

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



Sixty-fifth meeting of the Standing Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 7-11 July 2014

Interpretation and implementation of the Convention

Compliance and enforcement

ILLEGAL TRADE IN CHEETAHS (*ACINONYX JUBATUS*)

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.
2. The Annex to the present document presents the United Arab Emirates^{*} report in response to Notification to the Parties No. 2014/007 of 24 January 2014 on Illegal trade in cheetahs (*Acinonyx jubatus*), in the language in which it was received. The report was received by the Secretariat on 26 June 2014 and therefore could not be taken into account in document SC65 Doc. 39 (Rev. 2).

^{*} *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.*

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT & WATER



الإمارات العربية المتحدة
وزارة البيئة والمياه

Illegal trade of Cheetahs in UAE

Introduction:

The species *Acinonyx jubatus* (Cheetah) used to be distributed from Africa through middle east to Asia. In 1900 there were more than 100,000 cheetahs throughout Africa and Asia. Today this number has fallen to less than 12,000. However, in the past 50 years, the species has become extinct from those areas, except for Southern Africa, and smaller number in North and East Africa and Iran (Myers, 1976). The cheetah is not adaptable to human interference. The fact that it is also caught for live trade, hunting game, fur trade and protection of livestock contribute more to its decline. The species is recognized by the IUCN as “vulnerable” and is listed on appendix I of the Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).

UAE recognized the importance of protecting wildlife, therefore, it established different programs, such as Breeding Centre for Endangered Arabian Wildlife (BCEAW) in Sharjah. Such institutions are fundamental for the protection of Cheetahs, Falcons and Bustards. In fact, BCEAW is home for more than 30 north east African cheetah that were confiscated when they were illegally imported into the UAE.

UAE, Also, recognized the importance of tackling illegal wildlife trade early on, in line it’s keenness on protecting the environment, becoming the first nation in the Middle East to ratify CITES. The UAE regularly assesses the effectiveness of the country’s abilities to implement the Convention successfully and has positioned itself as a leading nation within the region for these efforts. The nation’s legislation on CITES were issued and became came into force in 2002, entitled Federal Law 11, which later qualified UAE for a category (A) status in the national legislation project. This meant that UAE’s legislation pertaining to illegal wildlife trade completely fulfilled all requirements to implement CITES.

Legalizations:

- Due to the geographical and strategic location of UAE as a link between the east and the west regions, it is considered to be a critical area for illegal wildlife trade trafficking. UAE government is aware of such matter, in efforts of controlling this

issue, UAE enacted a number of legislations which includes the Federal Law No. (11) for the year 2002 concerning the regulation and control of CITES, and includes 40 articles governing the scope of implementation, the functions of the authorities, administrative and scientific authorities, international trade and documentation, exceptions, identifying the ports of entry, how to deal with non-member states, registration of establishments and companies, transit, cooperation with the concerned authorities, and sanctions. It also includes , penal articles and sanctions for offenders which varies from fines up to 50 thousand dirhams and imprisonment up to six months. The penalties vary depending on the Appendixes to the Convention.

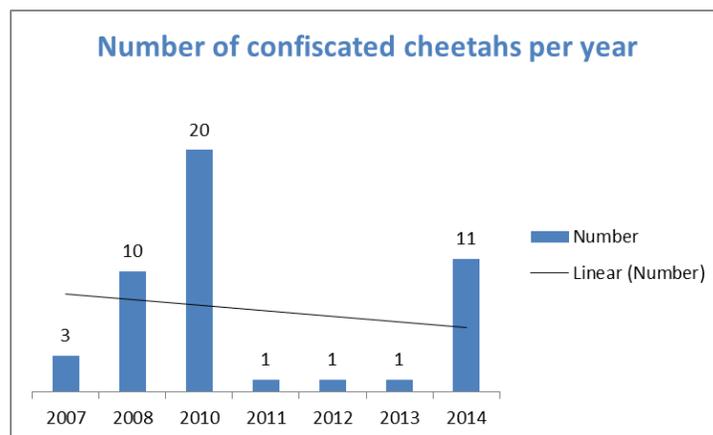
- Furthermore, the Ministry of Environment and Water issued a number of regulations within its administrative capacity. The Ministry issued ministerial decision No. (346) of year 2012 regarding the import of wild animals, which prohibits the importation of wildlife species non-bred in captivity for personal and commercial purposes unless it was for authorized agencies such zoo parks and breeding centers that are included in Appendix (a) of that decision, as well as animals included in the lists of the Federal Law No. (24) for the year 1999 concerning the protection and development of the environment, its amendments, and its regulations . Cheetahs are included in those two ministerial decisions and they are not allowed to be owned by the public except for authorized agencies.
- Local authorities in UAE also issued different legalizations to control illegal trade in wildlife and ownership of such species. An example, Municipality & Planning Department in Ajman issued an administrative decision No. 54 of 2011 on Regulation of Ban breeding wild animal, husbandry and non-domesticated animals and reptiles at the houses. Anyone who violate this decision get a fine of 10 thousand dirhams and the animal get confiscated. Dubai Municipality issued an administrative resolution No. 30 of year 2007 which consider raising animals in homes and housing areas is prohibited and considered as a health risk. Moreover, UAE is working to issue a new federal law about regulating Possession of predators.

