

Resolutions from the 15th meeting of the PBSG in Copenhagen, Denmark 2009

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Res#1-2009: Effects of global warming on polar bears

The IUCN Polar Bear Specialist Group

Recognizing that sea ice is essential to the continued survival of polar bears, and

Recognizing the 2007 conclusion of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC): "Climate change in polar regions is expected to be among the largest and most rapid of any regions on the Earth, and will cause major physical, ecological, sociological, and economic impacts especially in the Arctic." and,

Recognizing that the IPCC has concluded with "very high confidence" that human produced green house gases are playing a significant forcing role in global warming, and;

Recognizing that, as a result of warming, the maximum ice cover of the Arctic Ocean has declined significantly over the past 30 years both spatially and temporally, and;

Recognizing that documented changes in the pattern and timing of breakup and fluctuations in the seasonal distribution of sea ice significantly influence the condition, survival, and reproductive success of polar bears and their prey, and;

Recognizing the mandate to manage polar bears and the ecosystem of which they are a part (Article II);

Recommends that:

1. Urgent global actions be taken to significantly reduce atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations, and that

2. Polar bear range state governments and designated authorities agree to consider the current and likely future impacts of global warming in all management and planning affecting polar bears and their key habitats.

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Res#2-2009: Recommendations for renewed cooperative research in Baffin Bay

The IUCN Polar Bear Specialist Group

Recognizing that the contracting parties shall manage polar bear populations in accordance with sound conservation practices based on the best available scientific data according to the Agreement on Conservation of Polar Bears Article II, and;

Recognizing that an agreement between Canada and Greenland outlining shared responsibility for sustainable harvest management is forthcoming, and;

Recognizing the right of local people using traditional methods to take polar bears according to the Agreement on Conservation of Polar Bears Article III, and;

Recognizing that scientific evidence indicates that the shared Baffin Bay polar bear population has been subject to long-term over-exploitation by Canada and Greenland, and;

Recognizing that scientific information and Inuit Knowledge are in apparent conflict, and;

Recognizing that significant reduction in the sea ice in Baffin Bay may have affected the distribution of polar bears, and,

Recognizing that the existing estimate for the Baffin Bay population from 1997 is outdated in light of the climate induced changes which in itself may negatively have affected the population, therefore;

Recommends that a new assessment of the Baffin Bay population be conducted jointly by Canada and Greenland.

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Res#3-2009: On the 2008 status report on polar bear by the Canadian Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC)

The IUCN/SSC Polar Bear Specialist Group

Recognizing that changes in sea ice distribution and duration due to global warming form the most significant threat to the future welfare of world-wide polar bear subpopulations; and

Recognizing that Canada's 13 subpopulations of polar bears occur over broad geographic regions and that the rate, timing and magnitude of global warming in the Arctic will vary geographically and that the impacts on polar bear subpopulations will similarly vary; and

Recognizing that the Canadian COSEWIC report treats all 13 Canadian subpopulations as a single designatable unit and notes that the current overall trend for polar bear subpopulations in Canada is a slow decline; and

Recognizing that the Canadian COSEWIC report estimates current population growth rates for each subpopulation based on available historic data and does not account for the projected effects of future global warming on demographic rates; and

Noting that the 2008 COSEWIC report does not quantitatively evaluate the threat of global warming, especially predicted changes in sea ice, on polar bear subpopulations; and

Recognizing that the world is currently in a period of rapid warming; and

Recognizing that negative effects of global warming on several polar bear subpopulations have and are currently being documented; therefore

Recommends that due to the speed of current global warming the status of polar bears in Canada be re-assessed within 5 years of the last re-assessment rather than delaying to the normal 10-year cycle; and further

Recommends that the status of polar bears in Canada be re-assessed within the context of ongoing and projected habitat losses; and further

Recommends that geographic variation in anticipated effects of global warming and other potential population stressors be included when re-assessing the status of polar bears in Canada.

