

Lions in Jeopardy

50 years ago, 100,000 lions roamed Africa – today barely 20,000 remain – an 80% decrease.

All of western and central Africa combined, an area about the size of the USA and India put together, contains no more than 1,500 lions.

South Africa's captive breeding industry now holds 6,000-8,000 lions bred to be shot by trophy hunters and used for their skins, the live trade, and bones. Ever more bones are exported to Asia for use in traditional medicines.

Together with listing lions on CITES Appendix I, more countries should join Australia, France and the Netherlands by banning imports.

The IUCN has cautioned that wild lions declined by almost 50%, and are already extinct in 26 African countries. Only five large populations of over 1,000 individuals remain.

Many factors contributed to the lions' decline, including conflict with humans, prey depletion by poachers, direct poaching of lions for skins and body parts, and trophy hunting.

To halt the decline, all international trade in lions and their parts should be halted, including the import and export of lion hunting trophies.

An international trust fund should be established to safeguard remaining populations of this iconic species.

