

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



Fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties
Doha (Qatar), 13-25 March 2010

TIGER RANGE STATE REPORT – INDIA

The attached document has been submitted by India in compliance with Decision 14.65 (*Asian big cats*)*.

* *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.*

Report on implementation of Resolution CONF.12.5

Background:

1. The Government of India is seized up with the challenges facing tiger conservation, and has taken many initiatives in an ongoing manner to save the tiger. However, the status of tiger continues to be endangered, and the Government of India is providing assistance to the 17 tiger States under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Project Tiger for tiger conservation in designated tiger reserves. Besides, several milestone initiatives have also been taken to strengthen tiger conservation based on the recommendations of the Tiger Task Force, which was constituted by the National Board for Wildlife, in the wake of tigers getting locally extinct in Sariska.
2. As per the findings of the recent All India Tiger Estimation in 2008, using the refined methodology, the total country level population of tiger is 1411 (mid-value) the lower and the upper limits being 1165 and 1657 respectively. The new findings are based on determining spatial occupancy of tigers and sampling such forests using camera traps in a statistical framework. This assessment is not comparable to the earlier total count using pug marks.
3. The new findings indicate a poor status of tiger population in areas outside tiger reserves and some protected areas. The tiger population, by and large, in tiger reserves and in some protected areas of the 17 tiger states are viable, while requiring ongoing conservation efforts. In the recent past, tigers have become locally extinct in Sariska and Panna tiger reserves mainly due to poaching. While a CBI investigation was done in the case of Sariska, a Special Investigating Team (SIT) was constituted by the Ministry with an independent expert and members drawn from the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau, Wildlife Institute of India and the National Tiger Conservation Authority for investigating the causative factors for tiger extinction in Panna. The SIT has recently submitted its report, which has been sent to the State government (Madhya Pradesh) for needful administrative and ecological actions.
4. The status of tiger is low in some tiger reserves due to ecological factors like heavy rainfall leading to dense forest cover and paucity of natural prey base to support tigers, viz. Dampa in Mizoram, Namdapha in Arunachal Pradesh and Kalakad-Mundanthurai in Tamil Nadu. In some reserves the status of tiger is low due to left-wing extremism or other extremist disturbances viz. Indravati (Chhattisgarh), Valmiki (Bihar), Manas (Assam), Nagarjunasagar-Srisailem (Andhra Pradesh), Buxa (West Bengal), Palamau (Jharkhand) and Similipal (Orissa).
5. Based on the outcome of the recent All India tiger estimation and the managerial status, a rapid assessment of tiger reserves has been done. Out of 37 tiger reserves, 12 are good, 9 are satisfactory and 16 are in a poor status, which includes 7 reserves affected by extremist disturbances.
6. The main reasons for tiger decline include poaching, degradation of forest status outside tiger reserves and protected areas due to human pressure, life-stock pressure and ecologically unsustainable land-uses. This has caused fragmentation of habitat leading to mortality of tigers and their prey due to man-wild animal conflicts. Heavily used infrastructures like highways and rail-tracks disturb wild animals while causing their death due to road/train hits. Overall, there is a loss of forest quality in terms of prey biomass to support large carnivores like tiger and leopards.
7. The findings of the recent All India Tiger Estimation in the geographical information system domain has provided a knowledge of the status of existing source population of tiger and its habitat. This has enabled notification of core/critical tiger habitats apart from identifying sensitive corridors, State-wise.
8. Tiger mortality during the year (as on 23.9.2009)
 - (i) Total number of deaths : 56
 - (ii) Inside tiger reserve : 38 (4 deaths due to poaching)
 - (iii) Outside tiger reserve : 18 (10 deaths due to poaching)

Milestone initiatives taken for tiger conservation:

Legal steps

1. Amendment of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 for providing enabling provisions for constitution of the National Tiger Conservation Authority and the Tiger and Other Endangered Species Crime Control Bureau.
2. Enhancement of punishment in cases of offence relating to a tiger reserve or its core area.

