

Media Alert

London and New Delhi
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New hope as international community unites to save precious wildlife

As the world's largest environmental and nature event takes place in Hawai'i, conservationists herald the adoption of 85 motions that call upon the international community to do more to save endangered species and habitats.

Over 8,000 delegates representing governments, business, the scientific community, NGOs and indigenous peoples from more than 160 countries will attend the World Conservation Congress of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), from 1st to 10th September. Major topics on the agenda include debate over the closure of domestic markets for ivory.

Ahead of the Congress, members of IUCN voted electronically and adopted important motions, reflecting global concern for the conservation of several endangered species, including calling for urgent action to save the helmeted hornbill, eels, tigers, leopards, giraffes, lions, pangolins, vultures, the vaquita porpoise, the silky shark and thresher shark, and mobula rays.

Belinda Wright, Executive Director of the Wildlife Protection Society of India (WPSI), was heartened by the adoption of these motions. *"Hot on the heels of President Obama's speech linking conservation efforts to combating the impact of climate change, this shows us the world still cares about the species we are battling to protect"*, said Wright.

All eyes are now on government delegates attending the forthcoming 17th meeting of the Conference of Parties (CoP), to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora (CITES), starting on 24th September in Johannesburg. Many of the issues raised in the IUCN motions relate to illegal and unsustainable trade, and the impact of parallel legal markets for body parts of endangered species.

Some of the important motions approved by the IUCN Congress that will be addressed by CITES are:

- a motion which amongst other things recognises tiger farming as a serious threat to Amur tigers. An overwhelming majority of government members (96%) and non-government members (86%) voted in favour of the motion. Several draft decisions which will result in increased scrutiny of tiger farms are on the table for adoption at the CITES CoP.
- a motion to encourage the CITES host nation South Africa, and other African countries, to prohibit the "canned" hunting of captive bred lions. A proposal to prohibit international commercial trade in African lions is also on the table for adoption at the CITES CoP.
- a motion urging all IUCN members to support the proposals to prohibit international commercial trade in all 8 species of pangolins, which is up for adoption at the CITES CoP.
- a motion requesting all CITES Parties to support the proposals which are on the table for adoption at the CITES CoP to regulate international trade in silky sharks, thresher sharks, and mobula rays.

EIA and WPSI hope that these positive outcomes will extend to the debate on elephants resulting in support for the closure of domestic ivory markets – an issue which will also be addressed at the CITES CoP.

Debbie Banks, Campaign Leader on Tigers & Wildlife Crime at the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA), in particular welcomed the resounding recognition that tiger farming is a threat to tiger conservation. *“Proponents of tiger farming and legalized trade argue it relieves pressure on wild tigers. To the contrary, it stimulates demand for wild tiger parts. This powerful message from the members of IUCN comes just at the right time, reminding governments attending CITES that they must take more decisive action to phase out tiger farms, having allowed the problem to spiral out of control over the last nine years”*.

(Ends)

Background Information:

IUCN is a membership organization with over 1,300 members including states and government agencies, non-governmental organizations, scientific and academic institutions and business associations, and over 16,000 experts, from over 160 countries.

IUCN motions adopted are available here
<https://portals.iucn.org/congress/assembly/motions>

CITES agenda items on tigers, elephants, rhinos, helmeted hornbill, vaquita, lions and much more are available here <https://cites.org/eng/cop/17/doc/index.php>

WPSI is a national NGO working to combat poaching and trafficking of India's endangered wildlife. More information on poaching and wildlife trade data is available on their website <http://www.wpsi-india.org>

EIA is an international NGO committed to investigating and exposing environmental crime. More information on tiger farms is available here <https://eia-international.org/where-are-the-tigers>