



## **Panthera Recommendations for CITES COP19 Panama City, Panama November 14-25, 2022**

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### **About Panthera**

Panthera, founded in 2006, is devoted exclusively to preserving wild cats and their critical role in the world's ecosystems. Panthera's team of leading biologists, law enforcement experts, and wild cat advocates develop innovative strategies based on the best available science to protect cheetahs, jaguars, leopards, lions, pumas, snow leopards, tigers, and the 33 small cat species and their vast landscapes. In 39 countries around the world, Panthera works with a wide variety of stakeholders to reduce or eliminate the most pressing threats to wild cats—securing their future and ours.

### **Panthera at CITES COP19**

Panthera works with CITES Parties around the world as partners in wild cat conservation. We combine science, technology and law enforcement expertise to help develop collaborative, evidence-based approaches that benefit wild cats and people, so that both can thrive.

Poaching and the illegal wildlife trade threaten all of the big cats, which are sought after for their skins, teeth, claws, bones and organs for trinkets, luxury items, cultural use, and traditional medicines. Cheetahs and many of the small wild cats are trafficked live for the illegal pet trade, which thrives online and is notoriously hard to enforce. Commercial captive breeding of all the big cat species raises special concerns for its potential to contribute to illegal trade and drive demand, with impacts on wild populations as yet unknown.

At COP19, the Parties to CITES will consider seven big cat-specific matters and dozens of other documents and decisions that impact cats directly and indirectly.

Our recommendations are offered to assist with your decision-making and we are available for additional information and discussion.



## Recommendations and Comments on CITES CoP19 Working Documents

### 17.4 [Joint CITES-CMS African Carnivores Initiative](#)

#### **Recommendation: ADOPT DRAFT DECISIONS**

Panthera was pleased to participate in the first range State meeting of the Joint CITES-CMS African Carnivores Initiative and to contribute to the programme of work. Recognizing its ambitious vision and emerging opportunities under the joint framework to fund and implement its extensive slate of activities, Panthera recommends that the COP clear a path for progress by supporting the changes to the existing decisions and adopting the new draft decisions.

#### **Interpretation and Implementation Matters**

### 51. [Quotas for Leopard \(\*Panthera pardus\*\) Hunting Trophies](#)

#### **Recommendation: OPPOSE AS WRITTEN**

As an organization that has extensively studied and monitored leopards for more than 15 years in Southern Africa, Panthera believes that Resolution Conf. 10.14, Rev. CoP 16 is no longer fit for purpose, especially given that its underlying data is now 30 years old. Recent, large-scale camera trap studies in numerous countries in Southern Africa have shown lower densities of leopards than had been previously estimated. For this reason, we recommend a regular review of quotas to ensure they are science-based and remain at levels that are non-detrimental to the species' survival in the wild. In the absence of robust population data (and particularly trend data) in most leopard range states, an adaptive management approach with robust monitoring is the best way to ensure that legal leopard hunting is sustainable. We recommend at a minimum amending the current Resolution to provide for reviews of quotas by the Animals Committee at regular intervals.

#### **Species Specific Matters**

### 59. [Illegal Trade in Cheetahs \(\*Acinonyx jubatus\*\)](#)

#### **Recommendation: ADOPT DRAFT DECISIONS**

Panthera appreciates Ethiopia's leadership in keeping the plight of wild cheetahs at the forefront at COP19. The illegal trade in cheetahs, well-documented in numerous recent studies, is now widely recognized as a major threat to the conservation of the species, which is at risk across the whole of Africa. Poaching of East Africa's wild cheetahs for the illegal pet trade is a continuing and cumulative concern for the species threatened with extinction, with urgent implications for the persistence of the local subspecies, *A.j. soemmeringii*.



Panthera supports the draft decisions, which direct the Parties affected by the illegal trade in cheetahs to scale up their activities to combat the trade from source to destination, including reviewing national legislation and accessing the purpose-built tools, resources and support available to them, which to date have been greatly underutilized.

We welcome CITES' renewed focus on cheetah trafficking with immediate actions for Parties to take while the Big Cats Task Force and African Carnivores Initiative gear up to complement those efforts with their explicit mandates to address the complex challenges inherent in the live cheetah trade.

#### **67. CITES Big Cats Task Force (Felidae spp.)**

**Recommendation: ADOPT DRAFT DECISIONS**

Panthera supports the establishment of a diverse and inclusive Big Cats Task Force and recommends adoption of the Revised Terms of Reference (TOR) and Modus Operandi.

We appreciate the TOR's focus on engaging the relevant experts within Parties to identify opportunities to address illegal trade and prioritize actions to address it. We recognize that this sharing of knowledge and lessons learned leads to the widest range of interventions against the illegal trade in big cats, and provides an important strategic complement to ongoing tactical coordination efforts on the ground.

Panthera has specialized expertise in combatting the illegal trade in big cats and is engaged in a wide range of counter-wildlife crime activities in hotspots around the world. Among its major initiatives, Panthera is developing a transnational Big Cat Information Network to collect and connect data on wild cat trade across six regions. In partnership with the United States Department of State and other institutions, we monitor global threat patterns and help law enforcement agencies to fill knowledge and capacity gaps to disrupt illegal trade.

We stand ready to contribute to the Big Cats Task Force as deemed appropriate by the Secretariat.

