

WCC-2020-Res-098-EN
Saving the world's otters

NOTING that otters are unique animals that help increase public attention on the importance of wetland, coastal and freshwater ecosystems;

ALARMED that the majority of the world's otter populations are declining worldwide due to environmental threats including pollution, deforestation, degradation of wetland habitats, illegal or unsustainable exploitation for pelts and for use as pets, limited legal protections in some places, and climate change;

FURTHER NOTING that eight of the world's 13 otter species have been categorised on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species as facing a high risk of extinction (Critically Endangered, Endangered or Vulnerable), including the giant otter (*Pteronura brasiliensis*), marine otter (*Lontra felina*), southern river otter (*L. provocax*), sea otter (*Enhydra lutris*), Asian small-clawed otter (*Aonyx cinereus*), smooth-coated otter (*Lutrogale perspicillata*) and hairy-nosed otter (*Lutra sumatrana*), that four other species could become threatened with extinction in the absence of concerted global conservation efforts, and that only the North American river otter (*Lontra canadensis*) has been categorised as Least Concern;

ALSO NOTING that six otter species (and populations of others) are on Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) where international trade is regulated and monitored for sustainability, and that seven otter species are on CITES Appendix I, where all international commercial trade is banned, with the latter including smooth-coated otter and the Asian small-clawed otter, which were transferred to CITES Appendix I in August 2019;

ACKNOWLEDGING the Species Survival Commission (SSC) Otter Specialist Group's leadership in otter conservation, including its 2019 Global Otter Conservation Strategy, which highlights the need for governments, the private sector, conservation funders, scientists, and local and indigenous communities to work together to reduce threats to otters and to recover their populations;

CONCERNED that existing global and domestic conservation measures are inadequate to reverse the decline of most otter populations and that habitat loss, and the emerging Asian online trade in live otters for use as pets and attractions, could drive several otter species to extinction without urgent decisive action;

NOTING the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) 2019 Global Assessment's dire warning that about one million species could go extinct in the next few decades in the absence of transformative changes in global biodiversity policy; and

INSPIRED by the resiliency of otters which, when provided with protection from illegal and unsustainable exploitation, and given effective conservation management, and suitable habitats, can flourish in a wide range of natural, near-natural and human-altered habitats;

The IUCN World Conservation Congress 2020, at its session in Marseille, France:

1. URGES Members, otter range states and other stakeholders to support the goals and objectives of the IUCN/SSC *Global Otter Conservation Strategy* and other efforts to address threats to otters by:

- a. maintaining and enhancing otter habitats and eliminating illegal and unsustainable capture or killing of live otters;
- b. developing and applying national wildlife protection legislation and international law to protect otters, including by monitoring, regulating or prohibiting their capture and sale for local and international trade;
- c. eliminating the illegal trade in otters by increasing law-enforcement effectiveness in range and consumer countries, ensuring compliance with obligations and national regulatory frameworks, and reducing market demand for illegally collected otters or their parts and products;
- d. engaging in scientific research and otter population surveys, as well as educational and awareness activities;
- e. increasing societal support for otters and their environment and facilitating peaceful co-existence between otters and people;
- f. ensuring that the management of all captive-bred otters is integrated with conservation interventions for wild populations; and

g. providing funding for activities outlined in the SSC Otter Specialist Group's Global Otter Conservation Strategy;

2. URGES SSC and Members to work with otter range states to prepare and submit a proposal to the CITES Conference of the Parties to transfer the hairy-nosed otter (*Lutra sumatrana*) from CITES Appendix II to CITES Appendix I as soon as possible, along with future proposals to transfer other otter species that meet the criteria to Appendix I, if necessary;

3. URGES governments to prohibit the import, breeding and use of live otters as pets and attractions, and to work with online platforms to stop the demand for live juvenile otters; and

4. FURTHER URGES governments to ensure that any trade (domestic or global) is legal, sustainable, and takes into account local livelihoods and is consistent with conservation principles.