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Worldwide.



Non-implementation of existing  
Decisions and Resolutions related to  
tigers and implications for all big cats

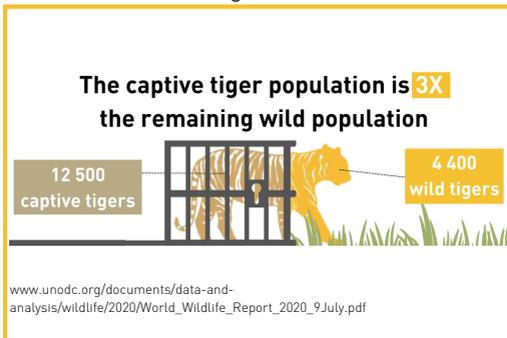
**#BREAK** THE  
**VICIOUS**  
CYCLE



# Non-implementation of existing Decisions and Resolutions related to tigers and implications for all big cats.

Each of the big cat species within the *Panthera* genus are in decline in the wild. That is the tiger (*Panthera tigris*), lion (*Panthera leo*), jaguar (*Panthera onca*), leopard (*Panthera pardus*) and the snow leopard (*Panthera uncia*). Whilst the fate of big cats in the wild

looks grim, there are Parties to CITES that allow their captive populations to grow unabated and for clear commercial intent. A commercial industry that not only trades in live animals and parts but where the number of animals is completely unknown.



An increase in demand for tiger bones, teeth, and claws especially in China and Viet Nam, and a resulting decrease in wild tiger populations leading to more legal protections and stricter enforcement on wild species, has led to a growth of tiger captive breeding facilities across the world.

The legal and illegal trade in big cats SC75 Doc.13 Annex 2

A 2020 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC) report [i] stated that there are an estimated three times as many tigers in captivity as there are in the wild, with some captive breeding facilities appearing to supply domestic tiger product markets and some appearing to be the source of illegal international trade. In 2022, Tiger Range Countries made the following joint statement as part of the declaration made at the International Tiger Forum: "expressed serious concern that there is still no comprehensive strategy to address the issue of phasing out of tiger farms, while their impact on driving illegal tiger trade continues unabated". A grave concern no doubt, but the reality is that tiger farming is increasing and

exists outside of tiger range countries. It is stimulating a demand not only for tiger parts but also all big cat parts and contributing to the decline of each species. This legal trade and acceptance of the farming of tigers only perpetuates illegal trade. It is clear that phasing out tiger farms is key to reversing population trends and saving all big cats. This must start with the effective implementation of existing CITES Decisions and Resolutions, starting with Parties that evidently do not implement but play an obvious role in the commercial trade and illegal trade of tigers and their parts. The scale of both legal and illegal trade is partly facilitated by the non-implementation of existing CITES Decisions and Resolutions.

# Case Studies



## South Africa

In 2020 FOUR PAWS sent PAIA (Freedom of Information) requests to all provincial authorities in South Africa to try and understand the number of big cats in commercial facilities and to what extent there were management practices in place that would allow the relevant authorities to keep track of the registration of births, deaths, disposal of carcasses and the scale of domestic trade. Responses from the relevant authorities were insufficient and in many cases, authorities were unable to provide any information. There have been numerous reports that South Africa has up to 12,000 lions and 1,500 tigers in commercial breeding facilities, but this cannot be proven given the fact the authorities have not implemented effective management practices on breeding and numbers. It can be derived from anecdotal research methods that South

Africa does have hundreds of commercial facilities or farms that are breeding big cats for commercial purposes. It is also clear that some of these farms have hundreds of big cats that are actively and intensively breeding. With such a clear lack of management practices and non-implementation of existing CITES Resolutions and Decisions, it is clear from the number of seizures that the growing legal industry is also acting as a conduit for illegal trade. An analysis of the CITES Trade Database does put South Africa as the world's largest exporter of big cats and their parts. With the majority of exports having a clear commercial intent by not only using the Purpose Code T but also by being traded from facilities with clear commercial intent and through the use of Purpose Code H for hunting trophies or Purpose code P for personal.