Administrative steps

3. Strengthening of antipoaching activities, including special strategy for monsoon patrolling, by providing funding support to Tiger Reserve States, as proposed by them, for deployment of antipoaching squads involving ex-army personnel / home guards, apart from workforce comprising of local people, in addition to strengthening of communication / wireless facilities.
4. Constitution of the National Tiger Conservation Authority with effect from 4.09.2006, for strengthening tiger conservation by, inter alia, ensuring normative standards in tiger reserve management, preparation of reserve specific tiger conservation plan, laying down annual audit report before Parliament, constituting State level Steering Committees under the Chairmanship of Chief Ministers and establishment of Tiger Conservation Foundation.
5. Constitution of a multidisciplinary Tiger and Other Endangered Species Crime Control Bureau (Wildlife Crime Control Bureau) with effect from 6.6.2007 to effectively control illegal trade in wildlife.
6. Declaration of eight new Tiger Reserves and in-principle approval accorded for creation of four new Reserves, namely Sahyadri in Maharashtra, Pilibhit in Uttar Pradesh, Ratapani in M.P. and Sunabeda in Orissa.
7. The revised Project Tiger guidelines have been issued to States for strengthening tiger conservation, which apart from ongoing activities, inter alia, include funding support to States for enhanced village relocation/rehabilitation package for people living in core or critical tiger habitats (from Rs. 1 lakh/family to Rs. 10 lakhs/family), rehabilitation/resettlement of communities involved in traditional hunting, mainstreaming livelihood and wildlife concerns in forests outside tiger reserves and fostering corridor conservation through restorative strategy to arrest habitat fragmentation.
8. A scientific methodology for estimating tiger (including co-predators, prey animals and assessment of habitat status) has been evolved and mainstreamed. The findings of this estimation/assessment are benchmarks for future tiger conservation strategy.
9. An area of 29284.76 sq. km. has been notified by 15 Tiger States (out of 17) as core or critical tiger habitat under section 38V of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, as amended in 2006 (Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Mizoram, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttarakhand, and West Bengal). Two tiger States (Bihar and Uttar Pradesh) have taken a decision for notifying the core or critical tiger habitats (2765.04 sq.km.). The State of Madhya Pradesh has not identified / notified the core / critical tiger habitat in its newly constituted tiger reserve (Sanjay National Park and Sanjay Dubri Wildlife Sanctuary).
10. Memorandum of Understanding developed for better/concerted implementation of conservation inputs through tiger reserve States.

Financial steps

11. Financial and technical help is provided to the States under various Centrally Sponsored Schemes, viz. Project Tiger and Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats for enhancing the capacity and infrastructure of the States for providing effective protection to wild animals.

International Cooperation

12. India has a Memorandum of Understanding with Nepal on controlling trans-boundary illegal trade in wildlife and conservation, apart from a protocol on tiger conservation with China.

13. A Global Tiger Forum of Tiger Range Countries has been created for addressing international issues related to tiger conservation.

14. During the 14th meeting of the Conference of Parties to CITES, which was held from 3rd to 15th June, 2007 at The Hague, India introduced a resolution along with China, Nepal and the Russian Federation, with directions to Parties with operations breeding tigers on a commercial scale, for restricting such captive populations to a level supportive only to conserving wild tigers. The resolution was adopted as a decision with minor amendments. Further, India made an intervention appealing to China to phase out tiger farming, and eliminate stockpiles of Asian big cats body parts and derivatives. The importance of continuing the ban on trade of body parts of tigers was emphasized.

Reintroduction of Tigers

15. As a part of active management to rebuild Sariska and Panna Tiger Reserves where tigers have become locally extinct, reintroduction of tigers / tigresses have been done.

