

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) - Singapore's Report to the 70th Meeting of the Standing Committee

Introduction

1. At the 69th Meeting of the Standing Committee (SC69, Geneva, November 2017), the CITES Standing Committee (SC) agreed not to include Singapore in the National Ivory Action Plan (NIAP) process. The SC also invited Singapore to report through the Secretariat to SC70 on its implementation of Resolution Conf. 10.10 (Rev. CoP17) on Trade in Elephant Specimens ("the Resolution"). It is in this context that we are submitting this report to further update the SC on the regular activities that Singapore has undertaken to continually improve our capabilities to combat the illegal trade in wildlife, including ivory.

2. Singapore submitted two previous reports to the SC on 19 January 2017 and 27 September 2017¹ providing information on our Whole-of-Government approach,² robust domestic framework, and strong cooperation with international and local partners to comprehensively combat the illegal trade in ivory and other wildlife. Singapore also submitted a document on 11 April 2018 to the CITES Secretariat on the status of Singapore's domestic ivory market and Singapore's efforts to implement the provisions of the Resolution. This was pursuant to the general request for such information, reflected in paragraph 2 of the CITES Secretariat's Notification No.2017/077, read with paragraph 8 of the Resolution.

¹ SC69 Doc. 29.3 A5

² As the CITES Secretariat noted in its report SC69 Doc. 29.3 A4 on its 2017 mission to Singapore, "Singapore has put in place a whole-of-government approach to address wildlife crime, including ivory trafficking. The aim of this approach is to facilitate a comprehensive and cohesive response to wildlife crime through engagement of all national government agencies with a role in combatting it. The approach is implemented through an Inter-Agency Committee. This Committee incorporates representatives from all key national agencies with a role in combatting wildlife crime, and establishes a contact point within each of these agencies for reporting and information-sharing. Through the Inter-Agency Committee, national agencies work alongside one another, each leveraging on their respective domain expertise to collectively ensure as well as improve the effectiveness of detection means and enforcement measures."

Updates on Our Regular Activities

Robust Domestic Framework

3. **Singapore reiterates that our strong and effective enforcement efforts are underpinned by a solid legislative framework.** As part of our continual effort to ensure that our legislation keeps up with technological and other developments, we have started a review of the Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act which is the principal legislation governing trade in wildlife that gives effect to CITES. The review will consider enhancing the Government's legislative powers, including increasing penalties on shipping agents and freight forwarders involved in cargo shipments of illegal wildlife.

Strong and Effective Enforcement Efforts

Action-Oriented Approach to Intelligence Reports

4. **Singapore continues to assess every intelligence report from our partners, and act upon every credible and actionable piece of information.** On 26 September 2017, Singapore received an intelligence report containing credible information about the transshipment of 64 containers of African rosewood (*Pterocarpus erinaceus*) from Guinea-Bissau to Viet Nam without CITES permits. In our subsequent enforcement action, Singapore seized a total of 1238.67 tonnes of African rosewood logs. Court proceedings have concluded and the wood logs were forfeited to Singapore in January 2018. The information pertaining to this case has also been shared with the relevant authorities in Viet Nam.

Robust and Comprehensive Risk Assessment Framework

5. **Singapore continues to enhance our risk assessment capabilities.** New risk profiles and risk indicators are developed and refined regularly based on seizures, intelligence reports, active engagement with international organisations and partners, as well as open source information. On 5 March 2018, Singapore seized 3.5 tonnes of ivory tusks from Africa. This shipment was flagged out by our robust

risk assessment framework. Case is pending investigation and we are in the process of prosecuting the local importer.

Strict Inspections of Travellers and Cargo

6. Singapore agencies continue to conduct inspections on the millions of travellers who pass through our checkpoints each year.

At all checkpoints, officers are trained to look out for travellers exhibiting suspicious behaviour. Such travellers are interviewed and detailed checks may be conducted on their personal belongings. These efforts resulted in the successful prosecution of a Malaysian attempting to smuggle 44 Fischer's Lovebirds, a CITES-listed species, into Singapore in February 2018. In April 2018, a Singaporean was stopped at a checkpoint and a leopard tortoise was found in his vehicle. Follow up investigations uncovered an African spurred tortoise and Mekong snail-eating turtle in his home. The latter case is pending prosecution.

7. Singapore continues to leverage on technology to comprehensively screen and check travellers and goods at our checkpoints.

