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Wildlife Trade and Biosecurity Branch
Department of Environment and Energy
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Via email: AustraliaCITESCoP18@environment.gov.au

To Whom it May Concern

CITES CoP18 - submission from RSPCA Australia

RSPCA Australia welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission for the forthcoming CITES CoP 18 meeting in May. RSPCA Australia is concerned about the impact of wildlife trade on both animal welfare and conservation grounds. In terms of animal welfare, taking animals from the wild poses serious risks including pain, injury or distress arising from the capture, transport, handling and long-term confinement of these animals, and potential effects on the ecosystem from where they are taken. The RSPCA has several policies pertaining to wildlife, including relating to international trade, utilisation and killing of wild animals for commercial purposes (see Appendix 1).

RSPCA Australia is concerned that, despite CITES providing a forum for international agreement and collaboration, the illegal wildlife trade is left relatively unchecked and verification processes especially for destinations, require strengthening. A recent example of the latter was reported in the media questioning the authenticity of a self-proclaimed zoo and conservation agency in Germany which imports rare birds and which has been reported to authorities; (https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/dec/11/legitimate-zoo-obscur-german-group-endangered-parrots-act?fbclid=IwAR0ojl6mDkGQtJ2m-5yr0MCrZPyXeTZ4Hg-ZV_lk8wbzNuGSqZJbbPZZJrY). This and no doubt other businesses, seemingly operate legitimately but without adequate investigation, it is difficult to determine if all transactions are done lawfully.

Greater resourcing required

The global legal wildlife trade is worth billions of dollars annually. Given that considerable money is gained through the exporting and sale of wildlife, it is recommended that the CITES CoP consider applying fees for each transaction to enable upgrading and surveillance to improve data collection and analysis as well as enforcement to tackle the ever increasing cruel illegal trade.

Comments pertaining to CITES CoP18 working documents

- **Combating Wildlife Cybercrime** (Docs. 33.1 and 33.2)

Given that this is a growing area for illegal traders and one which is difficult to police, it is essential that CITES authorities raise awareness amongst online sale platform providers as well as monitor and enforce laws.

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- **Appropriate and Acceptable Destinations (Docs. 44.1 and 44.2)**

As stated previously, the RSPCA does not support the removal of animals from the wild for trade or commercial purposes but whilst this is permitted internationally, it is imperative that legal standards are fully described and mandated for destinations accepting animals under CITES. In particular, space and environmental enrichment requirements must be included as well as consideration of the social needs of specific species. With regard to elephants, RSPCA Australia urges that elephants are not traded for entertainment purposes and that trade should be restricted to within elephants' natural range and in circumstances requiring wild populations to be boosted or where in-situ conservation programs operate.

- **Closure of domestic ivory markets (Doc 69.5)**

RSPCA Australia strongly supports the closure of domestic ivory markets as legal markets provide opportunities for laundering illegal ivory and undermine efforts by countries which have banned the sale of ivory.

- **Big Cats**

- **Draft decisions on Asian Big Cats: India (Doc. 71.2)**

RSPCA Australia supports the cessation of tiger farming due to the inherent cruelty, risk to conservation of this species and links to illegal trading. The breeding of tigers for commercial purposes should also cease.

- **African Lion: Nigeria, Niger, Togo (Doc. 76.2)**

RSPCA Australia is concerned about the increasing trade (particularly illegal) in lion body parts and recognises that this draft resolution will assist in improving the protection and conservation of African Lions.

- **Jaguars: Costa Rica and Mexico, Peru (Doc. 77.1 & 77.2)**

As with the increase demand for lion body parts (particularly bone products), RSPCA Australia is also concerned about illegal trading in jaguar body parts and supports initiatives to prevent such illegal trade.

The following table provides responses to the proposals which have been submitted for consideration at the CITES COP18.

Comments on Proposals for Amendment to Appendix 1 & II

Proposal Number	Proposed Amendment	Comment
CoP18 Prop 2 <i>Saiga tatarica</i> (Saiga antelope)	Transfer from App II to App I	Support. Saiga has been listed as Critically Endangered in the IUCN Red List since 2002 and this species is threatened with extinction and is affected by trade, as per Article II, paragraph 1 of the CITES treaty.
CoP18 Prop 5 <i>Giraffa Camelopardalis</i> (Giraffe)	Include in Appendix II	Support. Giraffes have been listed as ‘Vulnerable’ in the IUCN Red List since 2016. Giraffes satisfy Criterion B in Annex 2a of Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP17) relating to Appendix II listings: “... regulation of trade in the species is required to ensure that the harvest of specimens from the wild is not reducing the wild population to a level at which its survival might be threatened by continued harvesting or other influences.” Given the low reproductive rate and trend in trophy hunting giraffes, it would be prudent to include giraffes in Appendix I.
CoP18 Prop 6 <i>Aonyx cinereus</i> (Small-clawed otter)	Transfer from Appendix II to I	Support. Small-clawed otters are listed as ‘vulnerable’ on the IUCN Red List due to population decline caused by habitat loss and exploitation.
CoP18 Prop 7 <i>Lutrogale perspicillata</i> (Smooth-coated otter)	Transfer from Appendix II to I	Support. Small-clawed otters are listed as ‘vulnerable’ on the IUCN Red List due to inferred population decline caused by habitat loss and exploitation.
CoP18 Prop 8 <i>Ceratotherium simum simum</i> (Southern white rhinoceros) Eswatini population	Remove existing annotation for the population of Eswatini (currently referred to as population of Swaziland)	Oppose. The current annotation to the Appendix II listing of the Eswatini population of rhinos allows commercial trade only in live animals and hunting trophies. Removal of the annotation would allow trade in rhino horn as well.

