such facilities can demonstrate legal and non-detrimental acquisition of stocks;
- d) ensure that robust traceability systems are in place for any movement of specimens to, from or between such facilities including through the correct use of source codes (using the mechanisms provided in CITES Resolution Conf. 17.7 as appropriate);
- e) provide a report to any relevant Task Force established with a mandate to consider African lions, for inclusion in regular reports to the CITES Standing Committee; and
- f) consider restricting the captive breeding of lions to circumstances that benefit *bone fide* lion conservation efforts.

Regarding demand for African lion products

- 4. ENCOURAGES range States, consumer countries and other stakeholders to increase public awareness of the plight of lions, their importance to African ecosystems, and the potentially damaging conservation and societal impacts of domestic and international trade in lion products;
- 5. RECOMMENDS that Parties in whose territories a demand for lion specimens exists, develop and implement demand reduction programmes, making use of the strategies outlined in CITES Resolution Conf. 17.4, aimed at reducing the threat posed to African lions through demand for lion specimens;
- 6. RECOMMENDS that Parties where lion specimens are used alongside other wildlife products (such as tiger bone) in traditional medicines and products, work with traditional medicine associations, practitioners and consumers to eliminate such use, taking into consideration CITES Resolution Conf.10.19 (Rev. CoP14).

Regarding trophy hunting quotas for African lions

- 7 REQUEST Parties in whose territories lion trophy hunting operations exist, to establish strict, evidence-based and precautionary quotas for lion trophy exports in accordance with the principles of non-detriment provided for in CITES Resolution Conf.16.7 (Rev. CoP17) and the Guidelines for the management of nationally established export quotas in CITES Resolution Conf.14.7 (Rev. CoP15), and report these annually to the CITES Secretariat.

Regarding non-detriment findings

- 8. URGES Parties to regularly review the establishment of non-detriment findings for lion trophies (with reference to CITES Resolution Conf.17.9) and other lion specimens prior to the issuing of export permits;
- 9. URGES Parties to ensure that non-detriment findings for lion specimens are credible, reliable and are made fully available to the relevant authorities in importing countries, and conform with regional, national and population level strategies, action plans and regulations relating to the conservation of lions.

Regarding reporting

- 10. REQUESTS that the Secretariat provides clear direction to Parties on regular reporting requirements with respect to trade in African lion specimens, including reporting deadlines;
- 11. REQUESTS that Parties communicate export quotas for African lion specimens and any revisions thereof to the CITES Secretariat, in accordance with CITES Resolution Conf. 12.3 (Rev. CoP17);
- 12. REQUESTS that range States and other Parties include information on legal and illegal trade in lion specimens in their CITES annual reports;
- 13. REQUESTS the Secretariat to provide a report on the status of African lions, and the extent and nature of trade in African lion specimens, for consideration at each regular meeting of the CITES Standing Committee.

Regarding conservation of lion populations

- 14. URGES Parties and wider stakeholders to support and actively participate in efforts under the joint CMS/CITES African Carnivores Initiative to enhance wild lion conservation and protection;

15. URGES Parties and the Secretariat to secure the funding and resources necessary to implement measures under this Resolution and to manage the allocation of such resources appropriately.

TENTATIVE BUDGET AND SOURCE OF FUNDING
FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF DRAFT RESOLUTIONS OR DECISIONS

According to Resolution Conf. 4.6 (Rev. CoP16) on *Submission of draft resolutions, draft decisions and other documents for meetings of the Conference of the Parties*, the Conference of the Parties decided that any draft resolutions or decisions submitted for consideration at a meeting of the Conference of the Parties that have budgetary and workload implications for the Secretariat or permanent committees must contain or be accompanied by a budget for the work involved and an indication of the source of funding.