



**CONVENTION ON
MIGRATORY
SPECIES**

UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.27.1

24 October 2025

Original: English

15th MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES
Campo Grande, Brazil, 23 to 29 March 2026
Agenda Item 27.1

JOINT CITES–CMS AFRICAN CARNIVORES INITIATIVE

(Prepared by the Secretariat)

Summary:

This document reports on progress to implement Resolution 13.4 *Joint CITES–CMS African Carnivores Initiative (ACI)* and Decisions 14.161–14.166. It proposes the adoption of new Decisions and the deletion of Decisions 14.161–14.166. Range States are encouraged to reassess the ACI's functionality at the next meeting to ensure it is Range State-driven and capable of enhancing conservation impact and resource efficiency through strengthened international cooperation.

The attached draft Decisions would support the achievement of Targets 1.1–1.3, 2.1–2.3, 3.2, 4.1–4.3, 5.3 and 6.3 of the Samarkand Strategic Plan for Migratory Species 2024–2032.

JOINT CITES–CMS AFRICAN CARNIVORES INITIATIVE

Background

1. The [lion \(*Panthera leo*\)](#), [cheetah \(*Acinonyx jubatus*\)](#), [leopard \(*Panthera pardus*\)](#) and [African wild dog \(*Lycaon pictus*\)](#) are iconic predators in Africa, vital for maintaining healthy ecosystem functioning. These species also face similar threats, which require attention from complementary angles. In response, the 12th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CMS (CMS COP12) instructed the CMS Secretariat to establish, in collaboration with the Secretariat of CITES, the [Joint CITES-CMS African Carnivores Initiative](#) (ACI), covering these four species. Currently, the cheetah is listed on Appendix I of CMS (except for the populations of Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe) and of CITES; the lion and leopard are both listed on Appendix II of CMS and CITES; while the African wild dog is only listed on CMS Appendix II. The following countries are considered Range States of one or more of the four species: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.
2. CMS COP13 subsequently adopted Resolution 13.4 *Joint CITES–CMS African Carnivores Initiative*, providing the ACI with a long-term vision and working modalities. Parties also agreed that the Initiative should be implemented through a Programme of Work (POW) that will provide concrete, coordinated and synergistic conservation activities for all four species across their range, and be amended or adapted, as required. COP13 requested the CMS Secretariat to convene regular Range State meetings in cooperation with the CITES Secretariat to assess the implementation of the POW, revise the POW as necessary, and monitor the functionality of the Initiative.
3. A dedicated POW for the ACI was prepared by the Secretariats of CITES and CMS in accordance with their mandates (CITES COP18, 2019 and CMS COP13, 2020) and in collaboration with IUCN. The draft POW was approved by the Standing Committees of both Conventions in 2021.
4. The Secretariats convened the second meeting of the Range States (ACI2) in May 2023 in Entebbe, Uganda. Range States discussed the ACI POW, its implementation and prioritization of activities (including an implementation stock take), conservation issues specific to the species covered by the Initiative, and operational matters for the future of the ACI (including its governance, modus operandi and funding). The outcomes of ACI2 are available in document [CITES-CMS/ACI2/Outcomes](#). The following activities from the ACI POW were prioritized by Range States:

Result 1.2 Funding for the implementation of the ACI POW and priority activities is secured.

Result 1.3 Organizational structures promoting a broad international partnership and synergistic cooperation between ACI Range State Parties and other relevant institutions and stakeholders engaged in the conservation of African large carnivores are established or supported.

Result 5.1 Coexistence of local communities with the ACI species is promoted and improved.

- Result 7.4 *The resource kit for the cheetah has been finalized and a resource kit for lion, leopard and African wild dog has been developed based on the resource kit for the cheetah.*
- Result 8.1 *Infectious disease management plan for populations of the ACI species is developed and implemented.*
- Result 9.1 *Advice for ACI Range States on financing the effective implementation of the ACI POW is developed.*
- Result 11.2 *The African lion database is developed and operational.*
- Result 11.5 *A web portal for the ACI to disseminate all relevant information is developed and operational.*

5. At its 14th meeting, the Conference of the Parties (COP14) adopted Decisions 14.161–14.166 *Joint CITES–CMS African Carnivores Initiative* that read as follows:

14.161 Directed to Party and non-Party Range States to the Joint CITES–CMS African Carnivores Initiative

Parties and non-Parties that are Range States to the African Carnivores Initiative (ACI) are requested to review and extend the Programme of Work (POW), and thereby ensure the further implementation of the POW and Resolution 13.4.

14.162 Directed to Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe

Botswana and Namibia are invited, and Zimbabwe is requested to supply, by the end of the second quarter of 2024, data and information on the conservation status of their Cheetah populations to the CMS Secretariat for review and consideration by the 7th meeting of its Sessional Committee.

