

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

Species trade and conservation

GREAT APES

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.
2. In Resolution Conf. 13.4 (Rev. CoP16) on *Conservation of and trade in great apes*, the Conference of the Parties:

DIRECTS the Secretariat to: ...

- d) *report to the Standing Committee on the implementation of this Resolution at each of its regular meetings*

and

DIRECTS the Standing Committee to:

- a) *review the implementation of this Resolution at each of its regular meetings on the basis of the Secretariat's reports.*

...

Great Apes Summit

3. From 21 to 24 September 2013, the Secretariat attended a Great Apes Summit hosted by the Great Apes Survival Partnership (GRASP), the Jackson Hole Wildlife Film Festival and the Arcus Foundation in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, United States of America.
4. It was evident from discussions at that summit that the health of wild populations of great apes in Africa and Asia has been negatively affected by the combined effects of illegal trade in live animals, poaching for bushmeat, disease and habitat loss. Habitat loss and illegal domestic trade in bushmeat were singled out as the two most significant factors impacting on great ape populations. The Secretariat participated in a panel discussion on illegal trade in great apes at the summit, and highlighted the fact that although there is some illegal trade in great apes, data from official sources suggest that the illegal international trade in great ape specimens is currently limited. This point was confirmed by an intervention made by the World Customs Organization (WCO).
5. Discussions at the summit addressed the issues of the vulnerability of great apes to diseases and the challenges posed by diseases transmitted to great apes from humans and domestic livestock. An intervention made by the Uganda Wildlife Authority highlighted that enhanced sanitation programmes implemented among local communities in Uganda had positive results and that this, in turn, led to a decrease of diseases among great apes populations.
6. There was consensus at the summit that tourism could benefit some great ape populations. It was, for example, highlighted that tourism to see mountain gorillas contributed significantly to gorilla conservation

and benefited local communities. It was, however, emphasized that not all great ape habitats are suitable ecotourism destinations, and that appropriate sites should be carefully considered. The great ape tourism market can only accommodate a restricted number of tourists, and such tourism should be well regulated to ensure that it does not increase the pressures on great ape populations.

7. Discussions identified the lack of arrests and prosecution of offenders involved in illegal trade in great ape specimens in some countries as a persistent challenge. A number of presentations suggested that corruption remains a significant challenge to wildlife law enforcement. This fact was stated in the findings of the Secretariat's missions to gorilla range States, as reported in Annex 2 to document CoP16 Doc. 49.<sup>1</sup> Those Parties which have not yet done so are encouraged to take strong action against corruption, and the Secretariat would like to take this opportunity to remind Parties that Resolution Conf. 11.3 (Rev.CoP16) in paragraph c) recommends Parties that are not yet signatories to, or have not yet ratified, the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the United Nations Convention against Corruption consider doing so. The Secretariat would also like to remind Parties that the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime has developed several tools, manuals and publications aimed at combating corruption.<sup>2</sup>
8. The Secretariat wishes to express its sincere appreciation for the funding support provided by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, which enabled it to participate in the summit.

#### Implementation of Decision 16.67

9. At its 16th meeting (CoP16, Bangkok, 2013), the Conference of the Parties adopted Decision 16.67 on *Great apes (Hominidae spp.)*, as follows:

##### ***Directed to the Standing Committee***

*16.67 The Standing Committee, assisted by the Secretariat, and in consultation with interested Parties, GRASP, the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Animals Committee and other bodies as appropriate, review Resolution Conf. 13.4 (Rev. CoP16), with a view to establishing an illegal trade reporting mechanism, and present a summary of its consultations and its recommendations at the 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.*

10. Given the work that the Standing Committee Working Group on Special Reporting Requirements is already doing in accordance with its mandate under Decision 16.44, to identify how data on illegal trade might best be captured, the Standing Committee might wish to consider expanding the mandate of the Working Group to incorporate this aspect of Decision 16.67.
11. INTERPOL and WCO already gather information on illegal wildlife trade. Parties also include such information in their annual and biennial reports and it is further reflected in special reports requested on great apes, for example Annex 2 to document CoP16 Doc. 49. Any attempt to establish a mechanism for reporting on illegal international trade in great apes should, as appropriate, be carried out in close cooperation with INTERPOL and WCO, to ensure that such a mechanism does not duplicate, detract from or otherwise inadvertently impact negatively on the submission of data to existing databases. In addition, GRASP is currently pursuing the establishment of a database on illegal trade in great apes, in collaboration with the UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Centre. The Secretariat is concerned that the GRASP's illegal trade database initiative could also duplicate, detract from or otherwise inadvertently impact negatively on existing systems and conveyed this concern to the GRASP Executive Committee and the GRASP Secretariat. Any potential database or special reporting mechanism that focuses on the illegal trade in great apes should complement existing systems, and should not duplicate or function in isolation from it.
12. There are diverse pressures on great ape populations, as described in paragraph 4 of the present document. A number of these pressures present themselves at a national level and not necessarily at the international level. This could, to some extent, explain the lack of data at international level. Systems at the international level, such as those maintained by INTERPOL and WCO, have a limited ability to capture data on illegal domestic trade in great apes, and do not capture information on the other pressures affecting the species. As a result, there is a lack of information on the impact that illegal domestic trade in

