

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



Sixty-ninth meeting of the Standing Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 27 November - 1 December 2017

Species specific matters

CHEETAHS (*ACINONYX JUBATUS*):
REPORT OF THE SECRETARIAT

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.

Background

2. At its 17th meeting (CoP17, Johannesburg, 2016), the Conference of the Parties adopted Decisions 17.124 to 17.130 on *Illegal trade in cheetahs* (*Acinonyx jubatus*), as follows:

Directed to the Secretariat

- 17.124 *The Secretariat shall, subject to external funding, and in consultation with relevant experts, commission the development of a CITES cheetah trade resource kit that compiles relevant information and tools to assist in implementing the Convention with regard to trade in cheetahs, and addresses inter alia: identification of live cheetahs and parts and derivatives thereof; advice on procedures to be followed in case of seizures including handling, DNA sampling, guidance on the immediate and long-term disposal of live animals (e.g. decision trees based on relevant CITES Resolutions, veterinary care, contact details of experts or potential rescue centres, advice on procedures, reporting on disposal activities); and lists of suitable housing facilities for long-term placement of live cheetahs; and other relevant materials.*
- 17.125 *The Secretariat shall submit a draft CITES cheetah trade resource kit, together with recommendations on the languages in which it should be made available, and the formats in which it should be made available (e.g. hard copy, smart phone application, web-based), to the Standing Committee at its 69th or 70th meeting for its consideration. The Secretariat shall, subject to external funding, make the final version of the kit available in the languages and formats agreed by the Standing Committee, and subject to available resources, revise it as may be necessary to ensure that it remains accurate, up to date and reflecting best practice.*
- 17.126 *The Secretariat, subject to available resources, is invited to assess the feasibility of creating a forum on the CITES website for Parties, experts, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders to exchange and share information on cheetahs.*
- 17.127 *The Secretariat shall report to the Standing Committee on progress on all of the recommendations in Standing Committee document SC66 Doc. 32.5, paragraphs 17 and 18, and progress in halting illegal trade in cheetahs.*
- 17.128 *The Secretariat shall keep the Standing Committee informed about its actions to implement Decisions 17.124 - 127 and report on their implementation and its efforts to halt illegal trade in cheetahs at the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.*

Directed to the Standing Committee

17.129 *The Standing Committee shall review the draft CITES cheetah trade resource kit produced in compliance with Decision 17.125 at its 69th or 70th meeting, and formulate comments and recommendations to the Secretariat for its finalization and dissemination.*

Directed to Parties and donors

17.130 *Parties and potential donors are encouraged to provide funding support to the Secretariat for the implementation of the Decisions regarding illegal trade in cheetahs (Decisions 17.124 - 130), where needed.*

Implementation of Decisions 17.124, 17.125 and 17.128: Development of a CITES cheetah trade resource kit

3. At the time of writing (September 2017), the Secretariat had not received external funding for the implementation of Decision 17.124. The Secretariat is however in discussion with the Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Cat Specialist Group, and the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) to explore potential opportunities for developing such a toolkit. The Secretariat will continue these discussions and it will present orally any updates at the present meeting.
4. At its 68th meeting (SC68, Johannesburg, October 2016), the Standing Committee agreed on the leads for a number of issues, and Kuwait and Niger were identified as the leads for the topic of cheetahs. The Standing Committee further agreed that any interested Party or Observer could reach out to each lead at any time to express their interest in participating in this working group should one be formed during the 69th meeting of the Standing Committee.
5. In anticipation of the availability of a draft CITES cheetah trade resource kit, the Secretariat encourages the Standing Committee to establish an intersessional working group on cheetahs at the present meeting.
6. The Secretariat proposes that the Standing Committee consider the following terms of reference for an intersessional working group on cheetahs should a draft CITES cheetah trade resource kit and the recommendations of the Secretariat, provided in accordance with Decision 17.125, become available prior to SC70:

In support of the implementation of Decision 17.129, the intersessional working group on cheetahs shall:

- a) review the draft CITES cheetah trade resource kit and the recommendations of the Secretariat as outlined in Decision 17.125; and
- b) formulate comments and recommendations on the finalization and dissemination of the CITES cheetah trade resource kit for consideration by the Standing Committee at its 70th meeting.

