Meeting of the parties to the 1973 Agreement on the Conservation of Polar Bears

Moscow, Russian Federation, 05-06 December 2013

OUTCOME OF MEETING*

The year 2013 marks the 40th anniversary of the 1973 Agreement on the Conservation of Polar Bears, a unique multilateral Agreement to protect the polar bear, the ecosystems of which it is part, and the role of polar bears in the cultural and traditional life of indigenous people of the Arctic. The five polar bear Range States—Canada, Greenland, Norway, Russia, and the United States of America—met in Moscow, Russia to commemorate this historic event. A forum on the conservation of polar bears was held 04 December 2013, during which the Range States celebrated the success of the Agreement and recognized emerging challenges for polar bears. The forum culminated in the signing of a Declaration in which the Range States reaffirmed their commitment to work cooperatively for the conservation of polar bears in the 21st century. The forum was followed by the biennial meeting of the Range States 05-06 December 2013.

Introduction

The Agreement on the Conservation of Polar Bears was concluded in Oslo, Norway, on November 15th 1973. The Range States comprises Canada, Greenland, Norway, Russia and the United States of America.

An International Forum on Conservation of Polar Bears was held in Moscow, Russia on 04 December 2013. Representatives of the polar bear Range States commemorated the 40thanniversary of the Agreement, celebrated the cooperation of the Range States to further the international conservation and management of polar bears, and signed a Declaration (Appendix 1) of commitment to continue to work actively to implement the Agreement.

As agreed upon at previous meetings (USA 2007, Norway 2009, Canada 2011) the Range States, in accordance with the provisions of the Agreement, including Articles VIII and IX, decided that meetings under the Agreement should be held on a biennial schedule or otherwise as agreed to by the Parties.

Against this background, and building on the outcomes of the Iqaluit, Nunavut (Canada) meeting, the five Range States met in Moscow, Russia from 05-06 December 2013 and accomplished the following:

- Progress was reviewed on monitoring and scientific priorities for polar bears and local community engagement in monitoring and conservation efforts.
- The Polar Bear Specialist Group (PBSG) of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, in its capacity as scientific advisor to the Range States, was encouraged to determine how to best use Traditional Ecological Knowledge together with scientific approaches.

- The Range States agreed to establish a working group to address emerging issues related to trade of polar bear parts.
- Inter-sessional work on a Circumpolar Action Plan for polar bears was reviewed and next steps in the development of the plan were identified.
- The Range States affirmed the importance of the Polar Bear-Human Information Management System and approved its continued development.
- The Range States agreed to review some rules of procedure for future meetings.

Welcome and opening remarks were made by Sergey Donskoy, Minister of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation.

Monitoring, research and community engagement

A circumpolar monitoring framework for polar bears, developed by the PBSG, was presented (Vongraven et al. 2012) and research priorities were suggested. The Range States recognized the value of this work and noted that it will be considered, along with other information such as available resources and national priorities, in the development of national research efforts. Representatives of indigenous governments and organizations in the five Range States made presentations on the importance of Traditional Ecological Knowledge, the role of community consultations in polar bear management, and local community engagement in polar bear conservation. Plans were reviewed for updating a Bayesian network model to project circumpolar status of polar bears and evaluate threats to the species.

Traditional Ecological Knowledge

The five Range States agreed to adopt the following resolution from the Declaration:

Encourage the IUCN Polar Bear Specialist Group to determine how to best use Traditional Ecological Knowledge together with scientific approaches and analyses of polar bear population status for more effective decision-making and consider their recommendation at the 2015 regular meeting of the range states;

The Range States noted the role of Traditional Ecological Knowledge holders, social scientists and outside experts in this issue, and Canada offered support in this capacity.

Trade

The Range States agreed to identify a working group to address the following resolutions from the Declaration:

Explore mechanisms to counter the threat of poaching and illegal trade in polar bears and polar bear parts, including enhanced cooperation among law enforcement agencies at the national, regional and global levels;

Strengthen international cooperation to improve the clarity of legal trade data through the adoption of more effective reporting and monitoring practices and help address illegal trade through the adoption of procedures to better identify legally traded specimens and to verify the authenticity of trade documents.