Decision 14.69 was adopted in 2007 at CoP14 to effectively phase out tiger farming. Since this Decision was taken, South Africa has allowed tiger farming to exponentially increase and the subsequent export of both live tigers and tiger parts

FOUR PAWS questioned this through a Parliamentary question and the response was alarming:

The Ministry of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment replies:

(a) CITES Decision 14.69 is directed to Appendix I Asian Big Cat range States. South Africa is not a range State for Asian big cats.

(b) Decision 14.69 is not applicable for South Africa and, therefore, the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE); hence, no audits were conducted in terms of the said decision

Signed – Minister Barbara Creecy, 31st of May 2022

This reply from the Department is highly concerning. Not only is there a failure to implement existing Decisions, but there is also a lack of understanding that the Decisions apply to the Party. Decision 14.69 is clearly directed to All Parties. Decision 14.69 is not only a decision related to international trade but also domestic markets. FOUR PAWS also believes that Decision 17.226, Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev CoP18), Resolution Conf. 12.10 (Rev CoP15) [i] are also being disregarded by South Africa.

There must be an immediate review and timebound implementation of all existing agreements and a total closure of the commercial big cat industry in South Africa if we are to save the big cat species from trade pressure.

[i] Will of the Parties, through the vote in 2007, that trade in this context includes domestic trade



Tiger seizure in Czech Republic

## A SNAPSHOT OF BIG CAT TRADE FROM SOUTH AFRICA 2011 - 2020



**TIGER (CITES Appendix I listed species)**

- 452 live tigers and tiger parts exported
- Including 359 live tigers and 93 tiger parts exported, of which, 54 were trophies
- 34 tiger items were exported specifically for commercial purposes
- Top importers of live tigers were Vietnam, China, and Thailand; all have high demand for tiger parts used in traditional medicine and luxury items.



**LION (CITES Appendix II listed species)**

- 27,418 live African lion and lion parts exported
- Including 7,311 lion trophies, 7,196 skeletons, 1,949 live lions
- 557 live lions were exported to China, 160 to Thailand, and 108 to Vietnam.
- Many exports from captive-bred live e.g. 1,927 of the 1,949 live lions that were exported.
- Bone products, were exported in high quantities to Laos PDR and Vietnam: 2,218 bones exported to Laos PDR and 1,453 to Vietnam.



**LEOPARD (CITES Appendix I listed species)**

- 807 trophies, 374 skulls and 235 specimens exported
- 61 live leopard exported (48 of which were captive bred individuals)
- A number of leopard items exported from captive-bred individuals.



**JAGUAR (CITES Appendix I listed species)**

- 3 trophies and 2 skins
- 33 live jaguars exported
- As jaguars are native to the Americas and non-indigenous to South Africa, all items and live animals should therefore originate from captive animals bred in South Africa.

### SUMMARY OF RESPONSES TO QUESTIONNAIRES ADDRESSED TO PARTIES WITHIN WHOSE TERRITORY THERE WERE FACILITIES WHICH MAY BE OF CONCERN KEEPING TIGERS IN CAPTIVITY

#### Lao People's Democratic Republic

Implementing Decision 14.69?	No reply
Implementing paragraph 1 h) of Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev. CoP18)?	No reply
Implementing Decision 17.226?	No reply
Copies of national legislation applies these management practices and controls.	No reply
Management practices and controls reviewed in accordance with Decision 17.226?	No reply
Competent authority designated for ensuring that provisions of Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev. CoP18) and Decision 17.226 are complied with?	No reply
Actions taken during the past 5 year to ensure compliance with these provisions of Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev. CoP18) and Decision 17.226, including the number of inspections of facilities breeding tigers and measures taken by the authorities as follow up on inspections.	No reply
Illegal trade of tiger specimens linked to tiger facilities detected during the past 5 years? (If yes, number of seizures, arrests and prosecutions made and convictions and penalties imposed).	No reply

#### South Africa

Implementing Decision 14.69?	No
Implementing Decision 17.226?	No



## Laos PDR

In 2013 it was revealed that the Government of Laos was allowing the import and export of wildlife in contravention of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species. Despite many years of non-compliance proceedings, there was little progress in relation to its tiger farms.