#### **68. Asian Big Cats (Felidae spp.)**

**Recommendation:**

**ADOPT** recommendations in CoP19 Doc. 68 para 28 (a) – (d)

**OPPOSE** the recommendations in CoP19 Doc. 68 para 28 (e)

**RENEW** Decisions 18.100, 18.101 and 18.105 with reporting requirements to SC77

Tiger Range Countries and tiger conservationists, including Panthera, marked an important milestone this year with the latest [IUCN Red List Assessment](#) finding that the global tiger population has stabilized and may be increasing. However, the report cautioned that poaching of tigers and their prey for illegal international trade is a primary threat to tigers and continues



at unsustainable rates. Leopards, snow leopards and clouded leopards get less public attention, but their parts and derivatives are also extensively traded. As noted in the [CITES Secretariat's report to SC74](#), the potential impact of this trade on wild populations is of concern.

Panthera notes with dismay the lackluster response from Asian Big Cat range States to Notification to the Parties No. 2020/039; only four of the 13 tiger range states responded. This lack of reporting undermines the CoP's ability to fully assess the Parties' progress on implementation of Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev. CoP18) and related Decisions and make evidence-based decisions.

Panthera supports the CITES Secretariat's recommendations in CoP19 Doc. 68 para 28 (a) – (d). However, regarding CoP19 Doc. 68, para 28 (e), while we appreciate the efforts to streamline documents and decisions, Panthera is concerned that lack of implementation generally continues to be a problem, including of Decisions proposed for deletion. We therefore oppose the recommendations in CoP Doc. 68 para 28 (e) and support the call by WWF and EIA for an in-session Working Group at CoP19 to consider further time-bound, country-specific recommendations.

As this Year of the Tiger comes to a close in January 2023, we urge all Tiger Range Countries to recognize the extraordinary investments that have been made to reverse the decline of tigers globally and take urgent action nationally and regionally to stop poaching and illegal trade from undoing this progress. In the next Global Tiger Recovery Plan, now in development, we call upon Tiger Range Countries to adopt a zero-tolerance approach to trade in, and demand for, tigers, their parts and derivatives, to enable the continued recovery of tiger and other Asian Big Cat populations across their range.

## **72. [African Lions \(Panthera leo\)](#)**

### **Recommendation: ADOPT DRAFT DECISIONS**

Panthera supports the Draft Decisions as proposed in CoP19 Doc. 72, Annex 1 and welcomes a renewed focus on lions following unforeseen and unfortunate delays in implementing the CoP18 decisions.

COVID notwithstanding, Panthera and our partners have continued or launched many ambitious lion conservation initiatives in Southern, West and Central Africa since CoP18, including fitting the first satellite collars on the critically endangered West African lions in Senegal to provide real-time protection. Although we are seeing some encouraging results in terms of lion recovery in vastly depleted landscapes, such as Kafue National Park, we note that success is fragile and these species require constant vigilance in the face of economic and other factors that drive demand for their parts inside of Africa and beyond. There is no time to waste.



We are pleased to be engaged with the African Carnivores Initiative, the Living with Big Cats Initiative, the KAZA Carnivore Conservation Coalition, and numerous other entities working with governments, their partners, and communities to ensure that lions recover and the people that live with them benefit from their presence.

### **73. Jaguars (*Panthera onca*)**

#### **73.1 Report of the Standing Committee**

#### **73.2 Proposed Amendments to the draft decisions on jaguars**

**Recommendation: ADOPT DRAFT DECISIONS AS AMENDED BY THE CITES SECRETARIAT IN COP19 DOC. 73.2, PARA H. OF THE COMMENTS**

Panthera supports the Draft Decisions on Jaguars (CoP19 Doc. 73.2 as amended by the CITES Secretariat) to address the findings of CITES' comprehensive study on Illegal Trade in Jaguars. Subsequent studies also provide evidence of a growing threat to jaguars in many parts of their range and the need for a robust and coordinated response at the local, national and international levels.

The Jaguar 2030 Roadmap, endorsed by 16 of 18 current jaguar range States, calls for region-wide coordination on jaguar conservation, including harmonization of monitoring and evaluation protocols, which is crucial to producing comparable data across nations. We thus recognize the particular importance of developing a long-term, range-wide monitoring system as proposed in CoP Doc. 73.2, 19.AA (e) as a means to better understand existing and emerging threats to jaguars and the links between them, and to help range States better manage them.

Panthera welcomes the proposal by Costa Rica, El Salvador, Mexico and Peru (CoP19 Doc.73.2) to establish an intersessional working group to discuss the merits of a draft resolution on jaguars and are ready to participate if it is agreed. With respect to the proposal regarding a programme of work to promote the implementation of the actions proposed in the draft decisions, we agree that this is a necessary step and note that Pathway 1 of the [Jaguar 2030 Conservation Roadmap](#) envisions the development of a detailed and regionally agreed upon Path to 2030 in the form of a Vision, Strategy and Action Plan. In that regard, we propose that jaguar range States begin this work together in the context of the range State meeting to be held next year as proposed in Draft Decision 19.BB (c).

As a Jaguar 2030 Coordination Committee member, Panthera looks forward to working with the CITES and CMS Secretariats in preparation for the range State meeting where the participants will discuss their options for an official intergovernmental platform for jaguar conservation. We agree that multi-lateral, multi-sectoral cooperation is essential to combat threats to jaguars, secure the Jaguar Corridor, and maximize the ecosystem benefits of conserving jaguars throughout their range. We look forward to advancing this cooperation.