



KEY CONCERNS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: SC70 DOC. 51: ASIAN BIG CATS

A comprehensive review of implementation of Resolution Conf. 12.5 (rev. CoP17) was conducted in 2014 and made available in Annex 1 to SC65 Doc 38. The present review in Annex 4 to SC70 Doc. 51 (hereafter referred to as “Annex 4”), and the executive summary made available in Annex 3 to SC70 Doc. 51 (hereafter referred to as “Annex 3”). builds on the key findings and recommendations of the 2014 review and presents a detailed analysis of the Asian big cat trade.

Considerable resources have been spent in undertaking the reviews in both 2014 and 2018, and these initiatives have resulted in a wealth of information highlighting the key gaps in implementation of Resolution Conf. 12.5. **The Secretariat’s recommendations in SC70 Doc. 51 simply encourage Parties to note the information from the review; however as per Decision 17.227, the Standing Committee is required to determine whether time-bound, country-specific recommendations are required.** Further, the Annexes to SC70 Doc 51 were published late, providing insufficient time for Parties to review the important information in these documents.

In particular, the review has identified a serious concern that China, Laos, Myanmar and South Africa allow legal domestic trade in Asian big cats and their parts and products for commercial purposes. China has issued permits allowing legal internal trade in Asian big cat specimens, including wild-caught non-native specimens of Asian big cats; Laos has issued permits for both internal and international trade; and in most provinces in South Africa tigers are treated as an “exotic” species, for which trade is either not regulated at all or is allowed either with or without permits. South Africa has also reported exports of tiger skins for commercial purposes. **We recommend that SC70 request China, Laos, Myanmar and South Africa to adopt urgent measures to prohibit such trade in accordance with Resolution Conf. 12.5 and Decision 14.69. If sufficient progress has not been made, SC71 should consider appropriate measures in accordance with Resolution Conf. 14.3.**

We support the Secretariat’s intention to conduct missions to China, Czech Republic, Laos, Thailand, South Africa, United States of America and Vietnam, and urge these Parties to welcome the missions which should include relevant experts. **We request SC70 to direct the Secretariat to complete the missions on an urgent basis and to publish a draft report by January 2019 (including time-bound country-specific recommendations),** seeking comments on the draft report from Parties and other experts by the end of February 2019.

Poaching and trade continue to pose a serious threat to Asian big cats. Fewer than 4,000 tigers remain in the wild, yet between 2000 and August 2018, 1,912 tigers were seized.* During the same period, 5,042 leopards; 292 snow leopards and 95 clouded leopards were seized.* Set out below are recommendations for SC70 to address concerns reflected in SC70 Doc. 51 and Annexes 2, 3 & 4, particularly in relation to the ten focal countries identified for the review - China, India, Indonesia, Lao People’s Democratic Republic (Laos), Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Thailand, the United States of America and Vietnam. **We recommend that SC70 consider proposing the recommendations below as draft CoP Decisions for adoption at CoP18, in addition to recommending that relevant Parties report to CoP18 on progress made in addressing the concerns highlighted in SC70 Doc. 51 including Annexes.**

* Seized whole carcasses or live Asian big cats only.