As part of the efforts by the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority (ICA) to enhance Bus Security Clearance at Tuas Checkpoint, bus scanning portals are on trial to scan arriving buses to better detect anomalies such as hidden compartments. ICA also continues to deploy and upgrade its use of a variety of technologies, including radiographic scanning and handheld screening devices, to ensure that goods entering Singapore are lawful and legitimate. Any cargo with anomalies is diverted for further X-ray screening and physical inspection.

Upskilling of Enforcement Officers

8. Singapore continues to invest in intensive training of our enforcement officers focussed on the illegal wildlife trade.

On 31 October 2017, Singapore attended the inaugural Illegal Wildlife Training Workshop organized by Singapore Airlines and partly funded by USAID. There were modules that focused on the significance of the illegal wildlife trade and various risks posed to the airlines industry. There were also

case studies of seizures that highlighted global hotspots and popular routes of wildlife trafficking.

9. Officers from Singapore and regional wildlife enforcement agencies attended the i2 Analyst's Notebook (AN) software³ training course organized at INTERPOL Global Complex for Innovation in Singapore from 13 - 17 November 2017. The participants learnt how to use the AN software to analyse INTERPOL's existing database, to identify links between several suspects to different cases.

Solid Legislative Framework with Heavy Penalties

10. In line with Singapore's broader commitment to tackle the illegal ivory trade and to support elephant conservation, the Singapore Government is looking into legislating a domestic ban on the sale of ivory, even though the existing domestic market is small and inactive, and our enforcement efforts ensure that it does not contribute to illegal trade in ivory. The implementation details, including engagement with stakeholders who possess pre-Convention ivory, are being worked on.

Reducing Demand for Ivory by Increasing Public Awareness

11. **Singapore continues to make every effort to combat the illegal wildlife trade of ivory and other products by raising public awareness.** All significant seizures and subsequent prosecutions are publicised via mainstream and social media platforms. Singapore is planning to hold another ivory crush event⁴ to dispose of the 3.5 tonnes ivory tusks seized in March 2018. The event will help to further educate the public not to buy ivory products given the threats that elephant populations face from poaching.

12. Singapore also participates in public engagement sessions in partnership with non-governmental organizations. For example, the Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority (AVA) is collaborating with WWF to design

³ i2 Analyst's Notebook (AN) software is a visual charting tool to analyse bulk amounts of intelligence information. Different types of charts may be hybridized together to obtain better big-picture understanding of criminal organizations.

⁴ The previous ivory crush, at which 7.9 tonnes of elephant ivory seized over two years was crushed, took place on 13 June 2016.

educational outreach programmes for school children on illegal wildlife trade. Singapore is also working with Wildlife Reserves Singapore to increase public awareness about the illegal wildlife trade by placing messages at wildlife exhibits in the Singapore Zoo.

13. Singapore continues to hold regular training sessions with freight-forwarding companies to train them on how to better spot and recognize tell-tale signs of attempts to smuggle illegal wildlife into or through Singapore. 175 attendees from 123 companies attended the most recent session held on 21 May 2018. This adds to the 261 from 181 logistics companies who had attended 8 sessions between September 2017 and April 2018.

Strong International Cooperation

Regular Participation in International Forums and Law Enforcement Efforts

14. **Singapore continues to cooperate with our international partners against the illegal wildlife trade.** Singapore continues to work closely on the CITES Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles Task Force by collating alerts on seizures. Singapore is also receiving United for Wildlife Transport Taskforce Alerts through our partners in the aviation industry. These alerts provide updated information on recent illegal wildlife crime involving the transport industry and the information is shared amongst enforcement agencies.

15. Singapore attended the Wildlife Inter-Regional Enforcement Meeting for Customs Officers (WIRE-Customs) in Hanoi, Vietnam, from 16 – 18 October 2017, where attendees included intelligence analysts and investigators from Africa and Asia. They discussed the identification of CITES risk indicators to assist countries with the detection of cargo and containers potentially carrying illegal wildlife products.

16. **Singapore continues to support and participate in international enforcement efforts to combat the illegal wildlife trade.** Singapore hosted the 28th meeting of the INTERPOL WCWG from 9 – 13 October

2017, at the INTERPOL Global Complex for Innovation. Officers participated in intersessional meetings to learn about best practices and strengthen working relationships with counterparts from other countries.

