

Paola Bouley
Director and Co-Founder,
Gorongosa Lion Project

Jane Goodall
Founder, The Jane Goodall
Institute
UN Messenger of Peace

Tammy Hoth-Hanssen
Director, The AfriCat
Foundation

Hans de Iongh
Associate Professor,
Conservation Biology
Department CML,
Leiden University;
Guest Professor in Habitat
Conservation
Antwerpen University

Dereck Joubert
National Geographic Explorer
in Residence;
Conservationists and Filmmaker

Beverly Joubert
National Geographic Explorer
in Residence;
Conservationists and
Filmmaker

Mamadou Daha Kane
Head of the Monitoring and
Evaluation Office, Senegalese
National Parks Directorate

Kelly Marnewick
Manager, Carnivore
Conservation Programme,
Endangered Wildlife Trust

Virginia McKenna OBE
Co-Founder and Trustee,
Born Free Foundation

Sarel van der Merwe
Chair, African Lion Working
Group;
IUCN SSC Cat Specialist Group

Simon Morgan
Director, Wildlife ACT

Kristin Nowell
Director, Cat Action Treasury

Bruce D. Patterson
MacArthur Curator of Mammals
Field Museum, Chicago

Joyce H. Poole
Co-Director ElephantVoices

Claudio Sillero
Associate Professor of
Conservation Biology, Deputy
Director of the WildCRU
University of Oxford

Will Travers OBE
President and CEO,
Born Free Foundation

Hanlie Winterbach
Wildlife Ecologist,
Tau Consultants (PTY) LTD;
IUCN SSC Cat Specialist Group

June 24, 2016

Letter in support of listing all African populations of *Panthera leo* on CITES Appendix I:

The undersigned scientists and conservationists strongly support the proposal submitted by nine African lion range states - Niger, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria, and Togo - to list all African populations of the lion (*Panthera leo*) on Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) at the 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties that will take place in September/October 2016. In addition to the nine range state proponents, the proposal was supported by the majority of Parties that participated in the regional CITES coordination meeting held in Dakar, Senegal, on 15-17 March 2016.

For too long wildlife management authorities have overlooked the continuing decline of African lion populations because *Panthera leo* (subpopulation *Panthera leo leo* located in India and western and central Africa and subpopulation *Panthera leo melanochaita* located in eastern and southern Africa) was mistakenly thought to be abundant, healthy and wide-ranging. As a result, critical conservation measures needed to address the major threats to lion survival - human-lion conflict, habitat and prey loss, disease, and unsustainable take for international trade in lion trophies and lion parts - have not been adequately implemented. Given the recently documented precipitous declines of the *Panthera leo* populations, CITES now has a key role to play in controlling international trade in lions and lion body parts.

From an estimated global population of more than one million lions in the 1800s, and around half a million as recently as the 1940s, there may now be less than 20,000 wild lions left in Africa. The 2015 IUCN Red List assessment inferred that *Panthera leo* has undergone a population reduction of an estimated 43% over three lion generations, 1993-2014. The authors emphasized that this inferred rate was based on the assessment of well monitored sample populations, and the actual rate among unmonitored populations could be higher. There was also an observed rate of decline of 60% in sample populations in most of the African range States, with the exception of Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe where subpopulations increased by 11%. However, some of these populations that are growing are in heavily-managed and fenced reserves which limit their long-term growth potential and therefore their ability to contribute to the continental recovery of the species.

In the majority of its remaining range, the lion meets the IUCN Red List criteria for *Endangered* with the inferred rate of decline over 50% in three generations. In the region of West Africa the total population is estimated to be just over 400 individuals. This population is now considered regionally *Critically Endangered*.

According to the 2015 IUCN Red List assessment, *Panthera leo* occupies only 8% of historical range, lions have been recently extirpated from twelve African countries, and possible extirpation is suspected in another four. A further 50% decline is predicted in West, Central and East Africa, over the next 20 years, in the absence of concerted action. The species meets the biological criteria for an Appendix I listing by virtue of a marked observed ongoing and projected decline in the population size in the wild, and small and declining size of national populations and/or very small subpopulations across much of its range.

A growing global trade in African lion parts for commercial, personal, and hunting trophy purposes is likely having a compounding and detrimental impact on the species. The United States is the largest importer of trophies in the world, and between 2005 and 2014 the U.S. imported trophies of an estimated 5,600 African lions. European Union countries imported trophies of an estimated 3,170 African lions over the same period. In response to this growing trade, countries have already begun to take individual action with Australia, France, and the Netherlands prohibiting import of lion trophies, as well as the U.S. listing the African lion under the Endangered Species Act and permitting lion trophy imports only when the import will enhance the survival of the species in the wild.

The 2015 IUCN Red List assessment recognizes that poorly regulated trophy hunting contributes to lion population declines. In addition to prohibiting commercial trade in lion specimens, transferring all African lion populations to CITES Appendix I would require Parties to demonstrate the sustainability of hunting operations through the setting of scientifically-based quotas, establishment of non-detriment findings, and through the requirement of export and import permits to be issued for parts traded for hunting trophy purposes.

Another major emerging threat to lions is the trade in parts like skins and bones, with nearly 30,000 lion items legally exported from 50 countries between 2005 and 2014, more than a third from wild lions. In the communique that emerged from the lion range State meeting which took place in Entebbe, Uganda, on 30-31 May 2016, participants recognized increasing trade in lion bones as a main threat to lion populations. Therefore the species is known to be in trade, and trade has or may have a detrimental impact on the status of the species. There are also concerns that lion bones may in some circumstances be used as a 'covert substitute' for tiger bone products in Asia, potentially stimulating demand for tiger bone and incentivizing further poaching of endangered tigers and other big cat species (see CITES SC65 Doc. 38 Annex I).

An Appendix I listing would ensure that all possible measures are taken under CITES to halt and reverse the serious and continuing decline in lion populations through the strict control of international trade. The listing is also critical because it elevates awareness about the devastating decline of *Panthera leo* populations and promotes increased regional conservation efforts. All *Panthera leo* populations must be listed on Appendix I because a split-listing – with some populations on Appendix I and some on Appendix II – may complicate law enforcement efforts due to the difficulty of distinguishing the source of specimens and the opportunities such a scenario would provide for the laundering of illegal lion products into legal trade.

There is no compelling reason to permit commercial trade in lions (or any other big cat), given the threats to their survival, and therefore Appendix I is the most appropriate listing. The listing is an urgent priority and we call on all CITES Parties to support the proposal at CITES CoP17.

Sincerely,

The image shows a collection of approximately 15 handwritten signatures in various colors (black, blue, purple) and styles, arranged in three rows. Some signatures are accompanied by printed names or are clearly legible. The signatures include:

- Row 1: Jane Goodall, J. A. D. J. (with a large flourish), Virginia Mkeuma Kiria Tuccum
- Row 2: C. Sieff, S. Penne, M. S. (with a large flourish), M. H. (with a large flourish), M. H. (with a large flourish), S. (with a large flourish), S. (with a large flourish)
- Row 3: X. H. (with a large flourish), S. H. (with a large flourish), S. H. (with a large flourish), S. H. (with a large flourish)