

THE HUMAN FACE OF CONSERVATION HIGHLIGHTED BY COP16

When the world's largest wildlife trade summit concluded on 14 March in Bangkok, Thailand, conservationists could rejoice over a number of decisions for real conservation and enhanced cooperation on the great challenges lying ahead for a number of species.

FACE, representing the collective interest of 7 million European hunters and citizens, supports the constructive and logical conclusion of the 16th Conference of the Parties (CoP16) of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES); namely that conservation success lies in the respect for and the inclusion of local communities' needs in CITES decisions, because the social and economic benefits derived from sustainable use, including revenues from trophy hunting, provide sustainable incentives for local people to conserve wildlife.

This approach – '**conservation with a human face**' – is today generally recognised as an effective way of conserving wildlife. Already with Resolution Conf. 13.2 (rev. CoP14)¹, the Conference of the Parties officially established the link between CITES and the Addis Ababa Principles and Guidelines for the Sustainable Use of Biodiversity (adopted by the UN Convention on Biological Diversity). The positive role that the sustainable use of wildlife, including through hunting, may play is acknowledged by a majority of Parties (including the EU Member States), the European Commission, the CITES Secretariat along with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and by many other stakeholders in the global conservation movement.²

WHY BLANKET BANS ON SUSTAINABLE WILDLIFE USE IS NOT AN OPTION

The CITES web of resolutions and decisions by the Parties over the years³ have singled out **three key principles in realising successful conservation**: 1) the strict adherence to scientific data, facts, numbers and population dynamics, which in some cases allows the use of wildlife and in some other cases does not (i.e. sustainability); 2) taking into account the needs, including consumptive use of wildlife, and traditional knowledge of local communities (conservation incentivisation among people living with the wildlife); 3) effective measures and collaboration to combat organised, international poaching and illegal trade networks (enforcement).

The absolute dismissal of the categorical opposition to *any* use of wildlife, as advocated by the ideologically-driven animal rights' agenda (i.e. blanket bans), is implicit in the fundamental

¹ <http://www.cites.org/eng/res/13/13-02R14.php>

² One landmark in this respect is the IUCN Policy Statement on Sustainable Use of Wild Living Resources (Amman, October 2000): "*Use of wild living resources, if sustainable, is an important conservation tool because the social and economic benefits derived from such use provide incentives for people to conserve them*". This statement must not be misquoted or misused as excuse for depleting wildlife for the sake of people. Equally, it must not be completely ignored on the basis of ideological considerations which have little to do with facts and science.

³ <http://www.cites.org/eng/dec/intro.php>



principles of CITES. It has been widely recognised that strict protection as an end in itself increases the risk of increased **human-wildlife conflicts**, especially for potential conflict species such as the elephant, lion, leopard, cheetah, etc. This has the ultimate consequence of removing the incentives for the people living with wildlife to conserve it, and in the worst case increases the risk of poaching. This is particularly true in poor areas: blanket bans on drawing tangible and sustainable value from wildlife, where that same wildlife compromises the safety of humans or is leading to negative competition with agriculture and livestock (e.g. over water, space, pasture access routes, etc.) leads to an increased risk of poaching.⁴

THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT'S RESOLUTION ON COP16

For the aforementioned reasons, FACE regrets the ill-advised wording of the European Parliament's resolution of 6 February 2013 on the EU strategic objectives for the CoP16⁵. This resolution defied two of the very key conservation principles of CITES: science-based decisions and respecting and engaging local communities in conservation action. In short, the text categorically opposed *any* use of wildlife and supported any listing or up-listing of species in the CITES Annexes and rejected any down-listing or the slightest suggestion of sustainable trade, against the scientific advice of the conservation community, notably TRAFFIC and the joint programme of IUCN and WWF that provides impartial and reliable data about wildlife trade.

As expected, the Parties at CoP16 in Bangkok rejected the European Parliament's recommendations one after another. FACE sees a real risk that initiatives such as the resolution adopted by the European Parliament ahead of CoP16, although non-binding in nature, instead of contributing constructively to important wildlife and nature issues, result in side-lining this important democratic body of the peoples of Europe from the international conservation debate, as being unscientific and not respecting the need for engaging people living with nature in the preservation of its wildlife. The importance of respecting the last point was emphasised by the Parties at CoP16 in the adoption of a text recognising that the implementation of CITES is better achieved with the engagement of rural communities, especially those which are traditionally dependent on CITES-listed species for their livelihoods.

