

**2nd Meeting of Range States of the
Joint CITES-CMS African Carnivores Initiative (ACI2)**

Entebbe, Uganda, 1 – 4 May 2023

CITES-CMS/ACI2/Doc.5

**CONSERVATION OF THE LION (*PANTHERA LEO*) UNDER THE JOINT CITES-CMS AFRICAN
CARNIVORES INITIATIVE (ACI)**

(Prepared by the CITES and CMS Secretariats)

Summary:

Range States are asked to discuss the Guidelines for the Conservation of the Lion in Africa. Range States are requested to review, update and endorse the Spatially Explicit Strategic Action Plan for the Recovery of the Northern Lion in Africa 2023-2027 - Part B: Spatially Explicit Conservation Action Plan (SECAP; Annex 2 of this document). Range States are asked to take note of the process to develop draft guidance on Non-Detriment Findings for African lion, the Lion Monitoring Handbook, and to discuss the progress of the African Lion Database. Lastly, Range States may request the Secretariats to report back on the outcomes of this agenda item to relevant bodies of the Conventions.

This document is accompanied by two Annexes:

1. Guidelines for the Conservation of the Lion in Africa (Version 1.0, 2019)
2. Spatially Explicit Strategic Action Plan for the Recovery of the Northern Lion in Africa 2023-2027 - Part B: Spatially Explicit Conservation Action Plan (SECAP)

CONSERVATION OF THE LION (*PANTHERA LEO*) UNDER THE JOINT CITES-CMS AFRICAN CARNIVORES INITIATIVE (ACI)

Background

1. The African Lion (*Panthera leo*) has been listed on Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) since 1975, and on Appendix II of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) since 2017. At the 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES (CoP17, Johannesburg, 2016), an annotation to the Appendix II listing was adopted, establishing a zero annual export quota for specimens of bones, bone pieces, bone products, claws, skeletons, skulls and teeth removed from the wild and traded for commercial purposes. Under the annotation, annual export quotas for trade in bones, bone pieces, bone products, claws, skeletons, skulls and teeth for commercial purposes, derived from captive breeding operations in South Africa, will be established and communicated annually to the CITES Secretariat.
2. Facing similar threats as the Leopard (*P. pardus*), Cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*) and African Wild Dog (*Lycaon pictus*), the African Lion was included in the Joint CITES-CMS African Carnivores Initiative (ACI) at its launch in 2018.
3. At its 18th meeting (CoP18, Geneva, 2019), the Conference of the Parties of CITES adopted Decisions 18.244 to 18.250 on *African lions (Panthera leo) and the CITES Big Cats Task Force* (listed in [AC31 Doc. 28 Annex 1](#)). These decisions were replaced with a new set of Decisions on African lion (*Panthera leo*) ([Decisions 19.205 to 19.210](#)) and on the CITES Big Cat Task Force ([Decisions 19.92 and 19.93](#)) adopted at its 19th meeting (COP19, Panama City, 2022):
4. At its 13th meeting (COP13, Gandhinagar, 2020), the CMS Parties adopted [Decisions 13.88 to 13.91 on the Conservation and Management of African lions \(Panthera leo\)](#). These decisions were complementary to CITES Decisions 18.244, 18.247, 18.248, 18.249 and 18.250.
5. With the approval of the [ACI Programme of Work](#) by the Standing Committees of CITES and CMS in 2021, specific conservation measures for the Lion were agreed, incorporating existing decisions and resolutions relevant to lion in both Conventions.

Guidelines for the Conservation of Lions in Africa

6. The first Conservation Strategies for Lion in West and Central Africa were developed in 2006, based on a mandate from CITES CoP13 (IUCN 2006a). These Strategies lacked an implementation and a monitoring plan, and the impact of the Strategies was limited. The Strategies did, however, inform the development of some national or regional action plans and site-specific conservation programmes, but did not lead to a regional and transboundary conservation approach.
7. In May 2016, a [joint CMS-CITES meeting brought together all African Lion Range States](#) in Entebbe, Uganda, to review the conservation status of the Lion in Africa and to reconsider the IUCN Strategies. To provide input to this meeting, Bauer et al. (2015) reviewed the 2006 Lion Conservation Strategies and concluded that, in general, the 2006 Strategies were still relevant. All threats identified ten years earlier were also still valid, and additionally, illegal trade had emerged as an important new threat.
8. At the African Lion Range States meeting in 2016, enhanced international cooperation in Lion conservation was proposed – especially in the range of the Northern Lion – and the idea of a Joint CITES-CMS African Carnivore Initiative (ACI) was launched.

