

PROCEEDINGS OF THE FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE GLOBAL TIGER FORUM, NEW DELHI, INDIA

The Fifth General Assembly of the Global Tiger Forum (GTF) was held at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi, India, on the 30th of March 2011. The sessions were chaired by Mr Krishna Prasad Acharya, Director General, Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, as Chair country of the Global Tiger Forum. In all 70 distinguished delegates and observers participated in the Assembly.

Opening address:

In his opening address, Mr Krishna Prasad Acharya, Director General, Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, Government of Nepal stated that Nepal chaired the Global Tiger Forum for six years, after being elected in the 3rd General Assembly of GTF held in 2004 at Hanoi, Vietnam. He thanked all the members for the support rendered to Nepal as Chair of the Forum during these years, while stating that the GTF would play a vital role in strengthening the cause.

Dr Rajesh Gopal, Secretary General, GTF, welcomed the delegates and observers while thanking Nepal for Chairing the Assembly. He further thanked the Core Working Group of the GTF for assisting him in carrying forward the objectives of the GTF. He stated that efforts are on to build up the profile of the GTF and a new governance structure would be discussed in the Assembly. He further stated that the Government of India has agreed to donate an amount of US\$2,22,222 to the GTF in addition to the Development Grant Facility (DGF) from the Global Tiger Initiative of the World Bank. This would enable the GTF to assist the member tiger range countries in monitoring the Global Tiger Recovery Programme (GTRP). He also acknowledged the encouragement and support given by Mr S.C. Dey, former Secretary General of GTF. He further added that the GTF was established in 1994, and presently there are only seven members from tiger range countries, one member from non-tiger range countries, three members from International NGOs and seven members from National NGOs. He informed that the membership of the Forum open to all tiger range countries, non-tiger range countries, International NGOs and National NGOs, for strengthening the GTF in achieving its objectives.

AGENDA ITEM No. 1: APPROVAL OF NEW MEMBERS

With the permission of the Chairman, the Secretary General submitted that since the last General assembly of GTF, there have been seven entries of National NGO members in the GTF. The names of the National

NGOs, who have enrolled themselves as category E members of GTF and have paid their membership fees are:

(a) From India:

1. Ranthambhore Foundation
2. Wildlife Protection Society of India
3. Tiger Research and Conservation Trust
4. Wildlife Trust of India
5. The Corbett Foundation

(b) From Nepal:

1. National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC)
2. Wildlife Conservation Nepal (WCN)

DECISION:

The Assembly gave formal approval to their membership in the GTF.

AGENDA No. 2: STATUS OF MEMBERSHIP OF GTF

The Secretary General submitted that currently the Global Tiger Forum has seven members from tiger range states viz. Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, India, Myanmar, Nepal and Vietnam, besides one member from a non-tiger range country (United Kingdom), three international NGOs (WWF-International, International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) and TRAFFIC-International). Besides, seven National NGO members, (Ranthambhore Foundation, Wildlife Protection Society of India, Tiger Research and Conservation Trust, National Trust for Nature Conservation, Wildlife Conservation Nepal, Wildlife Trust of India and The Corbett Foundation) have also joined as members. Application has been received from the Centre for Wildlife Studies, a National NGO based in India, as category E member of the GTF.

Based on the informal request from Chinese side, the translated version (in Chinese language) of Statutes and Regulations of the GTF in Chinese language has been sent to China. Indonesia desired information regarding joining the GTF, which has also been provided. The Lao PDR had informed that membership in the GTF was under process within their Government.

DISCUSSION:

The delegation from Bangladesh stated that they were in favour of the Centre for Wildlife Studies joining as a Category E member in the GTF, which was concurred by the other members.

The delegation from China stated that the issue of joining the GTF was under consideration of their government. It was also stated whether Chinese could be the official language of the GTF, since translation of the proceedings of the GTF meetings/Assemblies and Statutes and Regulations into Chinese is a problem.

The TRAFFIC stated that they were very keen to see China as a member of the GTF and would assist in translating the GTF documents in Chinese.

The delegate from U.K. stated that they would also welcome China as a member of the GTF, besides all the other non-member tiger range countries.

Regarding the membership of the Lao PDR, the delegation informed that the issue was pending with their Ministry of External Affairs, which needed some clarifications.

DECISION:

The Assembly approved the application of the Centre for Wildlife Studies as Category E member of the GTF.

AGENDA ITEM No. 3: BUDGET ESTIMATES FOR 2011, 2012 & 2013

The Secretary General submitted that the budget estimates for the next three years i.e. 2011 to 2013, was provided in Doc.GA. 5.03.1, 5.03.2 and 5.03.3. He further submitted that the GTF has been saving some funds as the monthly remuneration of the present Secretary General is being paid by the Government of India.

DECISION:

The Assembly approved the budget estimates for the next three years i.e. 2011 to 2013.