Implementation of Decisions 17.126 and 17.128: Forum to exchange and share information on the CITES website

7. To implement Decision 17.126, the Secretariat was, at the time of writing, developing a web page on cheetahs on the CITES website¹. This web page will, among other things, contain a section that should serve as a forum for exchanging and sharing information on cheetahs. Parties, experts, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders who would like to share information on the web page, will be able to provide such information to the Secretariat for publication on the web page, as appropriate.
8. The Secretariat is also developing a web page on enforcement². The enforcement web page will include, among other things, guidance on the submission of enforcement-related information by the public and non-governmental organizations to the Secretariat. Parties and other stakeholders are also reminded of the directory of enforcement focal points available on the CITES website.³

¹ https://www.cites.org/eng/prog/terrestrial_fauna/cheetahs

² <https://cites.org/eng/prog/imp/enf/introduction>

³ https://www.cites.org/eng/resources/enforcement_focal_points

Implementation of Decisions 17.127 and 17.128: Implementation of recommendations adopted at SC66 and progress to halt illegal trade in cheetahs

9. The recommendations on cheetahs (*Acinonyx jubatus*) that were adopted by the Standing Committee at its 66th meeting (SC66, Geneva, January 2016) are presented in the Annex to the present document.
10. The Secretariat issued Notification to the Parties No. 2017/039⁴ of 15 May 2017, inviting Parties to submit information on their implementation of recommendations a), b), d) and e) adopted by the Standing Committee at SC66, as well as on any other measures that they might have implemented to halt illegal trade in cheetahs.
11. In response to the Notification, one reply was received. The Management Authority of Yemen requested support from the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC) to provide capacity building workshops at national level for enforcement officers at the border; a workshop for high level governmental officials to raise awareness on illegal wildlife trade; and to develop awareness campaigns for enforcement personnel working at the border and for school students. The Secretariat and its ICWC partners will further explore the feasibility to support the request from Yemen, notably by organizing a regional workshop to address the illegal trade in cheetahs, and will liaise directly with Yemen on this matter.
12. To implement recommendation c) adopted at SC66, the Secretariat reached out to the World Customs Organization (WCO) that has agreed to establish a closed user group on the WCO CENComm platform for relevant national competent authorities to facilitate the exchange of information on illegal trade in cheetah specimens. As soon as the closed user group platform has been developed by WCO, the Secretariat will issue a Notification to the Parties, inviting relevant national competent authorities to register as users of the closed user group.
13. Protecting big cats is the theme for next year's UN World Wildlife Day⁵ on 3 March 2018. This event will present a unique opportunity to raise awareness of the importance of cheetah conservation, illegal trade and threats to their survival in the wild, in line with recommendation a) adopted at SC66. The Secretariat encourages Parties, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations to take the opportunity of World Wildlife Day 2018 to initiate public awareness campaigns to promote the conservation of cheetahs, and reduce illegal offer of, and demand for illegally traded cheetahs.
14. In relation to the above, and to Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev. CoP17)⁶, paragraph 2, the Standing Committee may wish to note that the last population of cheetahs in Asia survives in central Iran (Islamic Republic of). In view of its size (estimated in 2007 at 60-100 animals, but less than 50 now), the population is highly vulnerable to any illegal hunting pressure. The population has been the subject of dedicated conservation actions over the last two decades, but a recent assessment of these efforts in summer 2017 by the IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group suggests that the Asiatic cheetah is now facing extinction, in part because of dwindling resources and support. To prevent this unique population going extinct, IUCN is proposing to conduct a campaign, including an international conference, aimed at Iranian and international conservation bodies, and at generating funding to implement an emergency recovery programme in collaboration with, among others, the Department of Environment of the Islamic Republic of Iran.
15. In considering how best to implement various tasks adopted at CoP17 related to cheetahs and other African carnivores, the CITES and CMS Secretariats, with inputs from IUCN, developed a Joint CMS-CITES African Carnivores Initiative, focusing on cheetahs (*Acinonyx jubatus*), African wild dogs (*Lycaon pictus*), African lions (*Panthera leo*) and leopards (*Panthera pardus*). The four species face similar threats on the African continent (habitat loss and fragmentation; conflict with humans and humans invading habitat; depletion of the prey base; and unsustainable or illegal trade practices), and both CITES and CMS adopted Resolutions and Decisions that address various aspects of conservation and trade, and call for measures that are often quite similar for each of the four species. The Secretariats of CITES and CMS will use the Initiative to bring more coherence to the implementation of these measures. A description of the Initiative can be found in the Annex to document AC29 Doc. 29⁷.

