

TRAFFIC Recommendations on the Proposals to Amend the CITES Appendices at the 16th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties

Proposal #/ Proponent	Species covered by the proposal	Proposal	RECOMMENDATION
# 3 USA	<i>Ursus maritimus</i> (Polar Bear)	Transfer from Appendix II to Appendix I	<p>There is an estimated global population of 20 000–25 000 Polar Bears <i>Ursus maritimus</i>, which range through Canada, Denmark (Greenland), Norway, the Russian Federation and the USA. The majority of these animals—approximately 15 000— either occur entirely in Canada or are in populations shared with Denmark (Greenland) and the USA (Alaska). The global conservation status of Polar Bears was assessed in 2008 by IUCN as Vulnerable. Nevertheless, the global population of Polar Bears is not small and the species's area of distribution is not restricted. While the population is believed to be slowly declining, it has not undergone a marked rate of decline in the recent past. The projected rate of population decline as a result of climate change over the next three generations (taken as 45 years) is estimated to be more than 30% but less than 50%. If the guideline figures in Annex 5 to <i>Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP15)</i> for a marked recent rate of decline are applied to a projected future decline, then the Polar Bear does not appear to meet any of the biological criteria for inclusion in Appendix I of CITES.</p> <p>While international transactions in scientific specimens of the species and some personal effects have increased since the 1990s, commercial trade has not increased and there has been relatively little change in overall volume of reported trade in the past 25 years. Canada is the only country that currently allows commercial exports of Polar Bear parts and products—all of which result from aboriginal subsistence hunting. International trade does not appear to be the primary incentive for harvest of the species. Since the 1990s, 700 to 800 Polar Bears have been legally hunted each year with fewer than 400 (about 2% of the global population) represented in international trade annually. The primary threat to Polar Bears is the retreat of sea-ice habitat, driven by global climate change. Trade does not appear to be a significant threat to the species.</p> <p>REJECT</p>