

CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES  
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA

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Seventieth meeting of the Standing Committee  
Rosa Khutor, Sochi (Russian Federation), 1-5 October 2018

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION ON ILLEGAL TRADE IN CHEETAH (*ACINONYX JUBATUS*)

This document is submitted by Ethiopia, Kenya and Yemen in relation to agenda item 43. \*

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## SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION ON ILLEGAL TRADE IN CHEETAH (*ACINONYX JUBATUS*)

This information document has been submitted by Ethiopia, Kenya and Yemen in relation to agenda item 43 on Illegal Trade in Cheetahs (*Acinonyx jubatus*): Report of the Secretariat. The purpose of this document is to assist the Standing Committee in formulating its recommendations on cheetah trafficking, to the 18<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of Parties. The information contained herein is supplemental to the data contained in Annex 2 of SC70 Doc. 43.

### Background

1. The cheetah continues to experience major reductions in its geographic range over the last century and population estimates in the areas most affected by illegal trade in East Africa (Ethiopia, northern Kenya, South Sudan and northern Uganda) amount to little more than 500 individuals<sup>†</sup>.
2. An inter-sessional working group on illegal cheetah trade re-established at SC69 compiled an analysis of responses received from Parties who responded to a questionnaire (Notification 2018/058<sup>‡</sup>), and is appended to SC70 Doc. 43 (Annex 2). In its assessment of this analysis, the Secretariat states that, “*Although there is some illegal international trade in cheetahs, the available information suggests that this remains limited*”.
3. As the Secretariat notes in SC70 Doc. 43, this conclusion is based on figures provided by national CITES authorities or approved by them. The Secretariat also included data from a compilation of the 2016 annual illegal trade data on cheetahs, submitted by Parties to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. When combining the data from both sources, the document states that, “*between 2015 and mid-2018, 13 live cheetahs, 15 cheetah skins, two cheetah skulls, one small piece of a cheetah specimen and two kilograms of unspecified cheetah specimens were seized by authorities.*”
4. Although the aforementioned questionnaire survey (E-Notif-2018/058) was a worthwhile exercise in trying to establish the extent of implementation by Parties of Decision 17.127<sup>§</sup>, the numbers of confiscated cheetah contained therein is unlikely to represent the full extent of the trade, and should not be the sole basis for assessing the scale and significance of illegal trade in cheetah. A study commissioned by CITES in 2013 demonstrated that the level of illegal cheetah trade is likely to be substantially higher than reported confiscations. A subsequent analysis estimated at least 61% of known cases of illegal trade in cheetahs is not intercepted by authorities (Tricorache et al, 2018).
5. The significance of illegal trade to the conservation of a species should not be gauged only from the number of animals traded, but should be assessed relative to the size and conservation status of the source populations. As noted above, the source populations of cheetah in East Africa are extremely small and of high conservation concern and, hence, even a low level of trade poses a significant risk to their survival.
6. For the same period covered by the data presented in SC70 Doc. 43 (Jan 2015-June 2018), a non-governmental organization (Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF)) has recorded 100 confirmed cases of illegal cheetah trade involving 393 animals or products (274 live cheetahs and 119 products, e.g., skins, skulls).

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<sup>†</sup> Durant, S., et al. 2017. The global decline of cheetah *Acinonyx jubatus* and what it means for conservation. Proceedings of the National Academy of Science; vol. 114 no. 3 528-533 doi:10.1073/pnas.1611122114.

<sup>‡</sup> <https://cites.org/sites/default/files/notif/E-Notif-2018-058.pdf>

<sup>§</sup> <https://cites.org/eng/dec/valid17/81848>

- 7. Over 75% of illegal cheetah trade cases are undetected by authorities. Confiscations represent 39.3% of all confirmed cases and 22.1% of all known cheetahs in the trade (see Figure 1 below). The 32 confiscated cheetahs and products reported in SC70 Doc. 43 represent 36.8% of 87 on record, and 8% of the total 393 cheetahs or products known from all sources to have been illegally traded during the reviewed period.
- 8. The CITES-commissioned study (Nowell, 2014) also found that Eastern Africa had the most records of illegal cheetah trade caused by the demand for exotic pet trade in the Arabian Peninsula. It also highlighted that Eastern Africa is the region in which wild cheetah populations are likely to be most negatively impacted by illegal trade. The study reported 43 live cubs confiscated in Somaliland (2011-2013), and the region has been identified as the main transit route for cheetah from Eastern Africa to the Middle East.
- 9. Kenya, Ethiopia and Yemen believe that, far from being “limited”, illegal international trade continues to be a significant and urgent threat to wild populations. By way of example, Kenya is aware that there are currently 11 confiscated cheetah cubs receiving NGO care in Somaliland; 8 of which were confiscated within a three-week period in August 2018.