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/cop/16/doc/E-CoP16-49-A2.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.unodc.org/documents/corruption/TRACK/11-83315\\_flyer\\_Final\\_cb.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/corruption/TRACK/11-83315_flyer_Final_cb.pdf)

great ape specimens has on the species themselves. Further to this, there is a lack of data on the impact of other pressures on great apes, which might be much greater than the impact of illegal trade. The Secretariat believes that the consideration of a possible new special reporting on illegal trade in great apes, as referred to in Decision 16.67, and the establishment of a database as envisaged by GRASP, should take into account the potential utility of compiling data on all pressures impacting on great ape populations, noting that such data might fall outside the scope of CITES, whose principal mandate is to regulate international trade in such specimens. A mechanism to collect and analyse information on these pressures could, however, greatly assist CITES Parties in their deliberations on matters relating to great apes, in particular the impact of the international illegal trade of this species. Such data is also crucial to ensure that responses are targeted at those pressures that could most significantly impact on the species. For this reason, the Standing Committee might also, should external funds be made available, consider requesting the Secretariat to commission a report on the status of great apes for its 67th meeting, i.e. immediately before the 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP17, South Africa, 2016). This report could be similar to the report on rhinoceroses from the African and Asian Rhino Specialist Groups of the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Species Survival Commission and TRAFFIC, submitted in accordance with the provisions of Resolution Conf. 9.14 (Rev. CoP15) on *Conservation of and trade in African and Asian rhinoceroses*.

13. Sanctuaries can also be important sources of information on matters affecting great apes, whether habitat loss, disease, illegal trade or others. The role that they could play in providing relevant data could be further explored.

#### Illegal trade in great apes

14. On 10 October 2013, three Sumatran orangutans (*Pongo abelii*) that had been illegally imported into Malaysia from Indonesia, were returned to Indonesia. According to the Department of Wildlife and National Parks of Malaysia, the animals had been seized by Malaysian authorities in 2006, 2007 and 2009 after they were found to have been imported illegally.
15. In response to intelligence reports on chimpanzees and bonobos that were allegedly traded illegally, the Secretariat has been working closely with relevant Parties and INTERPOL since late 2013 to support investigations. At the time of writing of the present document, investigations were still ongoing. The Secretariat will continue to provide technical assistance and support, within its mandate and available resources.
16. Data available from official sources for the period since CoP16 continue to suggest that there is very little illegal international trade in great ape specimens.

#### Illegal trade in bushmeat

17. Illegal trade in bushmeat, in particular identification of the species concerned, poses a significant enforcement challenge, and research to improve methods for species-specific identification of bushmeat is urgently needed. Information suggests that illegal domestic trade in bushmeat in some great ape range States could be impacting negatively on certain populations of great ape species. The Secretariat takes this opportunity to encourage Parties to be vigilant in their implementation of the provisions of Resolution Conf. 13.11 on *Bushmeat*.

#### GRASP

18. GRASP, in collaboration with the Republic of Congo, hosted the first GRASP Regional Meeting for great ape range States in Central Africa on 25 and 26 May 2013 in Brazzaville, Republic of Congo. Delegates from all seven Central African States attended the meeting. The key topics discussed included transboundary collaboration, economic incentives, such as Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation and the illegal trade in great apes. A GRASP Regional Meeting for great ape range States in East Africa is planned to be held in the second half of 2014.
19. The Secretariat participated in the 8th GRASP Executive Committee Meeting in Cambridge, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, on 8 and 9 August 2013. As a GRASP Executive Committee member, it also regularly participated in GRASP Executive Committee teleconference calls during the reporting period. Among other activities, the Global Strategy for the Survival of Great Apes and Their Habitat, the GRASP Priority Plan and the GRASP Secretariat work plan for the period 2013- 2016 were discussed.

20. GRASP, in collaboration with i-Site.com and key partners, launched the apeAPP mobile phone application at the Mobile East Africa 2014 conference, on 12 February 2014, in Nairobi.<sup>3</sup> The apeAPP links the general public directly to GRASP partner projects in the field, including those working to conserve great apes and their habitat.

#### Final remarks

21. There are significant and diverse pressures on great apes, such as habitat loss and fragmentation, poaching for bushmeat, illegal trade in live animals and diseases. To combat these pressures, continued law-enforcement capacity building, adequate legislation and reliable data for intelligence-led enforcement are essential. However, enforcement alone is not enough. An integrated approach, combined with benefits for local communities and strong political commitment to conservation, supported by appropriate funding and resources will be required to effectively address the variety of pressures affecting great apes. It is crucial is that activities should be targeted and directed to those pressures that could most significantly impact on great ape populations.

#### Recommendations

22. The Secretariat recommends that the Standing Committee:
- a) invite all Parties, in particular great ape range States, to review their implementation of Resolution Conf. 13.11 on *Bushmeat*;
  - b) encourage Parties and organizations with relevant expertise to conduct research to improve methods for species-specific identification of bushmeat;
  - c) extend the mandate of its Working Group on Special Reporting Requirements to consider the possible establishment of an illegal trade reporting mechanism for reporting illegal trade in great apes, as directed in Decision 16.67; and
  - d) consider requesting the Secretariat, subject to external funding, to commission a report on the status of great apes for its 67th meeting, as suggested in paragraph 12 of the present document.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/grasp-ape-app/id811612958?mt=8>