

## 18.42 Trade in Orang Utans

AWARE that the orang utan (*Pongo pygmaeus*), the only Asian great ape or pongid, is restricted in distribution to northern Sumatra and Borneo, where it is found in the East Malaysian states of Sarawak and Sabah and in Kalimantan, Indonesia, and that it is legally protected against hunting and trade throughout its range;

ALSO AWARE that the species is listed as "Endangered" in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Animals and in Appendix I of CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora);

DISTURBED that loss of habitat through logging operations and various forms of conversion to agriculture have increased the orang utan's vulnerability to exploitation;

FURTHER DISTURBED that during the past two years there has been a significant increase in illegal traffic in orang utans;

ALSO DISTURBED that infant orang utans are invariably captured for pets by killing their mothers, and the vulnerability of the young to human disease and miscarriage may result in further losses to the species;

NOTING that in February 1990, six infant orang utans, being shipped as personal effects in bird cages from Singapore to Yugoslavia, for redistribution to institutions, were confiscated in transit at Bangkok International Airport, Thailand;

CONCERNED that although the shipment was seized by the Thai authorities, this was on the grounds that improper identification violated Thai Customs law, and that Thailand has not yet enacted legislation to protect exotic wildlife in conformity with the provisions of CITES, of which it is a Party;

GRAVELY ALARMED that according to recent estimates released by the International Primate Protection League, TRAFFIC-Japan and other organizations, several hundred orang utans have been imported illegally into Taiwan in recent years;

FURTHER ALARMED that the orang utans are being captured at timber concessions, particularly in Kalimantan, and transported to Taiwan by sea;

FURTHER ALARMED that many apparently have been purchased as pets and for publicity purposes by commercial enterprises;

RECOGNIZING that laws in force in Taiwan are in conformity with CITES, thereby providing the mechanism to end illegal traffic in endangered exotic wildlife;

FURTHER RECOGNIZING that a long-term solution to any large-scale confiscation programme may need to involve rehabilitation and/or release into former habitat in a country of origin;

FURTHER RECOGNIZING that illegal traffic poses a threat to the survival of orang utans in the wild;

The General Assembly of IUCN—The World Conservation Union, at its 18th Session in Perth, Australia, 28 November-5 December 1990:

### 1. APPEALS to:

- a. the Government of Thailand, to enact urgently legislation to implement CITES fully, particularly to prevent trade in exotic endangered species and Appendix I species, such as the orang utan;
- b. the Government of Singapore, to comply fully with the provision of CITES, of which it is a Party, to prevent trade in exotic endangered and Appendix I species;
- c. the authorities in Taiwan, to enforce their laws conforming to CITES, to prevent illegal ownership of orang utans and to continue to take strong anti-smuggling measures;
- d. the Government of Indonesia, to:

- i. enforce wildlife laws better to stop illegal trade in orang utans;
  - ii. increase protection for orang utans and extend the protected area network;
2. ASKS the IUCN Species Survival Commission to be ready upon request to provide technical assistance with such issues as surveys, holding facilities and rehabilitation;
3. EMPHASIZES that any orang utans confiscated for return to wild habitat should undergo a quarantine and testing protocol to prevent genetic contamination and introduction of disease.