The Range States supported this effort. During the inter-session, Canada, Greenland, Russia, and the U.S. will create a working group, which will develop recommendations for consideration by the Range States. The Range States supported involvement of TRAFFIC International, World Conservation Monitoring Center, and law enforcement agencies in the working group. Recommendations will include consideration of how to best address enforcement challenges, and the feasibility of such efforts, such as a coordinated and integrated tagging system for polar bear hides to identify the time and place of harvest, efforts to understand dynamics of the supply chain for polar bear hides, coordination with ongoing efforts to monitor trade (e.g., Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna), establishment of common terminology for polar bear parts, development of a database, administrative procedures to facilitate verification of trade documents, and coordination and information sharing with and among national and international law enforcement programs. The working group will report its progress to the Range States at the next meeting of the parties.

A representative of TRAFFIC International expressed support for this effort.

Circumpolar action plan

Since the 2009 meeting of the Parties good progress has been made on development of a Circumpolar Action Plan for polar bears. The Range States affirmed the importance of a Circumpolar Action Plan and its timely completion and identified the following steps for development of the plan:

- The Range States will review the current draft of Volume 1 of the Circumpolar Action Plan (Chapters 1-7, Circumpolar Strategy for Polar Bear), discuss the draft via teleconference in January 2014 or as soon as feasible, and work toward finalization of Volume 1.
- The goal is to finalize Volume 1 by late spring 2014 and then proceed with consultations and approval at the national level.
- The Range States will concurrently work on Volume 2 of the Circumpolar Action Plan (Circumpolar Action Plan for Polar Bear).
- An inter-sessional meeting to work on the Circumpolar Action Plan is tentatively scheduled for the week of 22 April 2014. Norway will consider hosting this meeting.

- The U.S. and Canada will present a draft work plan and timeline for development of Volume 2 in advance of the April 2014 meeting.

The importance of allowing time for national consultation processes was recognized. A list of threats to polar bears (Chapter 6) was developed, and the Range States requested that the PBSG provide an initial assessment and categorization of the threats. This will be provided to a working group to be determined by the Range States that includes members of the Range States, PBSG members, and Traditional Ecological Knowledge holders.

Polar Bear-Human Information Management System (PBHIMS)

The Range States expressed continued support for development of the PBHIMS, including identification of national members to participate on the Range States Human-Polar Bear Conflicts Workgroup. The Range States recognized the need for financial and staff support of this work, and encouraged the timely dissemination to communities of best practices related to mitigating human-bear conflicts. To assist on these issues, a work plan and timeline for products related to the PBHIMS will be prepared by the Range States Human-Bear Conflict Working Group.

Rules of procedure

The Range States agreed that the U.S. will draft code of conduct regarding the distribution of documents by nongovernmental organizations at Range States meetings. The Range States will discuss this via teleconference in spring 2014. The U.S. offered to present code of conduct for other multilateral organization (e.g., the International Whaling Commission, CITES) that may be relevant to the Range States meetings.

Noting an existing document that describes the Role of Invited Experts, Observers and Media in Range States meetings, the Range States agreed to not revisit broader rules regarding participation of non-governmental organizations in the meeting of the Parties at this time. The U.S. reserved the right to revisit this question at a future date.

The Range States agreed to establish a working group to continue discussions during the inter-session to identify issues with respect to rules of procedure that may merit review by the Range States, including rules related to (1) set deadlines for distribution of shared presentations and documents among the Parties prior to meetings of the Range States, and (2) distribution of presentations and documents circulated by organizations external to the Parties.

Other

The Range States agreed to communicate via email over the next several months to develop details, and criteria for nomination, for a conservation award that the Range States may present at each meeting to an individual in recognition of achievements. The Range States hopes to present the inaugural conservation award at the next Range States meeting.

Recognizing that the Range States represents the primary forum for multilateral issues with regard to polar bear, Canada and Norway agree to draft a letter to the Arctic Council exploring opportunities for collaboration between the Range States and the Arctic Council.

The Range States will discuss protected areas for polar bears within each of the Range States as part of the Circumpolar Action Plan.

Once the Circumpolar Action Plan is complete, the Range States will discuss issues related to the polar bear conservation for regions in international waters.

Closing

Greenland offered to host the next Range States meeting in 2015 prior to the month of September; the location and date will identified as soon as possible. The Range States thanked Russia for organizing and hosting the International Forum on Conservation of Polar Bears and the meeting of the Range States.

Russia - [signature] (I. Pombnyakh)

Greenland Amatie Jessen

UNITED STATES Geoffrey S. Haskett

Norway Fredrik Gjell Thi

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*This outcome document is not legally binding and creates no legally binding obligations of the parties to the 1973 multilateral agreement for the conservation of polar bears.

Moscow Russia
06 December 2013