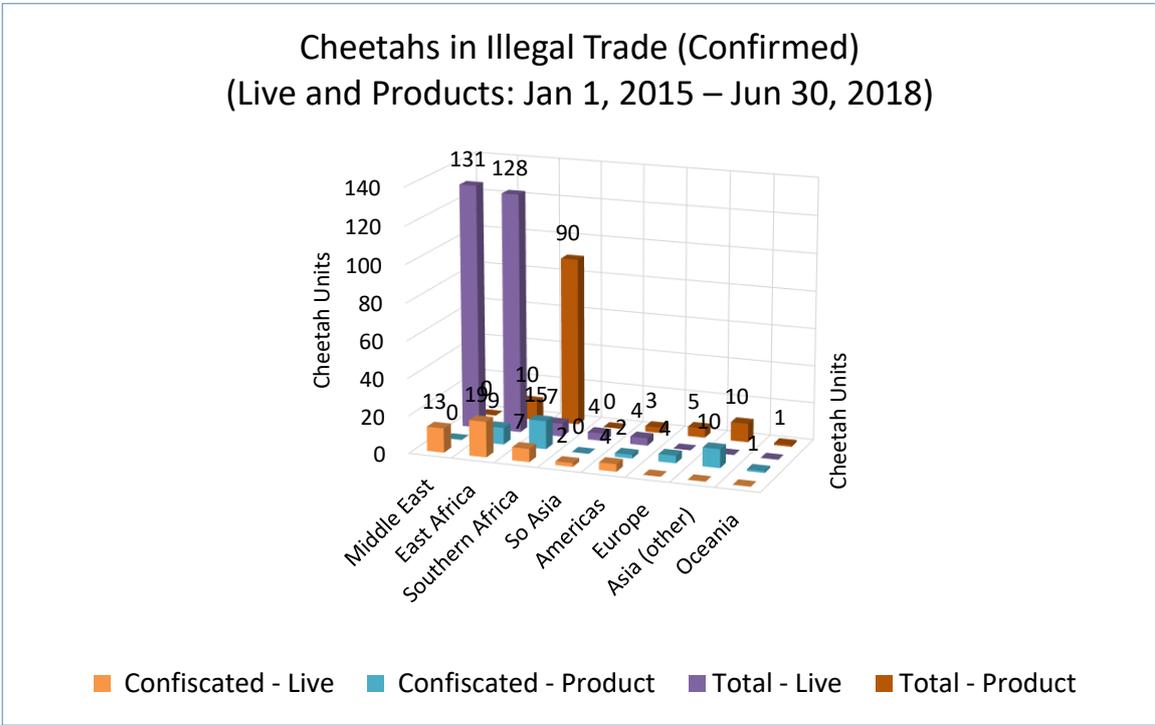


Figure 1. Total cheetah in illegal trade

Table 1 is a comparison summary of data included in document SC70 Doc.43 and confirmed data\*\* compiled by CCF. Numbers in parenthesis denote confiscations reported in the CITES document from data supplied by four Parties through the questionnaires and illegal trade report data compiled by the UNODC for 2016. When comparing 87 confiscations against 394 cheetahs or

\*\* Although the illegal nature of the trade makes it difficult to obtain information, CCF sources its data from its direct involvement in illegal cheetah trade cases: 36%; official channels (CITES, governments and government/NGO partnerships.): 28%; partner NGOs and field reports (e.g., veterinarians, cheetah owners/buyers): 28%; and media articles: 8%. Within these sources, reports are checked for veracity through interviews, online searches for official records, digital evidence (video, images). Only data that is confirmed via two such independent sources of evidence is included in this document. An additional 33 cases involving 254 cheetahs, while likely to be veridic, are excluded from these data for lack of additional verification.

cheetah products in the trade, the detection rate is 21.3%, while the remaining 78.7% are undetected cases. If a possible additional 254 cheetahs are included<sup>4</sup>, then this detection rate would be even lower, at 11.1%.

Region	Live		Products		Total in Trade	Total Confiscated
	Total	Confiscated	Total	Confiscated		
East Africa	128	19	10	9	138	28
Middle East	131	13 (9)	-	-	131	13 (9)
Southern Africa	7	7 (4)	90	15 (13)	97	22 (17)
Asia (other)	-	-	10	10	10	10
Americas	4	4	3	2 (2)	7	6 (2)
Europe	-	-	5	5 (4)	5	5 (4)
So Asia	4	2	--	-	4	2
Oceania	-	-	1	1	1	1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>274</b>	<b>45 (13)</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>42(19)</b>	<b>393</b>	<b>87 (32)</b>

**Table 1. Comparison summary of data**

10. Kenya, Ethiopia and Yemen invite the Standing Committee to take note of the information provided in this document in its deliberations of agenda item 43.

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