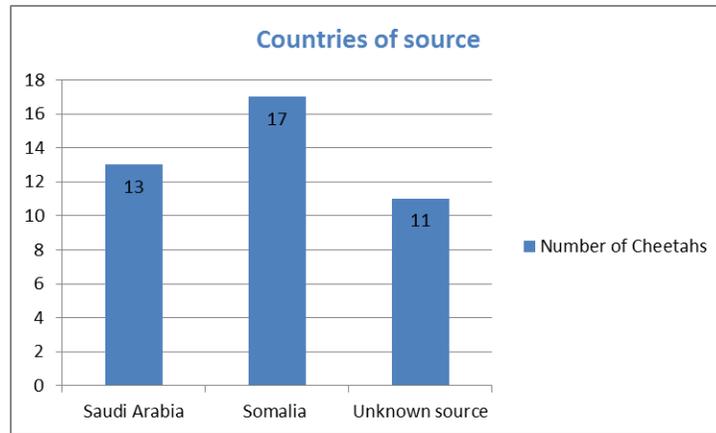
Furthermore, CITES authorities in UAE in collaboration with security agencies and NGOs are evaluating the effect of CITES enforcement in UAE and improving the efforts of CITES implementation regularly.

Access point control:

United Arab Emirates monitor all main border crossing points and equips ports with the latest techniques that would help to control illegal shipments. Customs all across UAE uses the latest advanced cargo container scanning technology. Meanwhile, the government of UAE is tracking the latest technologies used in customs to be applied. Such efforts result in controlling and better monitoring of UAE’s access points for goods and passengers, which result in confiscation illegal wildlife items.

The number of confiscated Cheetahs (*Acinonyx jubatus*) from 2007 to 2013 across different UAE access points is 32 live cheetahs and 4 items of cheetah’s skin. The number of confiscated cheetahs dropped drastically in recent years, i.e. 2011- 2013. It dropped from 20 cheetahs in 2010 to 1 cheetah on 2011. However, in 2014, the number of confiscated cheetahs till July was 11 live cheetahs all entered from Ghowaifat borders coming from Saudi Arabia (see Figure 1). These confiscated cheetahs differ in their origin, although most of them are from known origin but there is a number of cheetahs which are from unknown origin (see Figure 2).





Illegal trade of cheetahs in the Middle East including UAE is more significant than other areas. The young cheetahs may be taken from unknown areas to conservationists, but possibly from known resident populations as well (CITES, 2014).

Online control:

United Arab Emirates also cooperates with international governmental and non-governmental organizations; to take advantage of the expertise and develop them is in line with the UAE strategy. In addition, the Ministry of Environment and Water prevented the electronic illegal trade of endangered animal and plant species listed in the Convention, and in coordination with the authorities responsible for electronic communication sites on the internet, through the follow up on advertisements for the sale of endangered animals, where most of these ads were posted by fake communication channels outside the state, and 60% of such sites were removed, i.e. 800 sites, since such websites are unreliable sources of information which might carry a lot of exaggerations. The issue of uncontrolled keeping of large cats including Cheetahs is expounded by the advent of social media where large cats are shown in vehicles or as pets being walked around.

The rapid transfer of such images via popular social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, etc. results in pictures being made available to a wide part of the population in a very short time. This can make the problem look acute in this digital age because of the speed at which information can travel between people within and

outside countries. There are enough relevant laws to prosecute anyone found in violation of the laws mentioned previously. The External Audit Department in the Ministry in coordination with the local environmental authorities conducts many inspection programs on pet shops and the related businesses, and takes the appropriate action against the violator of CITES legalization. There are many reported cases for confiscation of such species from at the local level in cooperation with the competent authority in each emirate.

Awareness

Training courses:

The Ministry of Environment and Water provides special training courses on a regular basis for veterinarians, agricultural engineers working in Enforcement Authorities such as: Ministry of Environment and Water, Ministry of Internal ,Airports security and Customs, and those who are assigned to implement federal law no. (11) for the year 2002 on the organization and control of international trade on endangered Fauna and flora . There are more than 21 training courses conducted for the different concerned authorities from year 2007 to 2013. Moreover, the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) office in Dubai is playing an important role in cooperating with the Management CITES Authority in increasing the capacity building and awareness for the inspection officers and the community in general. These training sessions keep such individuals up to date with what is latest updates and to be in line with the best practices worldwide.



Public awareness:

UAE also concerned with increasing public awareness through the distribution of leaflets, posters and guiding brochures regarding CITES and the species listed in the appendixes of the Convention in different places in the UAE such as shopping malls, local markets, airports, schools and universities; to demonstrate the risks and dangers of illegal trafficking of rare and endangered species. The CITES scientific Authority in UAE , Environmental Agency Abu Dhabi, published a handbook titled “UAE CITES Handbook” which include common CITES & Non-CITES species involved in UAE trade. This handbook is distributed to all the people who’s interested in wildlife trading such as pet shops, animal markets and the public.

Awareness campaign were carried out in 2009 till now, titled "What You carry May Harm You", which was aimed to spread awareness to travelers through border crossing points. Furthermore, many electronic awareness campaigns are carried through social networking channels such as Twitter, Instagram and Facebook.



Resources:

- Myers, N. (1976) Status of leopard and cheetah in Africa. In: Eaton, R.L. (ed) The World Cats 3 (1) Carnivore Research Institute, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington: 53 – 69.
- Secretariat of CITES. (2014). Illegal Trade In Cheetahs (*Acinonyx jubatus*). Convention On International Trade In Endangered Species Of Wild Fauna & Flora. Geneva, Switzerland. P. 44.