

RANGE COUNTRIES TAKE STOCK OF THEIR GOAL TO DOUBLE WILD TIGER POPULATIONS



Global efforts to double the population of Tigers in the wild by 2022 were reviewed when over 140 Tiger experts from more than 20 countries gathered in Dhaka, Bangladesh, for the Second Stocktaking Conference of The Global Tiger Recovery Program (GTRP). The meeting, which took place from 14–16 September 2014, ended with Tiger range countries agreeing to a set of “Recommendations on Advancing Implementation of the Global Tiger Recovery Program”. These recommendations will form the basis for the GTRP Implementation Plan 2015–2016, which will be presented for endorsement at the Third Asian Ministerial Conference on Tiger Conservation taking place early next year.

The GTRP is a collaboration between the 13 countries that still have wild Tigers and which have set a goal of doubling wild Tigers by the next Year of the Tiger in 2022—the Tx2 goal. It was endorsed by the ground-breaking high-level “Tiger Summit” held in St Petersburg, Russia, in November 2010, when leaders of these governments met and declared their collective political will to take all necessary actions to prevent the extinction of wild Tigers. Nearly four years on, Tiger range governments agreed in Dhaka that while progress had been made, critical areas of concern remain and need to be addressed if they are to achieve their ambitious goal.

The Dhaka Recommendations agreed by the range countries set ten priorities for the next two years—crucially, the midway point towards the 2022 goal. It identified a host of urgent next steps needed such as increasing investment and providing frontline wildlife protection staff with adequate arms and training; completing national Tiger monitoring and assessment of all Tiger habitats by 2016; restoring areas with low Tiger densities; and enhancing capacity to deal with human-Tiger conflict.

Dhaka delegates also agreed on the need for practical measures to enhance enforcement through trans-border collaboration and intelligence-sharing, focusing on hotspots in the illegal Tiger trade. Analysis by TRAFFIC of Tiger parts seizures has previously highlighted how hotspots in the illegal trade chain can be identified, and TRAFFIC offered to help countries wishing to undertake similar studies. TRAFFIC’s analysis found that a minimum of 1590 Tigers had been seized in Tiger range countries between January 2000 and April 2014, an average of two per week.

With TRAFFIC’s analysis showing that illegal trade in Tiger parts and derivatives remains persistent and continues to drive poaching, a new sense of urgency was attached by Tiger range countries to efforts aimed at reducing demand for Tiger products. The Dhaka Recommendations urged that targeted and well-researched and designed programmes be conducted to reduce illicit demand for Tiger parts and for Tiger prey species. Dhaka delegates also agreed on the need for urgent assistance to be provided to the development of a Global Support Programme to reduce the demand for Tiger products. The Programme will be based on a Tiger demand reduction strategy that TRAFFIC had presented at the First Stocktaking Conference of the GTRP two years ago in New Delhi.

With the wild Tiger population estimated to be as few as 3200, the international community is still a long way off from the Tx2 goal. However, it is hoped that the actions taken at Dhaka will help Tiger range countries move on at a faster and more determined pace, and will help ensure that the next Year of the Tiger will indeed be a cause for celebration rather than despair.

Sabri Zain, Director of Policy, TRAFFIC