Then ahead of 2016's 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP17) to CITES, Laos announced it would phase out tiger farms – a move enthusiastically welcomed since all tiger farms in the country were linked to illegal trade.

But instead of investigating the facilities, the Government issued an order allowing the conversion of existing tiger farms to safaris and zoos for “conservation, tourism and scientific purposes”.

## Other CITES Parties

The narrative of unknown numbers is not only the case for South Africa, the European Union and Laos but also for other hotspots of commercial tiger farming in Thailand, the United States and China.

Viet Nam can also be considered a hotspot for demand, but with changes to national legislation, there are encouraging steps in the right direction. Nonetheless, Viet Nam has a significant problem with illegal operations particularly in Nghe An Province.

There is no doubt that much more needs to be done to prevent the decline of tigers and all big cats because of captive breeding and trade pressure.

To date, an audit on the tiger farms has taken place and subsequent inspections have been attempted, including visits by an ICCWC Wildlife and Forest Crime Analytic Toolkit Team, but not all tiger facilities opened their doors to officials and none of the facilities are running operations that can be classified as zoos.

Work is currently underway to develop DNA profiles of individual tigers that were audited but opportunities to develop a stripe pattern profile database and collaborate with Vietnamese authorities seizing tigers from traders based in Laos have been squandered.

Since CoP17, the number of tiger farms has actually increased while existing operations have expanded.

Until all Parties fully implement existing tiger Decisions and Resolutions into national policy and legislation, and introduce management practices to assess and control captive numbers and curb demand for tiger parts and products, then those Parties are only playing a role in the demise of the big cats.

The reality is that all big cats are in decline – all are traded legally and illegally across international borders – we still have Parties not implementing historic Decisions and Resolutions that were agreed to protect these animals from extinction. It's time to get serious about saving these animals.

## The facts remain:

- Commercial tiger trade and the farming of tigers for commercial purposes exists throughout the world.
- Legal trade fuels demand and perpetuates illegal trade.
- All big cat species are affected by trade and are in decline in the wild.
- Existing Decisions and Resolutions are being ignored by the Parties that are most engaged with intensive breeding and trading in parts from captive sources.

## Recommendations for Parties at CoP19:

- Immediate implementation of existing Decisions and Resolutions concerning big cats with timebound country-specific measures.
- Commitment to carry out country-specific missions to facilities of concern and release the reports by SC77.
- Effective phase-out of all tiger farms with timebound country-specific measures.
- Trade sanctions for Parties that continue to trade and breed big cats for commercial purposes whilst ignoring existing Decisions and Resolutions, hence contributing to the decline of all big cat species.

## Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) urges Parties to CoP19 to call for a demonstration of commitment to Decision 14.69 by Laos in particular through implementation of the following actions by SC77:

- Establish a stripe pattern database from the tigers audited to date.
- Convene an advisory group that includes experts in running non-commercial big cat sanctuaries, including in Asia, to advise on tiger farm phase-out plans (e.g., FOUR PAWS International, Wildlife Friends Foundation Thailand, Big Cat Rescue).
- Suspend the breeding of tigers in all captive facilities (by separating the sexes at least) as evidence of intention to implement the phase-out of tiger farms.



FOUR PAWS is the global animal welfare organisation for animals under direct human influence, which reveals suffering, rescues animals in need and protects them. Founded by Heli Dungler and friends in Vienna in 1988, the organisation focuses on companion animals including stray dogs and cats, farm animals and wild animals kept in inappropriate conditions as well as in disaster and conflict zones. With sustainable campaigns and projects, such as its own sanctuaries, FOUR PAWS provides rapid help and long-term protection for suffering animals.

[www.four-paws.org](http://www.four-paws.org)



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