AGENDA ITEM No. 4: APPROVAL OF PROPOSED NEW GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE OF GTF

The Secretary General submitted that a consultative meeting of the GTF was held at the WWF-India office on 28th and 29th June 2010, wherein a Strategy and Roadmap of the GTF (2010-2015) was agreed upon, (given in Annexure 4), and a proposed governance structure of GTF was agreed by the Executive Committee and Core Working Group of GTF (given in

Annexure 5), which was approved in the 15th meeting of the Executive committee held at Sariska in October 2010.

DISCUSSION:

Regarding the Associate membership in the GTF, US Fish and Wildlife Service stated that changes have been taking place in their administrative system and they would discuss the issue internally and revert back. It was also mentioned that active participation of tiger range countries in the GTF would have a great impact on their decision to join the GTF as an Associate Member.

The Centre for Wildlife Studies stated that if technical skills available in the United States could be made available to the GTF through the US Fish and Wildlife Service, it would help in improving the expertise of tiger range countries.

The US Fish and Wildlife Service informed about their willingness in this regard.

The U.K. delegation stated that the Executive Committee should define the responsibilities under various heads proposed in the new governance structure of the GTF.

The IFAW suggested that the last item under the head “GTF Standing Committee” should be deleted, which was concurred to by U.K. and WWF.

The Ranthambhore Foundation desired to know the responsibilities of the National NGO members.

The Centre for Wildlife Studies stated that the role of National NGOs would depend on the governance system prevailing in the countries where the National NGOs are working and that should be taken into consideration.

The Secretary General suggested a committee to work out the responsibilities of members.

DECISION:

The Assembly decided:-

1. Deleting the last item under the Head – ‘GTF Standing Committee’ – as proposed in the new governance structure of GTF
2. Forming a committee to work out suitable guidelines vis-à-vis the proposed new governance structure of the GTF.

AGENDA ITEM No. 5: AMENDMENTS TO THE STATUTES AND REGULATIONS OF GTF

The Secretary General submitted that in the 11th meeting of the Executive Committee of GTF, the amendments to the Statutes and Regulations of GTF were discussed. Some recommendations regarding the said amendments emerged during the deliberations for forwarding to the General Assembly.

On the basis of the decision taken during the 12th meeting of the Executive Committee followed by consultation on outstanding items like the membership fee, (for which feedbacks were received from the members) a draft amendment to the Statutes and Regulations of the GTF were prepared, placed as Annexure – 6 of the document. Since the proposal for amendments are required to be communicated to members not less than four months prior to the ordinary/extraordinary session of the General assembly, the amendments suggested in the annexure were also circulated to the members of the GTF as per Secretariat's letter No. 5-5/2008-GTF dated 16th September 2009, for the needful.

DISCUSSION:

The delegation from U.K. stated that the proposal regarding amendment to the Statutes and Regulations of the GTF should be consolidated and the updated revised version should be circulated to all the members for their suggestions/comments.

DECISION:

The Assembly decided that GTF Secretariat should circulate the consolidated draft of Statutes and Regulations of the GTF to all members within a time frame of forty five days. It was also clarified that except for changes in the governance structure, which needs to be incorporated, the existing amendment as circulated by the Secretariat vide its letter dated 16th September, 2009 stands approved to avoid any question on point of order.

AGENDA ITEM No. 6: RELATIONSHIP OF GTF & GTI

The Secretary General submitted that as per the decision taken during the 15th meeting of the Executive Committee of the GTF in October 2010, the GTF has signed an Aide-de-Memoire with GTI on 2nd November 2010. The GTI is proposing a web based TRCs Communication Platform for networking of all TRCs initially and later on envisages connecting all TRs across tiger landscapes for knowledge exchange, information sharing,

and sharing of best practices etc. This portal would be under the ownership of the GTF (financially to be fully supported by the GTI). Further, the GTF has submitted a proposal to the GTI seeking funding support for monitoring the Global Tiger Recovery Programme in all Tiger Range Countries. If approved by the Assembly, the GTF would also sign an agreement with the GTI/World Bank in this regard.

DISCUSSION:

The GTI expressed their appreciation regarding the commitment of all tiger range countries in tiger conservation. The cooperation and partnership with organizations like the GTF is important. The objective of the partnership between GTF and GTI is to develop a comprehensive scientific monitoring system for the range countries. The DGF grant must act as a catalyst to bring out the desired results and focus should be on the frontline staff, habitat and ecosystem. The partnership between GTF and GTI should also enhance connectivity, convergence of knowledge and exchange of practices between all concerned.

The Secretary General informed that the GTF will only act as a catalyst and not impose any superstructure for monitoring. The monitoring of the GTRP has to be a TRC driven process. If the tiger range countries agree to it, then it would be available to them through the GTF. If the tiger range countries desire it at the country level, the GTF would be happy to provide all facilitation for such a set up.

