

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



Fifty-seventh meeting of the Standing Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 14-18 July 2008

Interpretation and implementation of the Convention

Species trade and conservation

Asian big cats

REPORT OF THE SECRETARIAT

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.

Background

2. At its 14th meeting (CoP14, The Hague, 2007), the Conference of the Parties adopted the following Decisions:

Directed to Parties

- 14.65 *Asian big cat range States shall strengthen their efforts to implement Resolution Conf. 12.5 and, for tiger range States, report on progress at the 57th meeting of the Standing Committee, and subsequent meetings of the Standing Committee, and at the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP15), with a review for CoP15 identifying gaps and additional measures needed.*
- 14.66 *All Parties, especially those evaluating their domestic tiger trade control policies, shall take into consideration the view of the Parties as expressed in Resolution Conf. 12.5.*
- 14.67 *Asian big cat range States shall improve international cooperation in conservation and trade control through continual dialogue, and when convened, tiger range States are invited to participate in the tiger trade enforcement workshop and the conservation strategy workshop.*
- 14.68 *Parties are strongly encouraged to develop or improve implementation of regional enforcement networks.*
- 14.69 *Parties with intensive operations breeding tigers on a commercial scale shall implement measures to restrict the captive population to a level supportive only to conserving wild tigers; tigers should not be bred for trade in their parts and derivatives.*

Directed to the Secretariat

- 14.70 *Contingent upon availability of external funding, the Secretariat shall: convene a tiger trade enforcement meeting within 12 months of the end of CoP14; and cooperate in the development of a conservation strategy workshop, to be facilitated by IUCN – The World Conservation Union and the Global Tiger Forum (building on recent scientific*

work, including the 2006 Tiger Conservation Landscape Assessment) and other relevant organizations.

14.71 The CITES Secretariat, in consultation with Parties that have or seek to have specialized wildlife crime units, shall provide technical assistance and assist with the identification of additional opportunities for technical and financial support.

14.72 The CITES Tiger Enforcement Task Force shall, in conjunction with the CITES Enforcement Expert Group and in consultation with tiger range States, establish a mechanism to regularly monitor and evaluate the scale and nature of illegal trade in Asian big cats.

Decision 14.65

3. The Secretariat issued Notification to the Parties No. 2008/003 on 28 January 2008, reminding tiger range States of the need to submit reports for consideration at the present meeting. At the time of writing (late April 2008), five range States had submitted reports. These reports are attached as annexes to this document.

Decision 14.68

4. The Secretariat is conscious that most range States are members of either the ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network, or the South Asia Wildlife Trade Initiative that it is hoped will soon be formally established, or participate in the Mekong River sub-regional meetings. There exist, therefore, relevant fora in which many of the tiger range States can work together in a coordinated fashion.
5. The Russian Federation is currently not in any such enforcement or sub-regional network. The Secretariat is aware, however, that the Russian Federation and China have met to discuss cross-border enforcement matters and that the Russian Federation is usually represented at meetings of the Global Tiger Forum. There appears scope, however, for the Russian Federation to engage in, or be brought into, greater collaboration with other range States (and relevant consumer States) to combat illegal trade in Asian big cat species. The Secretariat suggests that organizers of relevant network or sub-regional events consider inviting the Russian Federation to participate as an observer.
6. Following comments by some non-governmental organizations and tiger conservationists questioning whether the tiger still exists in the wild in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Secretariat contacted the Government of that country. That Government advised that the tiger was still believed to be present and that, whilst no sightings had been made recently, pugmarks of tiger had been noted during surveys that had been conducted in the past few years. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea was adamant that it should continue to be regarded as a tiger range State. It is not a Party to the Convention but has designated a competent authority and scientific institution to the Secretariat. It is the Secretariat's intention to invite the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to participate in the workshops to be convened following CoP14.

Decision 14.70

7. In relation to the development of a conservation strategy workshop, the Secretariat has communicated on this subject with IUCN and the Global Tiger Forum and it has been agreed that these bodies should take the lead on this matter. The Secretariat will liaise with representatives of these bodies during the present meeting to discuss how this matter might best be taken forward.
8. In relation to a tiger trade enforcement workshop, the Secretariat was unable to raise sufficient funds to enable this to be convened within 12 months of CoP14. However, it has now received pledges that should suffice. It has had discussions with a number of Parties and organizations as to the nature of such a workshop. It has also taken account of requests for technical assistance voiced by tiger range States during the 54th meeting of the Standing Committee (Geneva, 2006) and the observations made by several Parties and organizations that there seemed to be scope for improved intelligence-gathering, analysis and dissemination in the combating of illegal trade in tigers and other Asian big cats.

9. The Secretariat has determined, therefore, that a specialized training course focusing on intelligence issues appears to be the most appropriate way in which to implement the enforcement workshop called for by the Conference of the Parties. It is currently in discussions to identify a suitable Customs or police college at which such a course could be conducted. It has sought Interpol's assistance in this work. The intention is to invite each range State to nominate at least two persons to undertake such training (as required by Decision 14.67) and hopes that this can be arranged either in late 2008 or early 2009.

Decision 14.71

10. The Secretariat notes that this is part of its regular enforcement-related activities and it will happily respond to such requests for assistance. It reminds Parties that the CITES Tiger Enforcement Task Force, at its first meeting in 2001, prepared guidance for specialized wildlife law enforcement units and this was published in Annex 3 of Notification to the Parties No. 2001/047 of 9 July 2001. This Notification can be accessed via the CITES website.

Decision 14.72

11. The Secretariat believes it would not be cost-effective to convene a meeting of the CITES Tiger Enforcement Task Force solely to address this issue. However, it proposes that representatives of the Task Force participate, as previously, in the meeting of the CITES Enforcement Expert Group, which it is to convene. The issue to which Decision 14.72 relates falls readily within matters that the Group is tasked with addressing. The Secretariat is confident that sufficient funds will be donated to enable the Group to meet. It is currently working to identify a possible venue for the meeting and thinks it is likely that the Group will come together in the first half of 2009.

Decisions 14.66 and 14.69

12. The Secretariat has not commented on Decisions 14.66 or 14.69, which are matters for the Parties, but suggests that the Standing Committee consider how it wishes to monitor implementation of these.