14.163 Directed to intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations

Intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations are encouraged to provide financial and technical support for the implementation of the ACI, its POW and the Range States meeting.

14.164 Directed to the Standing Committee

The Standing Committee is requested to consider the recommendations emanating from the Sessional Committee of the Scientific Council as per Decision 14.165 and approve or reject the recommendations. UNEP/CMS/Decisions COP14 6

14.165 Directed to the Scientific Council

The Scientific Council is requested to:

- a) *at the 7th meeting of its Sessional Committee and in collaboration with the IUCN Cat Specialist Group, discuss the information provided to the Secretariat in response to Decision 14.162 and the report on the Conservation status of the Cheetah populations of Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe and considerations for listing on CMS appendices; and*
- b) *provide recommendations to the Standing Committee at its 56th or 57th meeting.*

14.166 Directed to the Secretariat

The Secretariat shall, subject to the availability of external resources:

- a) *support Range States with the implementation of the ACI POW, specifically the results and activities prioritized by the Range States at their second meeting and set out in CITES-CMS/ACI2/Outcomes; and*
- b) *in close cooperation with the Secretariat of CITES, convene an ACI Range State meeting in 2025 to support Range States with the implementation of Decision 14.161.*

Implementation of Decisions

6. At the 7th meeting of the Sessional Committee of the CMS Scientific Council (ScC-SC7), the Government of Zimbabwe presented the report, [Status of the African Cheetah \(*Acinonyx jubatus*\) in Zimbabwe](#) (Annex to UNEP/CMS/ScC-SC7/Doc.6.4.1), which the Party had been requested to submit under Decision 14.165. The report followed a previous assessment, [Report on the conservation status of the Cheetah populations of Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe](#) (Annex 1 of UNEP/CMS/ScC-SC6/Inf.4), submitted by the IUCN Cat Specialist Group (IUCN Cat SG) to ScC-SC6, which argued that the cheetah populations of all three countries are eligible for listing on Appendix I of CMS. The report from Zimbabwe also concluded that cheetah populations in Zimbabwe were declining, resulting in a conservation status that would make cheetah eligible for an Appendix I listing under CMS. A member of the IUCN Cat SG, as requested, confirmed that the findings in the report from Zimbabwe broadly aligned with the IUCN report and considerations for listing on CMS appendices through a statement read out by the Secretariat.
7. The Scientific Council agreed to recommend to the Standing Committee that the cheetah population of Zimbabwe be listed on Appendix I of CMS, noting that it was important that Zimbabwe and other cheetah Range States are provided additional resources and support to recover their cheetah populations.
8. At the 56th meeting of the Standing Committee, the representative of Zimbabwe agreed to submit a proposal to list their cheetah populations on Appendix I and expressed hope that the proposed listing will assist in mobilizing more resources for cheetah conservation at national and regional level. They invited parties and other Range States to co-sponsor the proposal and a representative of Kenya expressed support and encouraged Botswana and Namibia to join the proposed listing. Other representatives expressed further support for the proposal. The Standing Committee approved the Scientific Council's recommendation and noted the support for submitting a listing proposal to COP15.
9. In line with Decision 14.166 (b), the Secretariat had intended to organize the third ACI Range State meeting in 2025. The Government of Zimbabwe had offered to host the meeting with funding from the Government of Germany. However, the CITES Secretariat informed the CMS Secretariat and the host country that CITES COP20, scheduled from 24 November to 5 December 2025, will discuss many agenda items related to the ACI POW. As a result, if a meeting of the ACI Range States were to be convened before COP20, decisions taken at the COP would not be considered at the Range States meeting. Therefore, it was agreed to postpone the Range State meeting to 2026. The Government of Zimbabwe has reiterated its offer to host the meeting, but due to the postponement, the previously allocated funding is no longer available and renewed fundraising efforts will be required to support the event.

10. To support the implementation of Decision 14.161, IUCN prepared a draft of the revised POW with funding from the Government of Germany, to be consulted on by all Range States prior to the planned third ACI Range States meeting.

Implementation of the ACI Programme of Work

11. In line with Result 1.3 of the POW, and as set out below, Red List Assessments (RLA) were completed for all four species of the ACI. Green Status of Species assessments (GSS) were completed for the lion and the leopard and one is ongoing for the cheetah.