Creation of Special Tiger Protection Force (STPF)

16. The policy initiatives announced by the Finance Minister in his Budget Speech of 29.2.2008, inter alia, contains action points relating to tiger protection. Based on the one time grant of Rs. 50.00 crore provided to the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) for raising, arming and deploying a Special Tiger Protection Force, the proposal for the said force has been approved by the competent authority for 13 tiger reserves. Rs. 93 lakhs each has been released to Corbett, Ranthambhore & Dudhwa Tiger Reserve for creation of STPF during 2008-09. Central Assistance will be provided to States for creation of STPF in remaining 10 Tiger Reserves in 2009-10. Since then, the guidelines of the STPF have been revised for deploying forest personnel in place of Police, with scope for involving local people like the Van Gujjars.

17. Special advisories issued for in-situ build up of prey base and tiger population through active management in tiger reserves having low population status of tiger and its prey.

18. Based on India's strong intervention during the 58th meeting of the Standing Committee of the CITES at Geneva from 6th to 10th July, 2009, the CITES Secretariat has issued a notification to Parties to submit reports relating to compliance of Decisions 14.69 and 14.65 within 90 days with effect from 20.10.2009 (Progress made on restricting captive breeding operations of tigers etc.).

Recent Initiatives:

1. Implementing a tripartite MOU with tiger States, linked to fund flows for effective implementation.
2. Revising the Special Tiger Protection Force (STPF) guidelines to involve local people like Van Gujjars and others in field protection.
3. Rapid assessment of tiger reserves done (12 good, 9 satisfactory and 16 poor).
4. Special crack teams sent to tiger reserves affected by left wing extremism and low population status of tiger and its prey.
5. All India meeting of Field Directors convened on 25 and 26 July, 2009 under the Chairmanship of the Minister for Environment and Forests for reviewing the status of field protection and related issues in tiger reserves.
6. Chief Ministers of tiger States addressed at the level of the Minister for Environment and Forests on urgent issues, viz. implementation of the tripartite MOU, creation of the Tiger Conservation Foundation, stepping up protection etc.
7. Chief Ministers of States having tiger reserves affected by left wing extremism and low population status of tiger and its prey addressed for taking special initiatives.

8. Field visits to Bhadra, Corbett, Sariska and Ranthambhore made by the Minister for Environment and Forests to review the initiatives and problems relating to tiger conservation.
9. Steps taken for modernizing the infrastructure and field protection.
10. Advisory issued for involvement of Non-Governmental Experts in the forthcoming all India tiger estimation.
11. Core Committee involving outside experts constituted for overseeing the forthcoming all India tiger estimation.
12. Report of the SIT constituted for looking into the local extinction of tiger in the Panna Tiger Reserve sent to the State (Madhya Pradesh) for the needful action.
13. Issue of tiger farming and trafficking of tiger body parts discussed at the level of Minister for Environment and Forests with the Chinese Authorities.
14. Action initiated for amending the Wildlife (Protection) Act to ensure effective conservation.
15. Initiatives being taken for improving the field delivery to capacity building apart from providing incentives.
16. Decision taken to host the World Tiger Summit in October-November, 2010.
17. Participating in the Global Tiger Initiative of the World Bank for strengthening of knowledge institutions and capacity building.
18. In collaboration with TRAFFIC-INDIA, an online wildlife crime data base is being created, and Generic Guidelines for preparation of reserve specific Security Plan has been evolved.

Other updates:

A. Reintroduction of Tigers in Sariska Tiger Reserve

A male tiger, along with a tigress, have been reintroduced in the Sariska Tiger Reserve (Rajasthan) during June/July, 2008, based on the recovery strategy suggested by the Wildlife Institute of India. The tigers are monitored regularly using satellite based radio collars.

B. Reintroduction of Tigers in Panna Tiger Reserve

Two tigresses have been reintroduced (March, 2009) in the Panna Tiger Reserve on account of local extinction of tigers in the said reserve. The reintroduced tigresses are being monitored by the local field staff using radio telemetry. Permission of the competent authority has been accorded for translocating four more tigers (2 males and 2 females) to the said reserve from the tiger reserves of the State.

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