

M E M O R A N D U M

To: Kenton R. Miller, Director General/IUCN

From: *R. Scott*
Robert F. Scott, Executive Officer, Species Survival
Commission

Copies: See Distribution

Date: 19 December 1984

Subject: Sumatran Rhino Conservation - SSC Endorsement of Singapore
Proposals

In its Madrid meeting of 1 November 1984, the Steering Committee of the Species Survival Commission (SSC) considered the reports of the ad hoc meeting on Sumatran rhino conservation held in Singapore on 3 and 4 October 1984. On behalf of SSC Chairman, Gren Lucas, I am pleased to report that, subject to the caveats described below, the SSC has accepted and endorses the unanimous findings and recommendations of the meeting (attached herewith as Annex 1, and referred to henceforth as "the Singapore Proposals"). A copy of this memorandum is being sent to the CITES Secretariat and the appropriate CITES Authorities in Indonesia, Malaysia, the UK and the USA, as well as to the other interested parties.

The purpose of the Singapore meeting was to determine whether a consensus and agreement could be reached on an integrated and coordinated approach to Sumatran rhino conservation that would comprehensively accommodate in situ conservation needs as well as captive breeding measures in both the countries of origin and in North America and the U.K. Such an agreement had been established by SSC as a prerequisite before it would consider endorsing any proposals. All of the interested parties had also announced their wish that any proposal going forward would do so only with the endorsement of SSC/IUCN.

The Singapore meeting was convened at the request of SSC by Dr. U. Seal, chairman of SSC's Captive Breeding Specialist Group. The 20 invited participants represented the Governments of Indonesia and Malaysia (including Sabah) as well as the American Association of Zoological Parks and Aquariums (AAZPA) in North America, and the Howletts and Port Lympne Foundation in the U.K., together with the Chairman of the SSC Asian Rhino Specialist Group and other SSC/IUCN representatives.

The meeting was highly successful, largely due to the exceptionally constructive efforts of each of the participants, even though they may initially have differed on points of both substance and interpretation.

It was also noteworthy and may very well serve as a model in another sense; this may have been the first time that such an integrated, comprehensive action approach has been taken in seeking to meet the conservation needs of a species. Factors considered included: taxonomy, genetic diversity and biology of the animal; ecology, status and dynamics of rhino populations; advances in technology and the role of captive breeding; translocations and reintroductions; intensive management options in the field; and the adequacy of both protected area systems and the management of individual protected areas. The proposals not only reflect all of the above considerations but provide for both actions and actions to cope with this broad array of concerns.

In endorsing the Singapore Proposals, SSC was convinced that the planned actions would, first and foremost, act to perpetuate both the species and the genetic diversity it represents as a component of natural ecosystems. It was also recognized that, in addition to a genuine altruistic concern for the future of a unique threatened species, the motivations of participants included a variety of self interests. This was viewed as a strength rather than a weakness of the proposals, but SSC's endorsement is contingent on the actions taken continuing to be demonstrably in the best interests of long term Sumatran rhino conservation.

The Singapore Proposals endorsed by SSC may be summarized as follows:

1. The primary goal is long term survival of the Sumatran rhino as a species and as a component of natural ecosystems.
2. A comprehensive masterplan for conservation of the species will be developed, which will be collaborative and multinational in nature and which will identify and integrate all of the actions necessary to achieve the primary goal.
3. Development and oversight of the masterplan will be the responsibility of a full-time, paid "coordinator" with the advice and participation of the SSC Asian Rhino Specialist Group and an advisory board composed of representatives of the interested parties. IUCN is able to hire the coordinator on a consultancy contract with funds provided by the parties, and with terms of reference agreeable to the parties. Implementation of various segments of the masterplan will be accomplished by various of the parties as mutually agreed and specified.
4. The conservation programme will include the following three fundamental activities:
 - a) Provide primary support for a program of conservation of the Sumatran rhinoceros as viable populations in sufficiently large areas of protected native habitat.
 - b) Develop an educational program to enhance public awareness and support for the Sumatran rhinoceros.
 - c) Establish a captive propagation program for the preservation of the genetic diversity of the Sumatran rhinoceros in the countries of origin and in North America and Europe, using animals with no hope of survival in the wild.

The parties are committed to contribute to each of these in each country as mutually agreed, with details subsequently recorded in a bilateral memorandum of understanding or similar document.

5. The following principles and actions are to be observed in the captive propagation programme:

- a) Animals selected for capture in the wild are to be "doomed" individuals or come from "doomed" populations or habitats; that is, those whose future long term viability or contribution to the survival of the species is determined to be unsatisfactory as measured by objective criteria subject to continuing refinement.

- b) Currently presumed subspecies stocks will not be mixed, either in captive breeding or in wild translocations, until further work is done on their taxonomy.
- c) The zoo communities will provide support and technical assistance in field capture and transfer operations.
- d) Bilateral agreements will provide for captive breeding programmes in the countries of origin as well as in the US and UK.
- e) Animals sent abroad will be on breeding loan from the countries of origin, or under some similarly equitable ownership agreement of sufficient time span to protect all interests.
- f) All animals placed in captivity and their future progeny will be managed cooperatively as part of a "world population" in the light of the primary overall goal of the programme. Decisions will be taken by consultation among the owners and interested parties, with oversight by the coordinator and advisory groups.
- g) Bilateral agreements will provide for appropriate support, training and technical assistance in captive breeding in the countries of origin.

In endorsing the above programme, SSC is aware that many complexities must be dealt with during its execution. Except for details spelled out in bilateral agreements, it is general in scope and fundamentally voluntary in nature except for those aspects over which CITES or Governments have some control. Special problems may arise in many different areas.

For this reason, SSC wished it carefully stated that its endorsement was contingent on future actions continuing to be in accord with the spirit as well as the letter of the proposals. However SSC hopes that the exciting feeling of cooperation that emerged from the Singapore meeting will persist, and that the proposals will indeed be successfully carried out as a model effort to preserve the earth's biological diversity.

Attachment

cc Distribution:

Singapore Meeting Participants

CITES Authorities

Secretariat (Lausanne)

USA (Jackowski)

UK (Hepworth)

W. Malaysia (Mhd Khan)

Sabah (Andau)

Indonesia (Rubini)

NCC, UK (Ford)

Dept. of State, US (Furness)

WWF (Kramer)

CMC

CDC

G. Lucas

J. McNeely

A. Fernhout

G. Rabb