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CMS

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GUIDELINES FOR THE CONSERVATION OF THE LION IN AFRICA

(Prepared by the CITES and CMS Secretariats)

Summary

Range States are provided with an update on the progress made in revising the *Guidelines for the Conservation of the Lion in Africa* and invited to agree to continue the process through a review group to be re-established at the third meeting of the range States of the Joint CITES-CMS African Carnivore Initiative (ACI3).

Recommended action

Range States are invited to:

1. take note of the progress made in revising the *Guidelines for the Conservation of the Lion in Africa*; and

2. agree to continue the revision process through a review group to be re-established at ACI3.

GUIDELINES FOR THE CONSERVATION OF THE LION IN AFRICA

Background

1. The African lion (*Panthera leo*) is one of the four species covered by the Joint CITES-CMS African Carnivores Initiative (ACI). Existing conservation plans and strategies that relate to trade in African lion specimens and the implementation of CITES have been included in the ACI Programme of Work (POW) under Objective 1 on *International cooperation, coordination and strategic conservation planning* and Objective 6 on *Sustainable use and management*.

2. The review of the *Guidelines for the Conservation of Lions in Africa* is part of Objective 1 of the ACI Programme of Work. Originally compiled by the Cat Specialist Group of the Species Survival Commission of the International Union of Conservation of Nature (IUCN SSC) and presented at the first meeting of the ACI range States (ACI1, Bonn, 2018), the *Guidelines* were revised following range State feedback and submitted as an information document to CoP18 (CoP18 Inf. 10). Designed for regular updates in consultation with lion range States and stakeholders, the *Guidelines* inform priority areas for the conservation of lions in Africa and can therefore facilitate the cooperation between African lion range States under the scope of CITES and CMS.

3. The review of the *Guidelines* was discussed at the Second Meeting of range States of the Joint CITES-CMS African Carnivores Initiative (ACI2), organized by the CITES and CMS Secretariats, that took place from 1 to 4 May 2023 in Entebbe, Uganda. In terms of the implementation of African lion conservation plans and strategies and review of such strategies, the following was agreed at ACI2 (Outcomes of ACI2 meeting):

   a) IUCN, in consultation with the range States, will update the *Guidelines* and in collaboration with the Secretariats, prepare a web-based document on the ACI web-portal that will be a “living” document and updated as new information becomes available.

   b) A review group will be established responsible for the review of proposed amendments to the *Guidelines* before it will be updated online. The review group will include two range State representatives from each of the subregions in Africa.

   c) Representatives from Kenya and Ethiopia will represent the Eastern African subregion. Other ACI subregions are to nominate representatives to the review group.

4. It is the CITES and CMS Secretariats understading that the composition of the review group following ACI2 was as follows:

   - Central Africa: Chad; Cameroon
   - Eastern Africa: Ethiopia, Kenya
   - Southern Africa: Zambia (second country to be nominated)
   - West Africa: Benin, Ghana, Nigeria (three representatives)

5. The Secretariat reported on the review of the Guidelines to the Animals Committee at its 34th meeting (AC34; Geneva, 2026) (see document AC34 Doc. 31). The report provided information on the process initiated by the Secretariat to obtain inputs from range States through a questionnaire aimed at identifying elements of the Guidelines requiring revision. On 17 February 2026, the Secretariat shared the Guidelines and questionnaire with range States, providing two options for submitting comments and inputs: an online questionnaire or an Excel spreadsheet, with a deadline of 30 March 2026. In view of the limited number of responses received, the Secretariat circulated a reminder on 10 April 2026, extending the deadline for submissions to 30 April 2026.

6. The Secretariat received comments from Botswana, Central African Republic, Namibia, Niger, Sudan, United Republic of Tanzania and Zimbabwe. The comments referred, *inter alia*, to the need to include:

   a) Overall update of information relating to African lion populations, estimates and distribution of populations, conservation measures and cooperation in transfrontier conservation areas;

   b) scientific papers published after the Guidelines were completed;

   c) the *Spatially explicit strategic action plan for the recovery of the northern lion in Africa (2023 – 2027);*

   d) the *IUCN SSC guidelines on human-wildlife conflict and coexistence*;

   e) greater emphasis on practical interventions relating to human-wildlife conflict and coexistence, recognition of the realities faced by communities living alongside lion, and stronger integration of lion conservation with community-based natural resource management, sustainable use, tourism, conservation performance and local-level challenges;

   f) the *Guidance for non-detriment findings for African lions* (AC33 Doc. 36 – Annex 3);

   g) information relating to the Southern African Development Community Transfrontier Conservation Areas' Financing Facility;

   h) updated information on existing lion conservation plans, policy frameworks for the conservation of lion, lion survey and monitoring methods and conservation solutions;

   i) additional considerations relating to reintroduction and augmentation of African lion populations, including genetic management to maintain diversity and long-term population viability;

   j) initiatives to address the development of strategies for African lion populations in cross-border corridors; and

   k) the Outcome document of the CITES Big Cat Task Force meeting.

7. The Secretariat also recommended that range States consider the findings of the *Comparative study of African lion population trends and conservation and management practices* when reviewing the *Guidelines* as well as the ACI Programme of Work. The Animals Committee agreed with this recommendation (AC34 SR).

8. Since AC34, the Secretariat has secured funding from the Government of Switzerland to engage the IUCN SSC Cat Specialist Group to revise the *Guidelines*, taking into account the inputs received from range States. As the administrative arrangement have not yet been finalized, a revised version of the Guidelines is not available for consideration at the 3rd meeting of the ACI Range States (ACI3). It is therefore proposed that range States consider re-establishing the review group to consider the revised Guidelines once available.

9. The IUCN SSC Cat Specialist Group proposed the following step wise approach to revise the Guidelines:

   - Integrate existing and outstanding comments from range States.
   - Solicit and integrate recommendations from additional reviews from expert groups.
   - Integrate up-to-date information from recent Red List Assessments (RLA), focusing on updated data from national and regional assessments. Where appropriate, information from the new Green Status of Species Assessment (GSS) will be collated also. The GSS relates to the recovery potential of populations and is a sister process to the RLA. Additional chapters may be required to integrate this information.
   - Additional chapters will also be required to demonstrate how the GCLA is linked to parallel initiatives such as the Spatially Explicit Strategic Action Plan for the Recovery of the Northern Lion in Africa (SECAP), to ensure alignment of overarching strategic aims and objectives.
   - Chapters will be structured to provide information at the country level, which in turn can be aggregated to provide information at the regional level (western, eastern, southern, and central Africa). Thus the updates will reflect the regionalisation of previous versions. However, additional inputs will be sought for parts of northern Africa where the species is now extinct, with a focus on potential restoration in the future using analytical processes such as the GSA to assess the recovery potential for the species.

10. It is proposed that the updated GCLA will be modular, with any future revisions focusing on changes in individual chapters as new information or data become available. This will expedite the review process in future iterations by range States through the Review Group without necessitating a review of the entire guidelines. As a living document, it will be made available through the Lion Portal, a dedicated section on the CMS Web site, or a bespoke online platform, depending on the costs involved and the availability of funding.

Recommendations

11. The ACI Range States are invited to:

    a) take note of the progress made in revising the *Guidelines for the Conservation of the Lion in Africa*; and

    b) agree to continue the revision process through a review group to be re-established at ACI3.