

**WCC-2012-Rec-139-EN**

**Bear farming in Asia, with particular reference to the conservation of wild populations**

NOTING that the Asiatic Black Bear (*Ursus thibetanus*) is listed as Vulnerable on the *IUCN Red List of Threatened Species*, as a result of habitat loss and over-exploitation principally for the bile;

ALSO NOTING that the Sun Bear (*Helarctos malayanus*) is listed as Vulnerable to extinction in mainland Southeast Asia for the same reasons;

RECOGNIZING that, since the 1980s, large numbers of both species, especially Asiatic Black Bears, have been kept in captivity for the collection and commercial sale of their bile (henceforth called farming), and this has significantly increased the availability of bile intended to meet the needs of patients;

OBSERVING that evidence of a cause-and-effect relationship (positive, negative or none) between increased supply and use of farmed bear bile and the exploitation of wild bear populations is lacking;

CONCERNED that, in some cases, bear farming is poorly managed and regulated, often involving inappropriate husbandry, which impacts adversely on their health, ability to breed and causes increased mortality, thus prompting some farms to restock bears obtained illegally from the wild, which has adversely affected some wild populations;

NOTING that the increased production of bile from farms has led in some cases to it being used to maintain general health (not just to cure specific ailments) and also for other conditions not prescribed in traditional medicine (despite these uses having been prohibited since 1998 and 2005 by different agencies in the People's Republic of China);

FURTHER NOTING that the practice of bear farming for the collection of bile is legally conducted in some countries in Asia, and remains illegally practiced in others;

MINDFUL that the Asiatic Black Bear and Sun Bear are both listed on Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), yet bile products from wild and farmed bears are illegally moved across national borders, in violation of this Convention;

ACKNOWLEDGING that some countries are moving towards the elimination of bear bile farming: the Republic of Korea banned live bile extraction and is currently considering how it may end bear farming, and the government of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam banned bile extraction and bear bile sales and is currently working towards ending the practice of keeping bears in captivity for commercial exploitation because of animal welfare and conservation concerns; and

ALSO ACKNOWLEDGING that significant advances have been made in the captive breeding of bears in farms in some areas in the People's Republic of China;

***The World Conservation Congress, at its session in Jeju, Republic of Korea, 6–15 September 2012:***

1. ENCOURAGES the Republic of Korea and the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam to continue their efforts towards ending bear farming;

2. URGES range State governments, working where appropriate with IUCN, to:
  - a. close down illegal farms as soon as possible;
  - b. issue no further licenses or permits for farms, and establish no new farms or new subsidiary operations of existing farms;
  - c. take all necessary steps to prevent the increase in numbers of bears in existing farms as soon as possible;
  - d. take increased measures to ensure that no more bears from the wild enter farms;
  - e. ensure that products from existing, legal farms can only be used for legally approved medicines;
  - f. conduct research to identify substitutes for bear bile, and to promote the use of these substitutes;
  - g. establish a scientifically sound monitoring system to track trends in wild bear populations and the factors that drive these changes; and
  - h. undertake a scientifically independent, peer-reviewed situation analysis of progress on the points listed above, and report back to the next session of the World Conservation Congress; and
3. RECOMMENDS that Parties to CITES fully implement legislation to prevent illegal international trade in Asiatic Black Bears and Sun Bears and their parts and derivatives, and promote greater public awareness of these issues.