⁴ <https://cites.org/sites/default/files/notif/E-Notif-2017-039.pdf>

⁵ https://cites.org/eng/protecting_big_cats_is_the_call_of_World_Wildlife_Day_2018

⁶ <https://cites.org/sites/default/files/document/E-Res-12-05-R17.pdf>

⁷ <https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/com/ac/29/E-AC29-29.pdf>

Recommendations

16. The Secretariat recommends the Standing Committee to:

- a) establish an intersessional working group on cheetahs with the terms of reference proposed in paragraph 6 above;
- b) encourage all Parties, in particular cheetah range States and Parties affected by the illegal trade in cheetahs, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations, to use World Wildlife Day 2018 to initiate public awareness campaigns to promote the conservation of cheetahs, and reduce illegal offer of, and demand for illegally traded cheetahs.

**Recommendations a) to e) on Cheetahs (*Acinonyx jubatus*)
adopted at the 66th meeting of the Standing Committee**

Regarding public awareness and education

- a) *Cheetah range States and Parties implicated in the illegal trade in cheetahs are encouraged to urgently develop and launch national public awareness campaigns to reduce illegal offer of, and demand for illegally traded cheetahs, using the communication tools and approaches most effective for their communities and by, inter alia: publicizing law enforcement outcomes; explaining the conservation impacts of the illegal trade; mobilizing social media; using key occasions (e.g. World Wildlife Day) and engaging key influencers; and establishing partnerships with NGOs as appropriate.*

Regarding enforcement

- b) *Range states of cheetahs and countries involved in the illegal trade chain are encouraged to:*
- i) *Further strengthen national and regional enforcement actions concerning the illegal trade in cheetahs involving all relevant enforcement agencies, and take them into account when developing work programmes and undertaking law enforcement operations;*
 - ii) *Make use of existing systems for exchange of information provided by INTERPOL and the World Customs Organization, or as appropriate, establish mechanisms to ensure regular, timely and effective communication between these countries regarding illegal trade in cheetahs;*
 - iii) *As soon as appropriate bring information on poaching and illegal trade in cheetahs, including parts and derivatives, to the attention of relevant authorities in source, transit and destination countries for appropriate enforcement actions and follow-up;*
 - iv) *Request support from ICCWC partners and subject to available funding, conduct joint operations between East Africa and the Middle East, targeting known or suspected smuggling routes; and*
 - v) *Also request that ICCWC and other relevant partners encourage and support Parties in their enforcement operations targeting illegal trade in cheetah specimens conducted via e-commerce.*

Regarding cooperation and information exchange

- c) *The Secretariat, subject to available resources and in cooperation with the World Customs Organization, is invited to explore the establishment of a closed cheetah user group for relevant national competent authorities in order to facilitate the exchange of non-nominal information on **illegal trade in cheetah specimens**.*

Regarding disposal of confiscated live cheetahs

- d) *Range, transit and destination countries involved in the illegal trade in live cheetahs are encouraged to collaborate on the humane disposal of confiscated live cheetahs through the use of existing and, where required and as appropriate, the establishment of national or regional rescue centres, paying particular attention to maximizing the contribution of the specimens to conservation of the species in the wild; and*
- e) *Parties are requested to inform the Secretariat of facilities available for the disposal of confiscated live cheetahs to be published in the CITES cheetah toolkit and on the website.*