

## CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSALS FOR AMENDMENT OF APPENDICES I AND II

### A. Proposal

Inclusion of Mt. Kenya Bush Viper (*Atheris desaixi*) in Appendix II in accordance with Article II 2 (a) and Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP12), Annex 2a

### B. Proponent

KENYA

### C. Supporting statement

#### 1. Taxonomy

- 1.1 Class: Reptilia
- 1.2 Order: Serpentes
- 1.3 Family: Viperidae
- 1.4 Genus: *Atheris*
- 1.5 Species: *Atheris desaixi* (Ashe, 1968)
- 1.6 Scientific synonyms: None
- 1.7 Common name: English: Mt. Kenya Bush Viper

#### 2. Biological parameters

##### 2.1 Distribution

*Atheris desaixi* is a Kenyan endemic species with a restricted range. Two isolated populations are known; one around Igembe in Nyambene Hills and the other at Chuka, south-eastern Mt. Kenya forest (Ashe, 1968, Spawls *et al.* 2002).

##### 2.2 Habitat availability

The species occur at mid-altitude forest around 1600 to 1700m above sea level. Known species habitat under threat from agricultural activities and deforestation. However, the impacts of these activities on the species not yet established.

### 2.3 Population status

Presently there are no known estimates of the total population or number of individuals in the wild as well as in captivity.

### 2.4 Population trends

A decline of the population is to be expected due to the increased removal of specimens for trade, habitat loss and destruction as a result of change in land use.

### 2.5 Geographic trends

There is high-presumed rate of habitat fragmentation leading to decrease in range area of the sub-populations though not known.

### 2.6 Role of the species in its ecosystem

Though little is known of the species biology, it is known to feed on small mammals. Little is known on its role to predict the consequences on the ecosystem following its depletion.

### 2.7 Threats

The primary threats to *Atheris desaixi* are trade and habitat destruction.

## 3 Utilization and trade

### 3.1 National utilization

No domestic use is known on this species.

### 3.2 Legal international trade

Not listed in CITES and no legal trade records.

### 3.3 Illegal trade

From the frequent interception of smuggled snakes by the Kenya Wildlife Service, the Management Authority for Kenya and customs officers, it is evident that there is substantive illegal trade on the species. Table 1 below shows illegal trade data; source extracted from Reeve (2002) report. The report quotes the export value of one specimen as USD250 based on price list of reptiles confiscated from one of the illegal dealers.

Table 1. Export of *Atheris desaixi* by one dealer between November 1999 and May 2000.

Number of specimens of <i>Atheris desaixi</i> exported	Destination country
17	USA
4	USA
6	USA
<b>(27)</b>	

### 3.4 Actual or potential trade impacts

There exists no official trade data for *Atheris desaixi*. However, isolation of the sub-populations of the species makes recovery of depleted sites unlikely.

### 3.5 Captive breeding or artificial propagation for commercial purposes

Though no data is available a significant number of specimens of the species is presumed to be held in zoos and private collections though the captive population size is unknown.

## 4 Conservation and management

### 4.1 Legal status

#### 4.1.1 National

The species is included in the list of species protected under the Kenya Wildlife (Conservation and Management) Act.

#### 4.1.2 International

The Mount Kenya Bush Viper is not currently listed in the CITES Appendices.

### 4.2 Species management

#### 4.2.1 Population monitoring

Currently there is no specific population-monitoring programme in place.

#### 4.2.2 Habitat conservation

Presently no population is known to occur in any protected area. Known areas have high human population. It may be present in Mt. Kenya forest reserve.

#### 4.2.3 Management measures

No species management programme for this species but there is strict enforcement against smuggling.

#### 4.3 Control measures

##### 4.3.1 International trade

No relevant international control measure for trade in this species.

##### 4.3.2 Domestic measures

Efforts of enforcement of the Kenya Wildlife Laws protecting the species have yielded several confiscations of specimens of the species. However, the wide network of the illegal wildlife traffickers undermines these efforts.

#### 5 Information on similar species

There are no other species in this genus that share the same geographic range with *Atheris desaixi*.

#### 6. Other comments

None

#### 7. Additional remarks

As shown above, *Atheris desaixi* meets the biological and trade criteria for Article II (2a) and criteria of Resolution Conf. 9.24 necessary for inclusion in Appendix II because:

- a) it is known, inferred or projected that unless trade in the species is subjected to strict regulation, it will meet at least one of the criteria listed for Appendix I listing in the near future(Criterion A) and,
- b) it is known, inferred or projected that harvesting of specimens from the wild for (illegal) international trade has, or may have, a detrimental impact on the species by either exceeding, over an extended period, the level that can be continued in perpetuity or reducing it to a population level at which its survival would be threatened by other influences (Criterion B (i, ii)).

#### 8 References

Ashe, J. 1968. A new Bush Viper. *Journal of East African Natural History*. Vol. 27 No.1 (116)

Reeve, R. 2002. The reptile trade in Kenya. A report prepared for the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW). September 2002.

Spawls, S., K. Howell, R. Drewes and J. Ashe 2002. A field Guide to the Reptiles of East Africa: Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi, Academic press