

November 25, 2015

TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION
President Vladimir Putin
23, Ilyinka Street,
Moscow, 103132, Russia

Re: Russia Listing Proposal of Polar Bears to CITES Appendix I at the next CITES meeting in Johannesburg, South Africa, September 2016

Dear Mr. President,

We, the undersigned groups, are writing to ask you and your administration the following urgent request concerning the survival of polar bears.

As is well supported by scientific assessment, polar bears are threatened by climate change with large portions of their populations experiencing habitat stress and with a significant part of the populations in decline. Unnecessary trophy hunting (inevitably leading to the international trade/movement in polar bear parts) is additionally increasing the unprecedented stress. This stress is already increasing due to habitat degradation caused by climate change, fossil fuel exploration and extraction and other anthropogenic encroachment.

Therefore we would urge you and your government that the Russian Federation initiates a very important step for the protection of polar bears. This step would be the proposal at the next CITES meeting to 'uplist' the Polar Bear from Appendix II to Appendix I. This next meeting of the 'Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species' will be held in September 2016 in South Africa.

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The bear family, Ursidae, as listed in CITES Appendix II, is provided only with a limited level of protection for all bear species. It is critical to the survival of polar bears that the Russian Federation submit a proposal to 'uplist' all polar bear taxa to CITES Appendix I, because their conservation status continues to increasingly erode through multiple threats. Also the polar bear clearly meets the criteria of an Appendix I listing: It is "affected by trade" and "threatened with extinction".

The Appendix I listing for all polar bears would provide a critically necessary higher level of protection, barring trade in the species for commercial purposes. CITES Appendix I designation for all polar bears would not impact indigenous hunting for cultural and / or subsistence objectives.

We believe that a proposal to initiate a transfer of all polar bear taxa from CITES Appendix II to Appendix I would be strongly supported by a vast majority of global civil society, including indigenous peoples.

We are happy to assist you and your administration in submitting such a proposal.

Respectfully,

On behalf of WHI, and with the following list of organizations

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