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Res#4-2009: Need for polar bear monitoring and capture

The IUCN Polar Bear Specialist Group

Recognizing that under the International Agreement on Conservation of Polar Bears the signatory parties have the responsibility to conduct research programs relating to the conservation and management of polar bears in their jurisdictions; and

Recognizing that effective monitoring should occur because of the increasing uncertainties posed to polar bears by global warming; and

Recognizing that capture and radiocollaring of polar bears has been critical to understanding polar bear biology; and

Recognizing that scientists do use internationally-recognized best practices and strive to improve all research methods and develop less-invasive protocols; and

Recognizing that, at present, monitoring vital rates requires the capture of polar bears; and

Recognizing that conservation cannot be successful without good monitoring data;

Recommends that the need to capture polar bears for monitoring and research projects in Nunavut be reviewed, and that where necessary, management authorities take actions necessary to allow that such vital monitoring can go forward.

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Res#5-2009: On minimizing human-polar bear interactions

The IUCN Polar Bear Specialist Group

Recognizing that interactions between polar bears and humans can result in loss of human life, disturbance and destruction of bears, and loss of property; and,

Recognizing that polar bear mortalities resulting from interactions with people can adversely affect bear population welfare and management strategies; and,

Recognizing that such interactions are increasing, and likely to continue increasing because of increased human activity and climate change induced changes in polar bear distribution;

Therefore resolves that all Signatory Nations to the Agreement on Conservation of Polar Bears should make immediate use of all available information, methods and means, in order to minimize detrimental interactions between polar bears and humans and urges those nations to conduct cooperative investigations necessary to do so.

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Res#6-2009: On the conservation of the Chukchi polar bear population

The IUCN Polar Bear Specialist Group

Recognizing that the Chukchi Sea has experienced some of the highest rates of sea ice loss in the Arctic, and that sea ice loss is predicted to continue, and;

Recognizing that the Chukchi Sea polar bear population experiences a high level of illegal

harvest in Russia, and;

Recognizing that the Chukchi Sea polar bear population is harvested at lower, but unregulated, levels in the U.S., and;

Recognizing that information is largely unavailable on population size and structure, distribution, habitat use, and survival and breeding rates, and;

Recognizing that a bilateral treaty between the U.S. and Russia, implemented in 2007, mandates the conservation of the Chukchi Sea polar bear population for future generations, and;

Recognizing the importance of traditional knowledge and supporting the involvement of local communities in conservation efforts, therefore;

Recommends that the U.S. and Russia continue and expand independent and collaborative studies, including the involvement of local communities, to collect the scientific information necessary to ensure the conservation of the Chukchi Sea polar bear population, and;

Recommends that effective conservation measures, including law enforcement to prevent illegal takes, are implemented immediately.

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Res#7-2009: International study to understand the effects of climate change on pollution levels and the effects of pollution in polar bears

The IUCN Polar Bear Specialist Group

Recognizing levels of mercury and perfluorinated compounds in polar bears of some regions have significantly increased in recent years, and;

Recognizing that persistent organic pollutants are still present at levels in polar bears that can interfere with endocrine, immune and reproductive function, and;

Recognizing that the high pollutant levels in polar bears appears to result from long range atmospheric transport of pollutants from low latitude sources into the Arctic environment, and;

Recognizing that such transport mechanisms may be enhanced and effects on polar bears amplified as a result of climate change, and;

Recognizing that previous studies by researchers in Denmark and Norway have laid the groundwork for an understanding of the dynamic links between climate change and changing contaminant burdens, therefore;

Recommends that Denmark and Norway build upon past work to lead a circumpolar study of the dynamic links between climate change, pollution levels, and the physiological effects of pollution in polar bears.

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Res#8-2009: Recommendations for the collection of scientific samples from harvested polar bears

The IUCN Polar Bear Specialist Group

Recognizing that the contracting parties of the International Agreement on the Conservation of Polar Bears shall manage polar bear populations in accordance with sound conservation practices based on the best available scientific data according to the Agreement on Conservation of Polar Bears Article II

Recognizing that sound management of polar bear populations requires collection of biological samples that allow for determination of age and sex of the harvest, but that such samples are not currently being collected in all jurisdictions, therefore

Recommends that all jurisdictions implement a system for monitoring the polar bear harvest that ensures the collection of biological samples.

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