Taxon	Red List Assessment	RLA date	GSS	GSS date	GSS status
<i>Panthera leo</i>	Vulnerable	May 2025	Largely Depleted	September 2024	Largely Depleted
<i>Panthera leo melanochaita</i>	Vulnerable	May 2025	Largely Depleted	June 2025	Largely Depleted
<i>Panthera leo leo</i>	Endangered	May 2025	Largely Depleted	January 2025	Largely Depleted
<i>Panthera pardus pardus</i>	Vulnerable	May 2024	Largely Depleted	November 2024	Largely Depleted
<i>Panthera pardus pardus (West Africa)</i>	Endangered				
<i>Acinonyx jubatus</i>	Vulnerable	Amended 2024	Ongoing	—	—
<i>Acinonyx jubatus soemmeringii</i>	Endangered	Amended 2024	—	—	—
<i>Lycaon pictus</i>	Endangered	June 2025			

Table 1: Red List Assessments and Green Status of Species

12. In line with Decision 14.166 (a) and contributing to Results 6.1 and 6.2 of the ACI POW, the CITES Secretariat updated the [Guidance for Non-Detrimental Findings for African lions](#), which was made available by the CMS Secretariat on the [Lions Web Portal](#). In accordance with Result 11.4 of the POW, the CITES Secretariat also commissioned an African lion comparative study, submitted to CITES COP20 as an information document ([CITES/CoP20/Inf.9](#)).
13. The CMS Secretariat convened two online meetings of the Working Group on Outcome 5.3 *African Lion Database* of ACI2 on 25 June 2024 and 24 March 2025. Following the last meeting, the IUCN Cat SG prepared draft Terms of Use and protocols for data standardization, verification and submission. The Secretariat will circulate the Terms of Use and protocols to the Working Group and Range States for comment.
14. In line with Result 1.4 of the POW, the Secretariat commissioned the IUCN Cat SG to update the *Roadmap for the Conservation of the Leopard in Africa*. This update was completed in October 2024, with funding from the European Union. The Secretariat will circulate the document to Range States for their review prior to the third ACI Range State meeting.

15. To support the implementation of CMS Decision 14.163 and under the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding on fundraising for the ACI, IUCN convened an interactive roundtable on *Scaling Integrated Species Conservation Action in Africa* on 5 June 2025. The IUCN and the Secretariat are following up with interested donors.
16. On 31 January 2024, signatories of the [Addis Ababa Declaration for Global Cheetah Conservation](#) recognized the joint CITES–CMS African Carnivores Initiative (as well as the CMS Central Asian Mammals Initiative (CAMI)) as a platform for conservationists and Range States to interact and jointly plan and implement activities to conserve cheetahs across their range. They recommended that, wherever possible, the ACI and CAMI are used to implement the three activities highlighted by the Declaration: (1) strengthen conservation engagement beyond conservationists; (2) agree on range-wide priorities and a collective strategic plan; and (3) understand resource needs and identify potential opportunities.
17. In line with Result 1.4 of the POW, regional strategies on cheetah have been updated for Southern Africa, and West and Central Africa under the lead of the IUCN Cat SG, and National Action Plans have been completed by Benin, the Central African Republic, Kenya and Senegal. Moreover, and in line with Activity 4.1.5, reintroduction guidelines for cheetahs are currently being prepared by the IUCN Cat SG.

Implementation of the agreed outcomes of the second meeting of the Range States (ACI2)

18. In line with Result 1.4, the implementation of the [Spatially Explicit Conservation Action Plan](#) (SECAP) is under way through the newly established Northern Lion Coalition, which has held two meetings to date. A coordinator is being hired by the IUCN Cat SG to support the implementation of the SECAP, with the role set to begin in November.

Discussion and analysis

19. Range States, at the third meeting now tentatively planned for 2026, are encouraged to review the focus and operational modalities of the ACI to ensure it is a Range State-driven effort, while bringing on board international partners that can effectively support the implementation of conservation priorities. This includes reassessing the ACI's setup to promote and support broad international partnership and synergistic cooperation between ACI Range States and other stakeholders, in line with priority Result 1.3 of the ACI POW.

Recommended actions

20. The Conference of the Parties is recommended to:
 - a) adopt the draft Decisions contained in the Annex of this document; and
 - a) delete Decisions 14.161–14.166.

ANNEX

DRAFT DECISIONS

JOINT CITES–CMS AFRICAN CARNIVORES INITIATIVE

Directed to Party and non-Party Range States to the Joint CITES–CMS African Carnivores Initiative

15.AA Parties and non-Parties that are Range States to the African Carnivores Initiative (ACI) are requested to revise the Programme of Work (POW) as necessary, and monitor the functionality of the Initiative in line with Resolution 13.4.

Directed to intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations

15.BB Intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations are encouraged to provide financial and technical support for the implementation of the ACI, its POW and the Range States meeting.

Directed to the Secretariat

15.CC The Secretariat shall, subject to the availability of external resources:

- a) support Range States with the implementation of the ACI POW, specifically the results and activities prioritized by the Range States at their second meeting, as set out in CITES-CMS/ACI2/Outcomes; and
- b) in close cooperation with the CITES Secretariat, convene the third meeting of the ACI Range States to support them with the implementation of Decision 15.AA.