

Informal translation of resolution submitted to Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference by CPPCC Standing Committee Member Yuan Xikun on March 5, 2017

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Resolution title: Request to close commercial tiger breeding facilities and cease large-scale domestication and breeding of tigers

Contents of resolution:

In order to save China's tiger population from a fate of extinction, China has since the 1980s encouraged breeding of tigers, in the belief that tigers could be conserved through captive breeding. Some private enterprises applied for the 'wildlife captive breeding permit' to enter the industry, in the hope of making profit through breeding and selling captive-bred tigers. There are currently more than 200 facilities breeding tigers in China, and the total captive tiger population is as high as 5,000-6,000 animals, far exceeding the requirements for release into the wild.

The issue of tiger breeding has for many years attracted the attention of the international community. The 14th CITES Conference of the Parties adopted Decision 14.69, which states "Parties with intensive operations breeding tigers on a commercial scale shall implement measures to restrict the captive population to a level supportive only to conserving wild tigers; tigers should not be bred for trade in their parts and derivatives." For various reasons, China has not implemented this decision, and has consistently been in danger of CITES sanctions. At every meeting of the CITES Parties and Standing Committee, China comes under widespread criticism, and breeding of tigers has become the issue over which China is most castigated in terms of implementing CITES.

With the expansion of the scale of tiger breeding, the state and tiger breeding facilities have been overloaded, and everyone has heard the voices calling for opening of trade in captive-bred tigers. On the other hand, due to lack of sufficient techniques, prey and suitable habitat, to date no captive-bred tigers have been successfully released into the wild, let alone replenishing wild tiger populations. The existence of a many captive-bred tigers and an industry with nowhere to go has brought about many issues which must be faced:

Additional management costs. In order to ensure that captive tigers and their parts do not enter the market, the state and relevant departments at various levels have drawn up multiple measures to strengthen management of tiger breeding facilities, including requirements that all breeding facilities regularly report on tiger numbers and breeding; that every tiger is registered after its birth, and that regular inspections are made after registering. Even so, there have still been issues with tiger breeding facilities under-reporting tiger numbers and secretly selling for profit, thus disrupting national policy.

Reducing the effectiveness of the ban on tiger trade. Since a State Council ban was put in place in 1993, all trade in tiger bones has been illegal. However, several large-scale tiger breeding facilities, using permits issued by the state to make wine with other species, such as lions, have produced various types of 'bone protecting wine' and 'bone supplement wine' products. Many of these have images of tigers on the packaging, suggesting that the product's ingredients include tiger bone. In addition, according to investigation reports from certain international organisations, some qualified legal enterprises have used a loophole in the 'special marking for legal utilisation of wildlife' system to conduct illegal operations, laundering illegally-sourced tiger skins for sale, or using tiger skins and

products that have a special marking for purposes other than scientific research, exhibition or education, even for commercial purposes (even though relevant regulations have never clearly stipulated that tiger skins and products cannot be used for purposes other than scientific research, education or exhibition). All kinds of behaviour have seriously misguided public awareness of the ban on tiger trade, misguided enforcement and have stimulated demand for tiger products.

High costs of enforcement. According to investigations by NGOs, open trade in tigers and their parts has been hard to find in recent years, but this kind of illegal trade still continues, and the techniques used in smuggling and trade are increasingly covert. In order to protect tigers, enforcement agencies must invest more manpower and resources into tackling covert smuggling and illegal trade. A report at the 17th CITES Conference of the Parties pointed out that between 2012 and 2015, in an estimated 30% of cases, tiger products derived from captive facilities. If there were not so many captive tigers and breeding facilities, enforcement agencies would not need to pay for corresponding costs of enforcement.

Seriously damaged international image. Most experts and NGOs worry that as current appraisal techniques cannot distinguish between tiger products from captive-bred tigers and wild tigers, if a trade in captive-bred tigers were opened, this would stimulate poaching of wild tigers, smuggling and trade (compared to the costs of breeding tigers in captivity, higher profits can be gained by poaching wild tigers and mixing their products into a trade in captive-bred tigers). This would therefore cause inestimable harm to wild tiger populations and could ultimately cause the global extinction of wild tigers. For these reasons, the ever-growing number of captive tigers in China and issues of the disposal and whereabouts of tiger carcasses has attracted the attention of the international community. Many tiger breeding facilities do not have the money to feed their tigers, but have very valuable frozen tiger carcasses stored away, and are waiting for the prohibition to be lifted to sell them and make profit. This situation has led to the frequent circulation of rumours that China will open up trade in captive-bred tigers, leading to increased questioning from the international community and cancelling out the hard work and effectiveness of the Chinese government's increased efforts in tiger conservation, thereby affecting China's images as a responsible power.

In 2010, Premier Wen Jiabao attended the Global Tiger Summit held in St Petersburg, and signed the St Petersburg Declaration and Global Tiger Recovery Plan, committing to doubling the global wild tiger population by 2022. As the next Year of the Tiger approaches, tiger conservation will inevitably become an increasingly hot topic, and the issue of captive breeding of tigers will once again be criticised from all sides. At the 17th CITES Conference of the Parties, Laos declared their intention to progressively close tiger breeding facilities in the country. This has put considerable pressure on other countries where commercial tiger breeding facilities exist, and China has borne the brunt of this. In order to resolve issues around captive breeding of tigers in China, we have the following suggestions:

1. With the help of the State Forestry Administration's Felidae Research Centre, establish a non-commercial 'tiger conservation research centre'
2. Close existing facilities engaged in or suspected to be engaged in commercial tiger breeding, destroy carcasses stored in the facilities, and prohibit establishment of new facilities. Move live tigers to the research centre
3. Stop large-scale tiger breeding activities. Restrict the number of tigers held in the tiger conservation research centre to a level needed to support scientific research and conservation of wild populations. This number is to be determined by expert scientific evaluation. Remaining tigers will be destroyed after their natural deaths

4. Establish a comprehensive management and monitoring mechanism for the tiger conservation research centre, to prevent the centre's tigers and their parts entering illegal markets
5. Regularly audit and inventory stocks and transaction records of those companies that currently hold permits to legally trade in tiger skins and tiger specimens, and strengthen monitoring to ensure the transactions they undertake are restricted to scientific research and education purposes
6. Draw up strategic measures to change consumer behaviour and mentality, to eliminate superstitions about the mysterious strength and effects of tiger products, and decrease demand for and consumption of products of endangered species, including tigers

<http://collection.sina.com.cn/ds/2017-03-06/doc-ifycaafp2169330.shtml>

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