⁴ See on this topic - the proceedings of the Symposium on Community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) for the conservation of CITES-listed species which was organised by the Austrian Ministry of the Environment and the European Commission in Vienna, Austria, in May 2011, http://ec.europa.eu/environment/cites/pdf/symposium_proceedings.pdf - the presentations at the March 2012 Conference of the interdisciplinary international research project HUNT, being financed by the EU's 7th Framework program, <http://fp7hunt.net/HUNTConference2012.aspx> – the conclusions of the Joint European Parliament Intergroup Meeting of 27 January 2010 between the "Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development" and the "Sustainable Hunting, Biodiversity, Countryside Activities and Forestry" Intergroups, <http://www.face-europe.org/Intergroup/Minutes/2010/Minutes.27.01.2010.EN.pdf>

⁵ <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P7-TA-2013-0047+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>



COP16 CONFIRMED THAT SUSTAINABLE USE IS STILL AT THE CORE OF CITES

POLAR BEARS: FACE commends that the majority of Parties and the large conservation-orientated organisations, such as the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), TRAFFIC,⁶ WWF⁷ and the CITES Secretariat⁸ joined FACE in opposing stricter trade measures for the **Polar bear** (*Ursus maritimus*). Such stricter measures could have been detrimental to the species' conservation by directly hitting Inuit subsistence-based livelihoods and thereby removing their incentives to continue managing this important resource as they have done for centuries. In line with this, a majority of Parties also rejected a proposal for new speculative climate change criteria through an extreme precautionary approach as a basis for decision-making. Instead Parties adopted a document clarifying that the current provisions of CITES are already sufficiently comprehensive and flexible to take climate change science into account in decision-making.

RHINOCEROS: FACE welcomed Kenya's withdrawal of its proposal to impose a moratorium on trophy hunting exports from the White rhinoceros (*Ceratotherium simum simum*) from South Africa and Swaziland. FACE, joined by organisations like WWF, TRAFFIC, IUCN and the CITES Secretariat,⁹ came out in defence of the significant role played by trophy hunting in the conservation and recovery of rhino populations in South Africa, the country holding more than 95% of the population. The economic returns from sustainable trophy hunting are instrumental in encouraging private landowners to conserve the rhino and contributing resources to fighting illegal poaching.

It is important to recognise that there is an increasing and worrying poaching of rhinoceros and illegal trade in the species, in particular driven by demand in Vietnam. Parties at CoP16 therefore adopted new decisions on enhanced enforcement based on intelligence-sharing with particular emphasis on Vietnam. These decisions should help to end the rhino poaching without punishing hunters and without harming rhino conservation by eliminating the important revenues derived from legitimate rhino trophy hunting.

ELEPHANTS: Burkina Faso and Kenya withdrew their heavily criticised proposal to prevent any further ivory sales from the African elephant (*Loxodonta africana*) until after November 2017. FACE welcomed this withdrawal, as it would have undermined the agreement on a moratorium on sales reached at CoP14, which explicitly relates only to Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe. Moreover, the proposal would unjustifiably have penalised African range States having been successful in their elephant management and some of which are now faced with management problems of how to sustain the increased populations. Although an increase in elephant poaching has occurred in Africa over the last couple of years, with Kenya identified as a major transit point for illegal ivory shipments, a number of scientific studies presented showed

⁶ IUCN/TRAFFIC Analyses of the Proposals: <http://www.cites.org/common/cop/16/inf/E-CoP16i-14.pdf>

⁷ WWF CoP16 positions: http://awsassets.panda.org/downloads/cites_cop16_proposals_digital_version.pdf

⁸ CITES Secretariat's Recommendations:

http://www.cites.org/eng/cop/16/doc/Proposals_with_Secretariat_comments.pdf

⁹ *Ibid.*



that elephant populations in southern African countries such as Namibia, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Botswana are in good shape and are well managed.

LIONS: Parties accepted to extend the validity of the review of the Lion (*Panthera leo*) until CoP17. Namibia and Kenya will make the periodic review report on lions to the next Animals Committee meeting, one year from CoP16. Hunters' organisations like FACE and major lion range states, have favoured this review as part of preventing any premature, ideological-driven proposal to uplift the lion to Appendix I at this time. Any decision needs to be taken on the basis of the best available science.

POSITIVE CONCLUSIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE USE THROUGH HUNTING

FACE is pleased to see that its recommendations have been followed for practically all of our key issues as outlined in our Conservation Guide¹⁰. This confirms that conservation through sustainable use and the important role of hunters are still at the core of CITES.

So what lies ahead of us? The conclusion of the lion review is scheduled for 2014. South Africa has indicated that it might consider legalising trade in rhino horn as a way of combating poaching and illegal trade. The question on how to handle the valuable stockpiles of elephant ivory from natural mortality and seizures of illegal ivory shipments is still an open question. The money they could bring in could be used to fund the combat against poaching and illegal ivory markets.

FACE encourages the Commission to continue its constructive support on livelihoods issues, as showcased by the organisation in May 2011 of the Vienna Symposium on Community-based natural resource management programmes and the Commission's support of the adoption at CoP16 of a text recognising that the implementation of CITES is better achieved with the engagement of rural communities. The enhanced integration of the importance of people, of their livelihoods – the human face of conservation – should be clearly reflected in Parties conservation strategies.

Work with FACE to ensure that the overall positive recognition of conservation taken by Parties during CoP16 is reinforced during the next CoP17 scheduled to convene in 2016 in South Africa.

ENDNOTES:

- Decisions and Resolutions adopted by the Parties at CoP16 as well as Summary Records of the discussions can be consulted on the CITES website: <http://www.cites.org/eng/cop/index.php>
- More information on FACE's work on CITES is available on our website: <http://www.face.eu/international-agreements/cites>

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¹⁰ http://www.face.eu/sites/default/files/attachments/on-screen_version_face_cites_cop16_guide.pdf