9. The First Range State Meeting of the ACI was held in November 2018 in Bonn, Germany ([ACI1 Report](#)).
10. In the same year, the *Guidelines for the Conservation of Lions in Africa* (GCLA) were developed to address several Decisions of CITES and CMS Conferences of Parties. The document was meant to provide guidance and best-practice examples for many aspects related to Lion conservation and was intended to be updated as new information becomes available or if new needs are identified. The GCLA should hence be a “living document”; however, regular and flexible updates would require a simplified and faster review, revision and endorsement process and a different form of publication (e.g., as a web-based document). The Guidelines highlight priority areas for the conservation of Lions in Africa and can therefore facilitate the cooperation between African Lion Range States under the aegis of CITES and CMS. Version 1.0 of the Guidelines was also presented and [taken note of at CMS COP13 under agenda item 26.3.1 on African Carnivores Initiative](#).
11. As requested in paragraph e) of CITES Decision 18.244, the Secretariat shared the *Guidelines for the Conservation of Lions in Africa* with the Animals Committee. At its 31st meeting (AC31, online, June, 2021), the Animals Committee considered the *Guidelines for the Conservation of Lions in Africa* ([AC31 SR](#)). The AC Chair of the intersessional working group on African lions (Mr Kasoma) introduced document [AC31 Doc. 28](#) and its addenda that contained the *Guidelines for the conservation of lions in Africa* and progress on studies being undertaken in fulfilment of Decision 18.246. Addendum two, by the co-chairs of the intersessional working group on African lions, provided some first elements of reflection.
12. AC31 considered document [AC31 Com. 6](#) and adopted the following recommendations:
- a) *The Committee invited the Secretariat to convey the comments and suggestions on the Guidelines for the Conservation of the Lion in Africa generated by the Animals Committee’s intersessional working group on lions to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the Secretariat of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), and to make the comments and suggestions available in an information document.*
 - b) *The Committee requested the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), in collaboration with the CITES and CMS Secretariats, and in consultation with African lion range States, to develop the next version of the Guidelines for the Conservation of the Lion in Africa in the context of the implementation of the Programme of Work for the Joint CITES-CMS African Carnivores Initiative (ACI), taking into consideration the comments and suggestions referred to in paragraph a) and recent scientific literature pertinent to the conservation of African lion.*
 - c) *The Committee encouraged the ACI range States to consider the revised Guidelines for the Conservation of the Lion in Africa referred to in paragraph b) at their next meeting, which is envisaged for 2022.*
 - d) *The Committee encouraged the African lion range States to share experiences and best practice recommendations in using and implementing the Guidelines for the Conservation of the Lion in Africa at their ACI range States’ meetings and through the Joint CMS/CITES/IUCN web portal on African lions.*
 - e) *The Committee agreed to submit the following draft decisions for consideration at the 19th meeting of the Conference of Parties:*
 - 19.AA *Directed to the Secretariat*
The Secretariat shall inform the Animals Committee regarding the activities and outputs of the African Carnivore Initiative (ACI) that relate to the Committee’s mandate and request advice from the Animals Committee, as appropriate.
 - 19.BB *Directed to the Animals Committee*
The Animals Committee shall advise the Secretariat, as appropriate, on information that it provides regarding the activities and outputs of the ACI that are relevant to the Animals Committee’s mandate.

13. The Secretariat conveyed the comments and suggestions on the *Guidelines for the conservation of lions in Africa* generated by the Animals Committee's intersessional working group on Lions to IUCN and the CMS Secretariat and made those comments available in an information document ([AC31 Inf. 23](#)).
14. On the CMS side, at its Fifth Meeting, the Sessional Committee of the Scientific Council of CMS agreed that the revision of the Guidelines be delegated to Lion Range States at Range State Meetings of the ACI. To ensure a feedback loop from the ACI to the Scientific Council, the Secretariat should inform the Scientific Council regarding activities and outputs of the ACI Range State Meetings that related to the Committee's mandate, and request advice from the Scientific Council, as appropriate ([UNEP/CMS/ScC-SC5/Report](#)).

Spatially Explicit Strategic Action Plan for the Recovery of the Northern Lion in Africa 2023-2027