	KEY FINDINGS AND CONCERNS UNDER SC70 DOC. 51	RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SC70
Asian big cats in captivity		
1.	<p>China, Czech Republic, Laos, Thailand, South Africa, United States of America and Vietnam are identified as Parties in which there are facilities of concern with regard to legal and illegal trade in Asian big cats (SC70 Doc. 51, para 12). There is increasing evidence that captive tiger specimens are entering illegal trade. For example, there has been a sharp rise in seizures of parts suspected to be from captive tigers.</p> <p>Lessons learned from Vietnam’s bear farm phase-out include prohibiting private possession of bears and relocating the animals to approved shelters. Laos has committed to establish a Committee on Tiger Farms to provide advice for phasing out its tiger farms.</p>	<p>Urge the seven Parties of concern to adopt measures to prevent further breeding and amend regulations to prohibit private possession and breeding of Asian big cats, with exemptions only for specimens that are part of an IUCN-recognised scientific studbook programme for conservation breeding.</p> <p>Urge Laos to ensure that experts with practical experience in the not-for-profit, non-commercial, hands-off sanctuary management of rescued big cats are part of the Committee.</p>
2.	<p>Of the seven Parties of concern identified in SC70 Doc. 51 (China, Czech Republic, Laos, Thailand, South Africa, United States of America and Vietnam), only Thailand is known to have taken recent enforcement action against captive tiger facilities implicated in trade in specimens from captive tigers, although this enforcement action has yet to result in any prosecutions. (Annex 4, pg. 75; Annex 3).</p>	<p>Request the seven Parties of concern to strengthen enforcement resulting in prosecution of offenders, and to demonstrate compliance with URGES (b), (g) and (h) of Res. Conf. 12.5 (Rev CoP17), by reporting on law enforcement action against facilities engaged in illegal internal and international commercial trade in captive Asian big cat specimens as per the format outlined in the CITES Annual Illegal Trade Report.</p>
3.	<p>In addition to the facilities noted in SC70 Doc. 51 Annex 2, research indicates that there are numerous illegal facilities in Nghe An Province of Vietnam where tigers are kept in “backyard” facilities¹ awaiting slaughter for the trade. Despite multiple exposés, Vietnamese authorities have yet to take commensurate enforcement action against such facilities. Their continued existence demonstrates that facilities with a small number (less than 49) of captive tigers also play an important role in tiger trafficking.</p>	<p>Urge Vietnam to conduct intelligence-led investigations into captive tiger facilities and illegal trade, particularly in Nghe An Province.</p> <p>Urge all Parties to be vigilant regarding risk of illegal facilities and trade from facilities that have less than 49 tigers. Ensure stringent inspection of all facilities that hold captive Asian big cats.</p>

¹[https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/2018/07/wildlife-watch-news-captive-tiger-farms-trafficking-investigation-Viet Nam-laos/](https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/2018/07/wildlife-watch-news-captive-tiger-farms-trafficking-investigation-Viet-Nam-laos/)

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Legislation and regulatory measures		
4.	<p>China, Laos, Myanmar and South Africa²allow domestic legal trade in Asian big cats and their parts and products for commercial purposes (<u>Annex 4, pg. 48; Annex 3</u>). Further, China and Laos have issued permits allowing some entities to engage in internal trade in Asian big cat specimens, and in the case of Laos, international trade. (<u>Annex 4, pgs 49-56; 58-60; Annex 3</u>).</p> <p>Leopards are the most heavily poached and trafficked Asian big cat and are the only large felid to have deteriorated significantly in conservation status in recent years (<u>Annex 4, pg.24; Annex 3</u>). In 2018, China issued a permit to a pharmaceutical company for the sale of 1,230.5kg of leopard bone (<u>Annex 4, pg 55</u>). Research indicates that such permits are being issued without requiring the company to establish legal origin of the stock.³ Given the high volume of leopards poached and trafficked from India and Nepal destined for China, the leopard bone sold in China is likely sourced from non-native wild-caught leopards.</p>	<p>Request China, Laos, Myanmar and South Africa to amend relevant national laws and regulations to prohibit internal and international commercial trade in all Asian big cat parts and products, including from captive specimens, as a matter of urgency (see recommendations above).</p> <p>Support Recommendation (d) proposed by the CITES Secretariat in its report and to request the eight identified countries (Afghanistan, Cambodia, China, India, Laos, Myanmar, Nepal and Vietnam) to report on progress made in tackling leopard trade (both for CoP18 and SC73).</p>
5.	<p>Parties such as Indonesia, Laos, South Africa⁴ and Thailand do not have in place appropriate national legislation to protect non-native big cat species. (<u>Annex 4, pg. 42</u>).</p>	<p>Request all CITES Parties, particularly Asian big cat range states such as Indonesia, Laos and Thailand and countries of concern for commercial breeding of Asian big cats such as South Africa, to amend relevant national laws and regulations to afford non-native big cat species the same level of protection as native big cats, including through CITES trade restrictions.</p>
6.	<p>Very few Parties (Myanmar, Peninsular Malaysia and the US) have incorporated the definition of “readily recognizable” from Resolution Conf. 9.6 into their legislative and regulatory measures (<u>Annex 4, pg. 40; Annex 3</u>). This is particularly critical in light of the escalating volume and diversity of products that through marketing or labelling claim to be made from Asian big cat bones, which is prohibitively expensive to prove forensically.</p>	<p>Request all CITES Parties to enact legislation incorporating the definition of “readily recognizable” from Resolution Conf. 9.6 into applicable legislation.</p>