17. On 20 – 22 March 2018, Singapore participated in the 14th meeting of the ASEAN Working Group on CITES and Wildlife Enforcement in Luang Prabang, Lao PDR, where country representatives provided updates on national legislation, capacity-building programs, significant wildlife enforcement activities, challenges, and future plans.

18. On 29 – 30 March 2018, Singapore attended the 1st meeting of the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC) Working Group on Illicit Trafficking in Wildlife and Timber (ITWT). The Working Group discussed the SOMTC Work Programme on ITWT for 2019 to 2021 and agreed to establish points of contact in ASEAN Member States to facilitate and coordinate law enforcement cooperation on ITWT issues.

19. Singapore also participated in Operation Thunderstorm from 1 – 31 May 2018, jointly planned by INTERPOL, in cooperation with the World Customs Organisation (WCO) and the INTERPOL Wildlife Crime Working Group (WCWG). The operations resulted in five separate seizures of illegal wildlife.⁵ All five cases are currently under investigation.

Reporting

20. **Singapore continues to report all ivory seizures**, including the recent seizure in March 2018 through ETIS, INTERPOL Eco-messages, and the CITES Secretariat. Singapore also reports to the CITES Secretariat and through Interpol Eco-messages, all other seizures of CITES-listed wildlife specimens, such as rhinoceros' horns.

⁵ There were three separate instances of an individual travelling from Indonesia to Singapore who was found, at the sea checkpoint, in possession of marine turtle (*Chelonidae spp.*) eggs. In addition, a 4th individual entering Singapore from Malaysia at a land checkpoint was detected with a live hornbill chick (*Bucerotidae spp.*) during the inspection of travellers. Finally, acting on a tip off, an Indian Star Tortoise (*Geochelone elegans*) was seized from a private residence.

Cooperation to Help Trace Poaching and Illegal Trading Hotspots in Source Countries

21. **Singapore carried out fingerprinting** of the ivory specimens from the 3.5-tonne ivory seizure in March 2018 using the newly developed ivory fingerprinting dusting powder, to try establishing leads on the perpetrators. The ivory fingerprinting kit was developed and provided to Singapore by the United Kingdom authorities and the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW). However, no fingerprints were found on the ivory specimens.

22. **We continue to cooperate with research institutes to identify hotspots where poaching and the illegal wildlife trade originate.** Professor Sam Wasser from the University of Washington visited Singapore from 23 - 25 April 2018 to collect samples from the 3.5 tonnes ivory seized in March 2018. DNA analysis will be carried out on the samples to trace the origins of illegal ivory. Singapore has, for over a decade, been working in a timely manner with Professor Wasser's team to conduct DNA analysis of seized ivory⁶.

23. Singapore also worked with the Veterinary Genetics Laboratory of the University of Pretoria to trace the origins of illegal rhino horns and shavings using DNA analysis. Samples from the eight pieces of rhino horns and shavings seized in September 2017 during Operation Savannah were sent to the University. The analysis showed that some of these specimens were linked to specimens found in Kenya. We will send this information to the CITES Secretariat and INTERPOL.

Singapore's Concerns with the ETIS Report

24. In response to the call for submissions by the Secretariat in paragraph 158 v) of document SC69 Doc. 29.3, Singapore submitted observations on 31 January 2018 to assist the Secretariat and the MIKE-ETIS Technical Advisory Group in its preparations of the Terms of Reference for the ETIS review.

⁶ <https://www.todayonline.com/singapore/ivory-seized-spore-authorities-march-undergo-dna-analysis>

Regular Review of Measures

25. Singapore regularly reviews our measures and laws to ensure that they are current in addressing the illegal wildlife trade. In this context, our ongoing review of the Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act to ensure that its sanctions remain effective in deterring criminals involved in the illegal trade in wildlife will be completed by 2019.

Conclusion

26. **Singapore remains firmly committed to combatting the illegal trade in ivory and wildlife and is determined not to be a conduit for such illegal trade.** Singapore has a robust legislative and enforcement framework supported by committed officers, effective measures, and the use of high-tech equipment. We also adopt a Whole-of-Government approach to ensure the effective implementation of these measures.

27. Singapore has adopted a comprehensive and robust approach to combat the illegal trade in wildlife, including in ivory. At the same time, we are continually reviewing our measures and laws to enhance the effectiveness of our overall regime.