

From: Theophilus Freeman <theofreeman50@gmail.com>
To: info@cites.org
Date: 25/07/2016 11:43
Subject: Liberia CoP17 Proposals

Dear Sir,

Please find Liberia position in support of notification nos 2016/043.

Kind regards,

Theo Freeman

Attention: Mr. John Scanlon, CITES Secretary General
International Environment House
Chemin des Anémones
CH-1219 Châtelaine, Geneva
Switzerland

18 July 2016

Dear Mr. Scanlon,

The government of Liberia takes due note of Notification No. 2016/043 which gives Parties the opportunity to provide comments on the listing proposals submitted for consideration at CITES CoP17 scheduled to take place in Johannesburg, South Africa on 24 September-05 October 2016.

In response to this Notification, the government of Liberia wishes to submit the following remarks.

Support for all pangolins listing proposals (proposals 8 through 12)

The government of Liberia is a proponent country of the proposal to list African pangolins in CITES Appendix I (proposal 12). This proposal was submitted after in-depth consultations with fellow African and Asian range States including during the first meeting of pangolin range States which was held 24-26 June 2015 in Da Nang, Viet Nam; and the Dakar meeting which was held between 18 West and Central African countries in March 2016.

These consultations have clearly shown that all existing Asian and Africa pangolins species:

- are particularly vulnerable because of their biological traits (inability to survive or reproduce in captivity, low reproductive rate, very specialized dietary requirements)

- are classified by the IUCN as Threatened (species listed in the IUCN Red List as either Vulnerable, Endangered or Critically Endangered) and are experiencing population declines
- are increasingly targeted for illegal international trade due to an expanding demand for their products (meat, scales and live specimens)
- yield products in trade that are impossible to distinguish at the species-level for non-specialists (similarity of appearance of pangolins scales, lack of easy access to DNA testing for seized pangolins products)
- meet the listing criteria for CITES Appendix I as per Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP 16) and necessitate a precautionary approach.

We consider that limiting the pangolins listing to only a limited selection of pangolins species would hinder enforcement efforts because of the difficulties distinguishing pangolin products (meat and scales) to species level, and potentially increase demand for the remaining Appendix II listed pangolin species because of the message this would send to potential consumers. We view the listing proposals for pangolins species as a package that Parties should support, in order to help secure the protection of all pangolin species from international trade. The government of Liberia therefore urges Parties to support the listing of all pangolins species in CITES Appendix I and to adopt proposals 8 to 12.

Support for the proposal to list *Pterocarpus erinaceus* in CITES Appendix II (proposal 57)

The government of Liberia is blessed with a rich forest resource and is a range State for the species *Pterocarpus erinaceus*. Our consultations with other West African countries have indicated that just as in Liberia, *Pterocarpus erinaceus* is heavily targeted by illegal traders in other range States, principally to supply logs to China for the production of high-priced furniture. We consider that this is a very serious threat which, once again, reflects the involvement of transnational organized criminal syndicates in poaching and illegal wildlife trade, and the increasing number of species they target in the West African subregion, making the protection of our species extremely challenging.

Our regional consultations indicated that without the support that an Appendix II listing provides, *Pterocarpus erinaceus* is likely to continue declining to levels that may threaten its survival in some areas of its West African range.

We note that in most range States, the species is already protected by national legislation but that despite these efforts, international demand for African rosewood is leading to increasing levels of illegal exports to supply Asian markets. Regulation of international trade is urgently needed to facilitate closer trade monitoring and stronger enforcement.

Liberia supports the listing of the species in CITES Appendix II and strongly believes that CITES Parties must encourage range States in the efforts they deploy to strengthen the regulation of international trade by adopting proposal 57 at CoP17.

Support for the listing of African lions in CITES Appendix I (proposal 4)

Liberia is not a range States for African lions but is deeply concerned by recent and ongoing declines in the species reported in the latest IUCN Red List assessment published in 2015. We note in particular that across West Africa the total lion population is estimated to be just over 400 individuals which has led to the species being regionally classified as ‘Critically Endangered’ by the IUCN. The IUCN assessment inferred that across the African continent, lion populations have reduced by approximately 43% over the past 21 years (approximately three lion generations, 1993-2014), and that this rate of decline is recognized by the authors of the assessment as conservative. Significant declines in lion populations are of great concern and we consider that the need to provide the highest CITES standard of protection for African lions has now become urgent in order to protect the species against the increasing threat of international trade.

Liberia, as a developing country heavily targeted by poachers and traffickers, has experienced first-hand how difficult wildlife law enforcement can be. Wildlife traffickers use elaborate techniques which are often difficult for field officers to identify. Consequently, Liberia is opposed to any CITES decision recommending a split-listing of the species with some lion populations remaining in CITES Appendix II while others are listed in CITES Appendix I. The origin of lion specimens cannot be easily identified in trade and closing commercial trade for some populations while allowing products from others to enter the international marketplace will present a high risk to populations that are most threatened. A split listing would also hinder efforts to reduce demand for lion body parts. We consider that CITES has the duty to take all measures in its power to curtail demand for lion specimens and to ensure that lions throughout their entire range recover before commercial trade can be allowed to resume.

We therefore strongly support the proposal submitted to list all African lions in CITES Appendix I.

Support for the listing of African grey parrots (proposal 19) in CITES Appendix I

Liberia is a range State of grey parrots and is deeply concerned about field reports indicating accelerating declines in the species throughout the country and region. Our consultations have indicated that other range States are also experiencing declines due to the increasing international demand for parrots to supply the pet trade. Levels of illegal trade in the species are increasing and the species is threatened across our subregion.

In our view, recurring declines indicate that the current CITES listing and the measures adopted by CITES to date to ensure that international trade levels remain sustainable, are insufficient to properly protect the species. We consider that an Appendix I listing has become an urgent conservation measure for the species throughout its range.

We strongly support proposal 19. Stopping commercial exports through an Appendix I listing is necessary to curtail declines.

Support for the inclusion of African pygmy chameleons of the genera *Rhampholeon* spp. and *Rieppeleon* spp. in Appendix II (proposal 27).

Liberia is not a range State of the species but supports its listing in CITES Appendix II as an important measure to ensure proper regulation of international trade. African pygmy chameleons are the last group of chameleons not yet covered by CITES. The proposal clearly indicates that there is a demand for these

species in international trade and that this group of species includes Endangered and Vulnerable species that are very similar in appearance to other species targeted by trade. We also note that these species are made vulnerable by their biological traits (including a low reproductive rate which makes them susceptible to over-collection).

We consider that CITES must support range States in their efforts to regulate international trade in African pygmy chameleons by adopting proposal 27.

Thank you for taking our remarks into consideration.

Sincerely,



Authority of Liberia