² Williams, V.L., Newton, D.J., Loveridge, A.J. and Macdonald, D.W. (2015). Bones of Contention: An Assessment of the South African Trade in African Lion Panthera leo Bones and Other Body Parts. TRAFFIC, Cambridge, UK & WildCRU, Oxford, UK

³ Chengdu Business Times. 2018. 数学教师向药酒企业售豹骨1.23吨来源成谜. Available from: https://news.sina.cn/sh/2018-06-27/detail-ihencxtu8920548.d.html?wm=3049_0015

⁴ Williams, VL et al. 2015. Bones of Contention

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National law enforcement		
7.	<p>An increase in organised Asian big cat poaching has been documented in recent years. Asian big cat poaching is largely driven by illegal international trade which may be escalating (<u>Annex 4, pg 70-74, 116; Annex 3</u>). Most focal Parties prosecuted Asian big cat cases in 2015-2017 except for Laos and Myanmar (<u>Annex 4, pg. 6; Annex 3</u>).</p> <p>Two parallel supply routes for illegal tiger trade are identified: a trans-Himalayan route (encompassing India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and China) for wild and a Southeast Asian route (encompassing Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam and China) for captive as well as wild, with the primary destinations China and, to a lesser extent, Vietnam. Other Asian big cats are trafficked through these routes. Tiger populations in Russia's Far East face substantial trade-driven poaching pressure. (<u>Annex 4, pg. 19, Annex 3</u>).</p> <p>Online trade in Asian big cat parts and derivatives is prolific, particularly on social media platforms such as WeChat, Zalo and Facebook, frequently conducted by Vietnamese and Chinese traders. (<u>Annex 4, pgs. 92-93, 117; Annex 3</u>)</p>	<p>Request all Parties implicated in illegal Asian big cat trade, particularly China and Vietnam, to strengthen enforcement efforts to dismantle major criminal networks trafficking in Asian big cats, and to regularly report on progress made in tackling illegal Asian big cat trade, including outcomes of cases, in the Annual Illegal Trade report.</p> <p>Urge China to strengthen enforcement efforts to address the trans-Himalayan trade operating out of persistent trade hubs, including by deploying specialist investigators to infiltrate the networks operating in this region and by exchanging intelligence with India and Nepal.</p> <p>Encourage China, India, Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh to invite the UNODC to establish Border Liaison Offices.</p> <p>Urge China and Hong Kong's Financial Intelligence Units to investigate the role of Chinese businesses and individuals engaged in Asian big cat trade in China and neighbouring Parties.</p> <p>Urge Parties to establish a dedicated team of specialised investigators by SC71, to collate information from the online and social media profiles (WeChat, Zalo, Facebook, QQ, Tieba etc.) of known and suspected Asian big cat traders.</p>
8.	<p>While possession is criminalised in almost all focal Parties (with the exception of China), there is limited enforcement action against consumers, which could serve as an important deterrent and reduce demand for big cat products. (<u>Annex 4, pg. 6, 8, 22, 43; Annex 3</u>)</p>	<p>Urge China to amend laws to criminalise possession as a matter of urgency. Request all Parties, particularly China and Vietnam which have been identified as the main consumer countries for Asian big cat trade, to strengthen investigation and prosecution and to publicise cases to act as a deterrent to others.</p>

