

058 Addressing wildlife trafficking and the management of seizure or confiscated live wild animals

CONCERNED that, despite the establishment of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in 1973, wildlife trafficking remains a cause of species extinction today;

CONCERNED ALSO that wildlife trafficking is the fourth most lucrative transnational organised crime activity in the world, and that revenues from crimes that affect the environment are increasing;

CONCERNED FURTHER about the lack of resources, training, and sufficient care centres, in many regions for the proper care, long-term maintenance, and rehabilitation of seized live wild animals, which may result in compromised animal welfare, poor conservation outcomes, and missed opportunities for reintroduction or appropriate placement;

NOTING that a critical component in countering wildlife trafficking is the management of seized or confiscated live wild animals by government officials;

NOTING also the IUCN *Guidelines for the management of confiscated, live organisms* and the *CITES guidelines for the disposal of confiscated live animals* [Annex 1 of CITES Resolution Conf. 17.8 (Rev. CoP19)], as well as the One Health approach;

RECALLING the IUCN SSC Position statement on the role of botanic gardens, aquariums, and zoos in species conservation, and HIGHLIGHTING the essential contribution of these institutions in the management of seized and confiscated wildlife;

EMPHASISING that when conducted in line with applicable guidelines, the return of seized or confiscated wild animals or their healthy offspring to their natural environment is a desirable solution but UNDERSTANDING, however, that management options for seized or confiscated animals are often dictated by a lack of information on the site of origin, and if known, by the availability and sustainability of such habitat; or concerns regarding the risks of genetic pollution of wild populations, the introduction of invasive species, or the release of pathogens and viruses; or because the physical and psychological state of individuals may require experienced care to achieve their rehabilitation;

AWARE of the value that some of the seized specimens may represent for the in and ex situ conservation of the species.

FURTHER UNDERSTANDING that effectively addressing trafficking and the management of seizures and confiscations requires combining international, national, and subnational competencies, as well as education and awareness-raising of stakeholders.

The IUCN World Conservation Congress 2025, at its session in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates:

1. REQUESTS the Director General and Commissions to:

- a. promote the IUCN *Guidelines for the management of confiscated, live organisms* with governments; and
- b. promote the enhancement, or where needed creation of a network of national and subnational focal points to work with authorities on strengthening how States address wildlife trafficking and the management of seizures and confiscations, including the identification and monitoring of seized or confiscated specimens and the appropriate approach for placement and care; and

2. ENCOURAGES States to:

- a. enhance the capacity of relevant authorities and non-State actors through the provision of resources, information and training focused on investigating wildlife trafficking, as well as the identification and humane handling of seized and confiscated specimens, with particular attention to

promoting animal welfare and supporting front-line officers and placement facilities in effectively managing seizures, confiscations and their aftermath;

b. work with prosecutors and judges to publish and disseminate findings from investigations and decisions regarding trafficking and seizures and confiscations, in compliance with national privacy protection laws;

c. review national and international legal frameworks against best practices in animal welfare and repatriation of seized or confiscated live animals to identify opportunities for legal reform and improved protection, with a view to developing clear Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and guidelines for the repatriation of seized or confiscated wildlife, ensuring that this option is viable and prioritized where appropriate, to support ethical, welfare-based outcomes and uphold international commitments to species conservation and disease management;

d. ensure that sufficient placement facilities exist within the country to be able to receive all live animals seized or confiscated, to allow for law enforcement against illegal wildlife trade to be maximally effective

e. ensure that decisions on the management of seized or confiscated animals consider their welfare and the quality of housing, care, facility expertise and the in situ or ex situ conservation of the species;

f. ensure that all such placement facilities meet the requirements for animal welfare and health safety, including through the establishment of and collaboration with relevant regional and global networks, and raise awareness on this issue;

g. establish standardised and taxonomically comprehensive databases gathering data on imports, seizures and confiscations, of specimens, as well as information on offenders, instigators and identification tools and training materials;

h. include consideration of wildlife trafficking and the management of seized or confiscated specimens in nature conservation strategies and educational curricula, and through appropriate media; and

i. define quantified indicators to evaluate the effectiveness of the implemented.