15. The Report *Spatially Explicit Strategic Action Plan for the Recovery of the Northern Lion in Africa 2023-2027* concerns the conservation of the Northern Lion (*Panthera leo leo*) in West and Central Africa. It has been drafted based on a comprehensive technical and scientific review led by IUCN (Part A), and has been peer reviewed by several Lion experts. It consists of two parts:
 - Part A (CITES-CMS/ACI2/Inf.15) is a technical review and scientific assessment of the conservation status of the Northern Lion *Panthera leo leo* in West and Central Africa, and the hybrid population in the North-East Overlap Zone. It revealed that the situation is very critical and that the survival of the Lion – especially in West Africa – requires immediate and site-specific activities.
 - Part B is the *Spatially Explicit Strategic Action Plan* (SECAP; this document, Annex 2) which proposes a spatially explicit plan for the maintenance of remnant populations and the recovery of local Lion populations in suitable areas where Lions have gone extinct in the past decades. It operationalises the conservation planning so far into a concrete programme of work to recover the Northern Lion in Africa. The SECAP for the Northern Lion in Africa should be implemented over the next ten to fifteen years.
16. Part B is hereby submitted to the African Range States and will be revised according to their comments. The submission, review, revision, and final endorsement process are being arranged within the frame of the Joint CITES-CMS African Carnivores Initiative (ACI). Part B has hence the character of a proposal that will be finalised in a participatory process with the Range States and other institutions involved in or important for the conservation of the Northern Lion in Africa.
17. At this stage, the SECAP does not include a tabulated LogFrame including indicators, actors, timeline, budget, etc. These must be added after review, which will be best achieved in a participatory approach.
18. For the fine-tuning and implementation of the SECAP, the following steps are foreseen:
 - a) Discussion of the SECAP at the Second Meeting of the Range States of the ACI in Entebbe, Uganda in May 2023;
 - b) Revision and fine-tuning of the SECAP and re-submission to the Range States for final endorsement and initiation of preparatory activities;
 - c) Development of a work plan with timeline and budget, of a funding strategy, and a monitoring plan in a meeting with Range State representatives and partner organisations in West Africa in the fall of 2023;
 - d) Establishment of a Steering Group with representatives from Range States, NGOs, and other institutions involved (or a single institution as a coordination entity) to oversee the implementation of the SECAP;

- e) Implementation of the SECAP according to the priority assessment and as funding for these projects is secured.

19. This first version of the SECAP is designed for a five-year period from 2023 to 2027. Along the implementation of the plan, the progress of the projects with regard to achieving the Results will be monitored and shared. It is not realistic to expect the recovery of the Northern Lion in Africa to be achieved by 2027, but substantial progress must be made within these five years. In 2027, the overall progress towards the Goal and Objectives through the Results will be assessed and the SECAP will be revised and renewed.

African Lion Database

20. The following CMS and CITES Decisions, notably CMS Decision 13.88(b) *Conservation and Management of the African Lion (Panthera leo)* and CITES Decision 18.249 (d) on *African lions (Panthera leo) and the CITES Big Cats Task Force*¹ requested the development of an inventory of all African Lion populations across the range of the Lion:

13.88 The Secretariat shall, subject to external funding and in collaboration with African Lion Range States and the Secretariat of CITES as well as the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and, taking into consideration, as appropriate, the Guidelines for the Conservation of Lions in Africa: (...)

b) support the development of an inventory of all African Lion populations across its range, and of relevant databases; (...)

13.90 African Lion Range States are encouraged to collaborate in implementing the measures contained in Decisions 13.88 paragraphs (a) - (g).

18.249 Parties, including range States and consumer countries of African lion, as relevant, are encouraged to:

(...)

c) provide details on the observed and/or removed lion body parts in trade when collecting and communicating data on illegal killing and illegal trade in lions to CITES in their annual reports; and

d) cooperate on lion conservation, including by sharing information on lion populations, illegal killing and illegal trade.

21. Based on these Decisions, the following activities were included in the Programme of Work for the Joint CITES-CMS African Carnivores Initiative under Objective 11 *Knowledge and information*:

Result 11.2 The African Lion Database is developed and operational.

Indicator: (1) The African Lion Database is operational and contains the relevant up to date data.

Activity 11.2.1 Support the development, establishment and continued functioning of the African Lion Database.

Result 11.3 The African Lion Database is expanded into an African Carnivore Database.

Indicators: (1) The African Carnivores Database is operational and contains the relevant up to date data, and (2) long-term funding is secured to maintain and curate the database.

Activity 11.3.1 Expand the African Lion Database to an African Carnivores Database and compile, in cooperation with the ACI Range States and other relevant partners, the relevant data for the ACI species.

Activity 11.3.2 Secure long-term funding for the maintenance of the African Lion / African Carnivores Database.

¹ These CITES Decisions are no longer valid and as stated in paragraph 3, new Decisions were adopted at CITES CoP19 in November 2022.

22. This African Lion Database (ALD) has been developed. The ALD is a range-wide compilation of spatially explicit data on lions in Africa and should (1) provide readily available information on lions for all kind of assessments (e.g., IUCN Red List assessment, Non-detriment-finding Reports, etc.), (2) provide information for the conservation of transboundary populations, and (3) facilitate the improvement and streamlining of lion monitoring data. The ALD is a joint project of the IUCN SSC Cat Specialist Group and the Endangered Wildlife Trust and has been financially supported by the Lion Recovery Fund and National Geographic thus far.
23. Data are provided to the ALD by the Range States' institutions, scientists, and NGOs. To date, more than half of the Lion range in Africa is captured in the ALD, summing up to 849 population records from 393 lion areas, based on 18,553 single records including 2,459 lion mortalities. The next steps include the development and launch of an online portal for the ALD, the integration of further data sets from various Range States, and the securing of funding for the long-term management and technical maintenance of the ALD. Under the [Programme of Work for the ACI](#), it is planned to further expand the ALD by including other ACI species.

