

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



Eighteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties  
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INFORMATION SUPPORTING PROPOSAL COP18 PROP. 6 TO TRANSFER  
THE SMOOTH COATED OTTER (*LUTROGALE PERSPICILLATA*) TO APPENDIX I  
AND PROPOSAL COP18 PROP. 7 TO TRANSFER  
THE ASIAN SMALL CLAWED OTTER (*AONYX CINEREUS*) TO APPENDIX I

This document has been submitted by India in relation to proposals CoP18 Prop. 6 and CoP18 Prop. 7.\*

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**Information supporting proposal CoP 18 Prop. 6 for transfer of Smooth coated otter (*Lutogale perspicillata*) to Appendix I submitted by India, Bangladesh and Nepal and Proposal CoP 18 Prop.7 to transfer Asian small clawed otter (*Aonyx cinereus*) to Appendix I submitted by Philippines, India and Nepal**

The Smooth coated otter (*Lutogale perspicillata*) and Asian small clawed otter (*Aonyx cinereus*) have indeed suffered marked declines in their population sizes in the wild, which can be inferred from high levels of exploitation and high vulnerability to the intrinsic factors ( low density and low fecundity). The population of both the species are suspected to have been declined by at least 30% in the last 30 years, though the IUCN Otter Specialist Group estimates that decline of both species have been more precipitous, approaching at least 30% over just two generations or about 20 years.

2. The IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC) Otter Specialist Group, also has in their document “Asian Small Clawed and Smooth Coated Otters and the criteria for listing in CITES Appendix 1” mentioned that- the trade in live otters for pets is an emerging threat to smooth-coated otters, and they are increasingly found advertised for sale online. Over just a four-month period, between 734 and 1189 otters were advertised for sale online in 560 advertisements in Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Malaysia, according to a 2018 TRAFFIC study and also that the illegal pet trade is a growing threat to Asian small-clawed otters, which are popular for private ownership and increasingly in pet shops, pet fairs, and even in coffee shops.

3. The document highlights about Multiple TRAFFIC reports indicating that seizures of live small-clawed and smooth-coated otters are increasing, and the popularity of the animals on Instagram and other social media sites is fuelling demand and popularity and that an Appendix I listing would facilitate enforcement, especially with regard to online sales, and would be helpful in preventing laundering of supposedly captive-bred small-clawed and smooth-coated otters. The document stresses the fact that having *Lutra lutra* (Eurasian otter) on Appendix I and the other tropical Asian otters on Appendix II makes enforcement difficult given the similarity of appearance of the species and the difficulty in distinguishing between species once discovered in trade, especially skins, furs, and other parts and derivatives. Also that the status of otter species once threatened by international trade in other parts of the world has improved after being listed on Appendix I of CITES.

4. Further, multiple recent reports by TRAFFIC and others have also confirmed that small-clawed and smooth-coated otters are in international trade and that trade is having serious and detrimental impacts on the species, and this fact is also supported by the information provided in the IUCN assessment.

5. The level of inferred decline are to be considered as “marked” under the criteria and we should not wait for the population to decline to 50% which it would eventually lead to if no action to arrest this decline are taken.

6. These assessments help to illustrate about these fast-disappearing species, that the declines in both species are likely to be much more precipitous than the scant population data available for the species may suggest, and that the precautionary approach would be to end any commercial trade before they are lost forever, in accordance with Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP17), Paragraph 2.