Panthera Briefing for Parties
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About Panthera

Panthera is devoted to conserving the world's 40 species of wild cats and their vast ecosystems. Our team of biologists, law enforcement experts, data scientists and wild cat advocates combine cutting-edge research and technology to measure, monitor and recover species with proven techniques to promote coexistence and counter wildlife crime. In cat landscapes around the world, in collaboration with communities and partners, Panthera works to eliminate the most pressing threats to wild cats and preserve biodiversity so that both cats and people can thrive.

Big Cats at CITES SC81

Poaching and the illegal wildlife trade threaten all the big cats and many small cat species. Because of their critical roles in maintaining healthy ecosystems, the decline of these species and their habitats poses a threat to biodiversity worldwide. The agenda for SC81 includes several documents concerning implementation of decisions directly and indirectly impacting big cats and their status in the wild, including jaguars and tigers. Panthera's recommendations on the relevant documents are below. Ms. Karen Wood, Sr. Director of Global Policy, will be in Geneva for SC81 and is available by WhatsApp or email (contact info above) to answer any questions or provide additional information.

Agenda Item 15: Cooperation with Multilateral Environmental Agreements and Other International Organizations

Panthera welcomes the ongoing effort to develop a CITES partnership strategy that is coherent, fit-for-purpose, and able to benefit from emerging opportunities for improved coordination and available resources at international level. Two regional initiatives on big cats—the Joint CITES-CMS African Carnivores Initiative and the Regional Action Plan for Jaguar Conservation—call for close cooperation between the CITES and CMS Secretariats and welcome the participation of the CBD. Some range States of the target species are Parties to CITES but are not Parties to CMS, raising

some challenges. However, the successful implementation of these regional initiatives hinges on cooperation among the Secretariats and many other partners supporting the efforts of range States, promoting efficient use of resources while avoiding duplication of effort. We encourage the Standing Committee to adopt the recommendations in Paragraph 11.

Agenda Item 29: Demand Reduction to Combat Illegal Trade
Panthera was pleased to contribute information related to its Furs for Life program in response to Notification 2026/097 on demand reduction to combat illegal trade in CITES-listed specimens. Panthera's Furs for Life initiative operates in southern Africa and aims to reduce demand for illegally sourced big cat skins, particularly those used for cultural and traditional purposes.

The initiative promotes the use of high-quality, legally produced synthetic alternatives that meet cultural preferences, while simultaneously supporting behavior change within end-user communities. This approach seeks to reduce incentives for illegal offtake by addressing demand drivers directly, rather than relying solely on enforcement.

We concur with the Secretariat that more information sharing from CITES Parties about their demand reduction interventions—including case studies documenting both successes and challenges—would be highly valuable. We consider that lessons from Furs for Life may be transferable to other big cat systems facing similar demand dynamics, as may be the case for other taxa. We note the interest from Parties in addressing demand for jaguars and cheetahs, and we add that many CITES-listed small cat species are illegally traded for pets, which is an area of growing concern.

Panthera supports the recommendations in Para. 40 of the document and stands ready to contribute to expanding the CITES Guidance around this developing area of research and applied science.

Agenda Item 57: Jaguars (*Panthera onca*) (Decision 20.188)
Panthera appreciates the report on the work of the Intersessional Working Group and the drafts submitted by Mexico and Brazil for the Terms of Reference for the Steering Committee of the Intergovernmental Platform for Jaguar Conservation and the Digital Platform. As members of the Intersessional Working Group, Panthera, with the members of the Jaguar 2030 Roadmap Coordination Committee, TRAFFIC and ZSL, provided detailed feedback on the draft documents contained in the Annexes to the present document.

A range State-led governance mechanism is key to implementing the Regional Action Plan for Jaguar Conservation (RAP): to facilitate cooperation amongst all stakeholders, share knowledge, reduce duplication of effort, make efficient use of resources, and leverage regional coordination for community, financial and political support to match the RAP's ambition. We note that only three range States of the 12 represented in the Intersessional Working Group provided input on the draft documents—the TORs for the Steering Committee and the digital platform. We encourage all range States to actively engage at this critical development stage to ensure the Intergovernmental Platform is an inclusive and effective cooperation mechanism that is representative of the whole region.

We note with concern Section 4.3. of the present document proposing that the participation of additional Observers on the Steering Committee be discretionary and on an ad hoc basis. This approach would have the effect of marginalizing key stakeholders who contribute alternative systems of knowledge, technical support, access to networks, multisectoral expertise, financial resources, and more, limiting the Platform's collective impact. We recommend that stakeholders from a variety of sectors, especially representatives of Indigenous people and local communities and organizations that can provide regional and landscape-level insights, be included as Permanent Observers on the Steering Committee along with the representatives of the relevant conventions and IGOs.

We suggest that these Observer organizations and individuals be subject to term limits consistent with the other Steering Committee members to ensure that a diversity of ideas and voices inform implementation of the RAP.

Panthera looks forward to working with the range States and other members of the Intersessional Working Group to further develop these core documents, and to address its additional mandate to identify and evaluate potential sources of financing.

Finally, we note that several members of the Intersessional Working Group are range States of the Joint CITES-CMS African Carnivores Initiative (ACI). In this regard, we hope that they may share their experiences with forming a governance structure to operationalize the ACI Programme of Work as there may be lessons learned of value to jaguar range States and others.

Agenda Item 58: Implementation of Resolution 12.5 (Rev.COP20): Tigers (*Panthera tigris*) in Captivity

Panthera acknowledges the progress reported by some Parties with facilities that are breeding or housing tigers for non-conservation purposes to implement elements of

the methodological approach spelled out in Decision 20.189 to improve those facilities' conservation value as well as to end activities at facilities where there is none. However, we note the very limited response in terms of numbers of relevant Parties reporting and the lack of substantive information provided. Thus, in its report, the Secretariat stated it was unable to accurately assess to what extent Parties were implementing the guidance.

The lack of robust reporting leaves open to question whether or how effectively Parties with facilities that are breeding or housing tigers for non-conservation purposes are implementing the measures agreed by CITES to prevent these facilities' involvement in illegal tiger trade.

To increase uptake of the methodological approach, we encourage the Standing Committee to adopt the recommendation requesting the Secretariat to prepare a document outlining the approach for consideration at SC82. This can utilize detailed guidance developed by relevant experts, such as the General Guidance for the Inspection of Captive Tiger Facilities, Definition and evaluation of conservation breeding of captive tigers and the World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Education Strategy.

We also encourage the Standing Committee to adopt the recommendation to include the methodological approach in the CITES resolution related to tigers, recognizing its long-term nature.

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