Lion Monitoring Handbook

24. Reliable monitoring of Lions and their prey populations are a requirement for effective conservation and management. The ACI POW includes several Results and Activities related to monitoring of the large carnivores and their prey, e.g., Result 11.1. In a workshop in April 2022 in Johannesburg, organised by the Endangered Wildlife Trust and financially supported by the Lion Recovery Fund, wildlife biologists discussed the current state of the art with regard to counting lions and their prey. The discussions and conclusions are now being summarised in a Lion Survey Manual. This handbook will provide best-practice guidance for monitoring lion and prey under various circumstances and depending on the capacities available.

Non-detriment Findings (NDF)

25. At COP19, CITES Parties adopted Decision 19.205 on *African lions* (*Panthera leo*), which is identical to the former Decision 18.244 with editorial updates relating to reporting to the Animals Committee, Standing Committee and CoP20 and directs the Secretariat to share any relevant updates to the *Guidelines for the Conservation of Lions in Africa* with the Animals Committee for review:

Decision directed to: Secretariat, in collaboration with African lion range States, the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

19.205 Subject to external funding, the Secretariat shall, in collaboration with African lion range States, the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and, as appropriate, taking into consideration the joint CITES-CMS African Carnivores Initiative and the Guidelines for the Conservation of Lions in Africa in information document CoP18 Inf. 10:

- a) support the implementation of activities in joint African lion conservation plans and strategies that relate to trade in African lion specimens and the implementation of CITES and as needed, the review of such plans and strategies;*
- b) jointly with the CMS Secretariat, undertake a comparative study of African lion population trends and conservation and management practices, such as lion hunting, within and between countries, including the role, if any, of international trade;*
- c) support capacity-building in African lion conservation and management including where appropriate, in the making of non-detriment findings by range States according to Resolution Conf. 16.7 (Rev. CoP17) on Non-detriment findings and the implementation of Resolution Conf. 17.9 on Trade in hunting trophies of species listed in Appendix I or II;*
- d) assist in maintaining a joint CITES-CMS web portal on African lions, that also allows for the posting and sharing of information and guidance on the conservation and management of African lions;*

e) share any relevant update of the Guidelines for the Conservation of Lions in Africa with the Animals Committee for its review; and

f) report on the implementation of the present Decision to the Animals Committee and the Standing Committee and to the Conference of the Parties at its 20th meeting.

26. The CITES Secretariat is collaborating with the IUCN Cat Specialist Group to develop draft guidance on the non-detriment findings for African lion, as requested by the Parties in Decision 19.205 paragraph c) and as per the ACI POW Objective 6 *Sustainable use and management* as well as Result 6.1 Activity 6.1.1 and Result 6.2 Activities 6.2.1-6.2.3. The process to develop the draft guidance will include a consultative process with the range States. The draft guidance to be developed will also be incorporated in the documents to be considered at the international expert workshop on non-detriment findings to be held later this year as provided for in Decision 19.132 paragraph b) ii). A concept talk on the planned approach will be presented and discussed at the ACI Meeting for consideration by the Range States. The deadline for the submission of the draft guidance is 30 June 2023.

Recommended actions

27. Range States are asked to discuss the GCLA (Annex 1 of this document) and consider the following points:
- a. Is the information provided in the GCLA helpful and should the GCLA be revised and updated on a regular base?
 - b. If so, should they be transferred into a web-based publication?
 - c. How can the revision, review and endorsement process be organised to allow for fast and flexible updates, full transparency, and quick response to the needs and/or concerns of the Range States?
28. Range States are requested to review the draft Spatially Explicit Strategic Action Plan for the Recovery of the Northern Lion in Africa 2023-2027 - Part B: Spatially Explicit Conservation Action Plan (SECAP; Annex 2 of this document).
29. Range States are asked to discuss the progress of the African Lion Database based on the presentation to be provided, and to discuss the further integration of missing countries/parts.
30. Range States are asked to take note of the presentation on the Lion Monitoring Handbook.
31. Range States are requested to provide inputs to the proposed approach and process to develop draft guidance on NDFs for African lion.
32. Range States may request the Secretariats to report back on the outcomes of this agenda item to the CITES Animals Committee, the CMS Scientific Council and COPs.