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9.	<p>India and Thailand have developed tiger identification databases and India's database includes stripe pattern profiles of tigers in India, Nepal, Bangladesh (Annex 4, pg. 80; Annex 3). Nepal has shared photographs of seized tiger skins with India which has resulted in positive identification of origin and supported investigations.⁵ Despite making seizures of tiger skins which are likely derived from wild tigers in South Asia, China has not to date shared images of those skins with India.</p> <p>Similar databases are under development for snow leopards with AI technology that could be applied to any big cat species that has unique spot / stripe patterns.</p>	<p>Request all Parties making seizures of tiger skins to share images of those skins, with India and Thailand, and/or INTERPOL by SC71.</p> <p>Urge Parties to engage with the Snow Leopard Trust⁶ regarding the status of development of the snow leopard database and the scope for application to other big cat species.</p>
10	<p>Border towns in Laos and Myanmar continue to serve as hotspots for wildlife trade particularly catering to Chinese buyers, emphasising the need for cross-border co-operation with China (Annex 4, pgs. 6-7, 23, 77-78; Annex 3).</p>	<p>Encourage China, Laos and Myanmar to strengthen co-operation, including through joint enforcement operations, to stop illegal wildlife trade at border towns in Laos and Myanmar.</p> <p>Encourage China to enhance inspections at borders with Laos and Myanmar of passengers (air and road), vehicles and mail potentially carrying Asian big cat parts and derivatives from "wildlife trade tourism" hotspots.</p>
Demand reduction, education and awareness		
11	<p>China, and to a lesser extent, Vietnam, emerge from this review as the "primary destinations for international illegal big cat trade". Uses for Asian big cat specimens include: live (for exotic pets and captive facilities); skins and skin pieces (for household décor and fur trim for clothing and accessories); bone (for medicinal or health products, wines and "bone glue" (Vietnam)); claws, teeth and skulls (curios and talismans); meat, gallbladders and other organs (for consumption); and whiskers (talismans).(Annex 4, pgs19, 90-101, 123; Annex 3).</p>	<p>Request China and Vietnam to work with consumer behaviour change experts to conduct targeted behaviour change initiatives with metrics to assess efficacy, along with appropriate legislative and regulatory measures, to deter consumers from purchasing any big cat products. This should include high level political declarations of zero tolerance for the use of big cat parts and derivatives, including from captive bred specimens.</p>

⁵<https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/cop/17/WorkingDocs/E-CoP17-60-02.pdf>

⁶<https://news.microsoft.com/transform/snow-leopard-selfies-ai-save-species/>

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12	Continued availability of big cat products through channels which appear to consumers to be legal, including tiger farms and unpoliced “wildlife trade tourism” markets in Laos and Myanmar, is counteracting demand reduction messaging. (Annex 4, pg. 7; Annex 3).	Request Laos and Myanmar to implement awareness raising campaigns in appropriate languages in key border towns and border crossings to deter Asian big cat trade. Urge China and Vietnam to work through their foreign missions and with NGOs, media, and private entities, including tour operators and airlines, to increase awareness among Chinese and Vietnamese nationals visiting and residing in Asian big cat source and transit Parties (and source Parties for other big cats), reminding them not to purchase big cat parts and derivatives.
3.	A recent USAID survey of 1,800 people in six cities in China found that most purchasers of tiger products obtained them from traditional pharmacies or retail shops. (Annex 4, pg. 94; Annex 3).	Request China to take appropriate measures to ensure that medical practitioners, pharmaceutical companies and retail outlets are not trading in Asian big cat parts and products, including by requiring such businesses to display signs that it is a criminal offence to buy Asian big cat products and to prosecute traders and consumers who are selling/buying such products. Encourage China, Vietnam and the private sector, with the assistance of NGOs, to establish a coalition of medicinal practitioners, hospitals, pharmaceutical companies and retail outlets committed to eradicating the use of Asian big cat parts, including from captive specimens. ⁷
14	Evidence is growing that Asian demand is also being supplied by big cats outside the region: African leopards and lions, and jaguar from Latin America (Annex 4, pgs. 4, 26, 117; Annex 3). The use of other big cats not only poses a threat to these species but also continues to grow demand for tiger products.	Request all Parties, particularly South Africa, to adopt a zero-export quota for lion parts and products for commercial purposes, including from captive sources, and for all import Parties to adopt a highly precautionary approach to imports of all big cat parts and products from any source. Urge China and Vietnam to take measures to raise awareness among Chinese and Vietnamese companies operating in Latin America and Africa to reduce illegal trade, and work with enforcement in these countries to investigate and prosecute individuals engaging in illegal trade.

⁷This could be modelled along the lines of the United for Wildlife Transport Taskforce and the World Travel and Tourism Council’s Buenos Aires Declaration.