

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



Sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties
Bangkok (Thailand), 3-14 March 2013

Compliance and enforcement

(Enforcement matters)

ILLEGAL TRADE IN CHEETAHS

1. This document has been submitted by Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda*.
2. The attention of the 16th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties is hereby drawn to the illegal trade in cheetahs (*Acinonyx jubatus*) which is a cause of increasing concern for the species' conservation in the wild (e.g. EWCA 2012, IUCN/SSC 2007a, 2007b, in prep., Kotze *et al.* 2008, Lindsey *et al.* 2009, Ogada 2011).

Background

3. The cheetah has experienced major reductions in its geographic range over the last century and the resident populations of East Africa are known to persist in just 6% of their estimated historical range (IUCN/SSC 2007a), 21% in southern Africa (IUCN/SSC 2007b) and 9% in North, West and Central Africa (IUCN/SSC in prep.).
4. Cheetahs range more widely, and therefore require larger areas, than almost any other terrestrial carnivore species in the world (Durant *et al.* 2010). Their vast area requirements mean that their population densities are naturally low and the removal of a few individuals can have a significant and detrimental impact on a local population.
5. The cheetah has been listed on Appendix I of CITES since 1975 and is listed as Vulnerable on The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (Durant *et al.* 2008) with two Critically Endangered subspecies – *A. j. venaticus* in Asia (Jowkar *et al.* 2008) and *A. J. hecki* in north-west Africa (Belbachir 2008).
6. Since the 8th Conference of the Parties held in 1992, Namibia, Zimbabwe and Botswana have been approved export quotas of 150, 50 and 5 cheetahs, respectively (via an annotation to its Appendix I listing).
7. The 12th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties in 2002 approved the registration of two commercial cheetah captive breeding operations in South Africa (CoP12 Comm. I Rep. 7, in accordance with Resolution Conf 12.10 (Rev CoP15)).

The illegal trade in cheetahs

8. The Coalition Against Wildlife Trafficking publishes figures on its website, with a link to a spreadsheet of background data, showing that in 2011, 27 cases involving illegal trafficking of 70 cheetahs were reported to the

* *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.*

Cheetah Conservation Fund (CAWT 2012). Instances of illegal trading in cheetahs are reported on websites of government institutions (e.g. UK Border Agency 2012), and by newspapers (e.g. The Addis Fortune 2011, The Jordan Times 2010, The National 2010), and environmental organisations (e.g. Born Free Foundation 2012, Wildlife Extra 2011).

9. The majority of unofficially reported cases of cheetah trafficking relate to cubs, and a high percentage of the cheetahs allegedly die either during transit or shortly after confiscation (CAWT 2012, Ogada 2011).
10. The CITES Trade Database records only 20 'live' cheetahs as 'confiscations / seizures' during 2009 and 2010.
11. The Middle East is reported to be an important destination for traded cheetahs (EWCA 2012, IUCN/SSC 2007a) stemming from the practice of keeping them as pets and of using them for sport hunting (Arab News 2011, Gulf News 2011, Ogada 2011).
12. The Horn of Africa, and especially Somalia, has been reported for several years to represent a commonly used transit route for the illegal trafficking of cheetahs (e.g. Amir 2006, CAWT 2012). The illegal wildlife trade is believed to have contributed significantly to the current situation in which wild cheetahs are very rare in the region and their continued existence there is thought to be threatened by the trade (IUCN/SSC 2007a, EWCA 2012).

Recommendation

13. The Proponent(s) would therefore like to recommend that the Conference of the Parties adopt the draft Decision contained in Annex I to this document

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ANNEX 1

DRAFT DECISION

16.XX

DIRECTED TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE:

The Standing Committee shall commission an independent study, in accordance with UN rules, of both the legal and illegal trade in wild cheetahs, and assess the impact of this trade on the species' conservation in the wild. The study will research the source of cheetah in illegal trade, transit routes of trafficked cheetahs, and will document the measures taken by Parties with regard to live confiscated specimens. All range States will be fully consulted as stakeholders, and the findings will be reported to the 65th meeting of the CITES Standing Committee.

DIRECTED TO THE PARTIES:

All relevant Parties are urged to assist those commissioned to undertake the above-mentioned study in any way possible including through the provision of necessary information about illegal and legal trade in cheetah.

Parties are further urged to provide reports concerning all detected illegal trade in cheetah specimens to the 65th meeting of the Standing Committee and relevant Law Enforcement Agencies including Interpol Wildlife Crime Unit.