		Overall poaching levels remain high and allowing legal rhino horn to be sold creates opportunities for illegal laundering. Without substantial resources, enforcement is difficult and allowing rhino horn onto the market will erode good progress in reducing demand.
CoP18 Prop 9 <i>Ceratotherium simum</i> <i>simum</i> (Southern white rhinoceros)	Transfer from Appendix I to Appendix II with the following annotation: For the exclusive purpose of allowing international trade in: a) live animals to appropriate and acceptable destinations; and b) hunting trophies. All other specimens shall be deemed to be specimens of species included in Appendix I and the trade in them shall be regulated accordingly.	Oppose. Based on the following statement in the proposal that the current population is under threat, this proposal is not supported. Until poaching is controlled, this species must remain in Appendix 1. <i>'Illegal killing and illegal trade in rhinoceros products constitute the greatest threat to this species. Since 2012, Namibia has experienced an increase in losses of rhinoceros from illegal killing. A concerted effort is being made and will need to continue to be made to reverse the trend, in order to sustain population growth and maintain the economic, tourism, social and community value/benefits of rhinoceros.'</i>
CoP18 Prop 11 <i>Loxodonta Africana</i> (African elephant)	Amend existing Appendix II listing annotation to allow stockpile ivory sales to CITES approved trading partners at any time in the future.	Oppose. Any legal market in ivory creates opportunities for illegal laundering. There is concern that the trade is not adequately controlled to prevent illegal laundering unless substantial resources were dedicated to preventing this.
CoP18 Prop 12 <i>Loxodonta Africana</i> (African elephant)	Transfer from Appendix II to I	Conditional support/abstain. Due to elephants being nomadic and therefore crossing borders, they should be listed under Appendix I throughout Africa. RSPCA Australia understands that this proposal may jeopardise all elephants being listed under Appendix 1 and so consideration should be given to abstaining from voting on this proposal. Instead, discussions should focus on Document 69.5 'Ban on domestic ivory sale', which if

		successful would greatly reduce reliance on the Appendix listing to protect elephants.
CoP18 Prop 32 <i>Ctenosaura spp.</i> (Sping-tailed iguanas)	Include in Appendix II	Support.
CoP18 Prop 36 <i>Geochelone elegans</i> (Star tortoise)	Transfer from Appendix II to Appendix I	Support.
CoP18 Prop 37 <i>Malachochersus tornieri</i> (Pancake tortoise)	Transfer from Appendix II to Appendix I	Support.
CoP18 Prop 38 <i>Hyalinobatrachium spp.</i> , <i>Centrolene spp.</i> , <i>Cochranella spp.</i> & <i>Sachatamia spp.</i> (Glass frogs)	Include in Appendix II	Support.
CoP18 Prop 42 <i>Isurus oxyrinchus</i> & <i>Isurus paucus</i> (Mako sharks)	Include in Appendix II	Support.
CoP18 Prop 43 <i>Glaucostegus spp.</i> (Guitarfishes)	Include in Appendix II	Support.

In conclusion, CITES plays a critical role in protecting wildlife around the globe and parties should use the 'precautionary principle' when making decisions, as too little protection will see the further extinction of many species. This can be avoided through stronger laws, increased surveillance, better enforcement and greater penalties.

Should you require further information regarding this submission, please don't hesitate to contact me via email; devans@rspca.org.au

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on these very important issues. We would greatly appreciate a copy of the Department's report to the CITES CoP18 Meeting, when available.

Kind regards



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APPENDIX 1

RSPCA Policy E01 Wildlife - General principles

- 1.6 RSPCA Australia supports the ratification by the Australian government of international treaties, conventions and agreements which serve to protect biodiversity and promote the humane treatment of wild animals.

RSPCA Policy E04 Utilisation of wild animals

4.1 Farming of wild animals

- 4.1.1 RSPCA Australia is opposed to the taking of animals from the wild for the purpose of farming (defined as the breeding, rearing and slaughter of animals for commercial purposes), due to the risk of pain, injury or distress arising from the capture, transport, handling and long-term confinement of these animals, and potential effects on the ecosystem from where they are taken.

4.2 Hunting of wild animals

- 4.2.1 RSPCA Australia is opposed to the hunting of any animal for sport.
- 4.2.2 RSPCA Australia is opposed to open seasons on duck, quail, deer and other 'game' species, and to the breeding and release of animals into 'game parks' for the purpose of hunting for sport.
- 4.2.3 Where wild animals are legitimately hunted for subsistence, this must be conducted humanely and with regard for the conservation status of the species involved.

4.3 Killing of wild animals for commercial purposes

- 4.3.1 RSPCA Australia is opposed to the killing of wild animals for commercial utilisation (i.e. for food or other animal products) unless this is carried out as part of a wild animal management program that meets the criteria specified in Policy E2.

RSPCA Policy E06 Import and export of wild animals

- 6.1 RSPCA Australia is opposed to the import or export of animals taken from the wild as the capture, transportation, confinement and acclimatisation of wild animals causes them unacceptable distress and suffering.
- 6.2 Export of captive-bred native animals should only be permitted for non-commercial purposes from a government-approved facility in Australia to an equivalent government-approved facility overseas where adequate care can be guaranteed.