The Bangladesh delegation informed that the aim should be to develop a monitoring system and increase the capability of range state officials. The standards of monitoring should be developed.

The delegation from Malaysia stated that the GTF should assist in monitoring of the GTRP and share information with the tiger range countries.

DECISION:

The Assembly accorded approval for signing of the DGF proposal between the GTF and the World Bank.

The GTF, represented by the Secretary General, and the World Bank, represented by Mr Hartwig Schafer, Acting Vice president, Sustainable Development, World Bank, signed the document for availing the DGF Grant of US\$100,000.

AGENDA ITEM No.7: DEMAND REDUCTION FOR TIGER PARTS AND PRODUCTS

The Secretary General submitted that a concept paper on Demand Reduction for tiger trade has been developed by the TRAFFIC to get the support of the TRCs for its implementation. The TRAFFIC intends to collaborate with the GTF and they have the seed money to initiate the process. The project concept developed by TRAFFIC is at Annexure – 7.

DISCUSSION:

TRAFFIC submitted that they were in the process of determining the dates, venue and agenda for organizing a *creative workshop of experts on demand reduction messaging* and look forward to the support of the tiger range countries and the GTF and invite any suggestions on the issue.

IFAW stated that concept paper developed by TRAFFIC was vital for saving tigers and appreciate TRAFFIC's initiative on the project and IFAW supported the same. IFAW urged the tiger range countries to give full support to the concept.

ACTCM (American College of Traditional Chinese Medicine) expressed their appreciation for GTF, GTI and tiger range countries towards efforts undertaken to conserve wild tigers. The ACTCM stated that traditional Chinese medicine profession does not support or use any tiger parts. They have a common goal to work together to reduce the demand of tiger parts. Illegal use of tiger parts is not supported by the traditional Chinese medicine.

WPSI stated that in a meeting in China in 2007, there were 67 participants strongly lobbying for lifting the ban on use of tiger parts and products by the Chinese government.

The delegation from China stated that a workshop was organized by the Chinese government in 2007 to decide whether the ban on use of tiger parts and products should be lifted or continued, as the pressure to lift the ban became very strong from 2002. However no official solution emerged from the workshop.

AGENDA ITEM No. 8: HOLDING OF THE NEXT GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GTF, VENUE AND DATES

The Secretary General stated that as per the Statutes and Regulations of the GTF, the General Assembly should be held once in three years. Thus, it will fall due in March 2013. Normally, three days would be required for carrying out the business of the General Assembly in full. So far, there is no proposal from any country government to host

the 6th General Assembly. The General Assembly of GTF has not been held so far in three other GTF member tiger range countries (TRCs) (Bhutan, Cambodia and Myanmar). It will be appropriate to know if any of these three countries would be interested in holding the 6th General Assembly of GTF.

The cost of holding the 6th General Assembly would be around US\$45,000, out of which around US\$30,000 would be required for arranging participation of the delegates from tiger range countries (two per member TRC and one per non-member TRC), including their international travel, hotel accommodation and per diem. This cost is the liability of the GTF. The host country will have to incur expenses towards (a) hiring of conference hall for three days (b) conference related expenses like signages, banners, badges, bags, display boards, audio-visual equipments etc. (c) working lunch and tea for all delegates for three days (d) staff and other logistic support for holding of the General Assembly (e) local transport (f) inaugural tea and reception dinner, if any. International NGOs and inter-governmental bodies including members from developed countries are expected to participate in the General Assembly on their own.

DISCUSSION:

The delegation from Bhutan stated that it would like to host the 6th General Assembly of the GTF. Cambodia appreciated the offer from Bhutan.

Myanmar informed that they are unable to make any offer in this regard at this juncture.

DECISION:

The Assembly decided that the 6th General Assembly of GTF would be held in Bhutan. The exact venue and dates would be finalized in consultation with the Government of Bhutan.

AGENDA ITEM No. 9: ELECTION OF THE CHAIRPERSON AND MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Secretary General submitted that as per the Statutes and Regulations of GTF, "The General Assembly shall elect the Chairperson of the Global Tiger Forum". There is no stipulation in the Statutes and Regulations of GTF regarding what would be the tenure for the Chairperson of the Forum. However, India held the post of Chairperson of GTF in the initial years between 1994 to 1999 (5 years) till the formal

ratification of the Statutes and Regulations of GTF by required number of tiger range countries were received. Bangladesh took over as the Chairperson of GTF in January 2000 after the 1st General Assembly of GTF at Dhaka, and was re-elected as Chairperson for a second term during the 2nd General Assembly of GTF held at India in November 2001 (as per the provisions of the Statutes of GTF as existing then, General Assembly was supposed to be held once in a year). Nepal took over as Chairperson of GTF after the 3rd General Assembly, held in Hanoi, Vietnam in November 2004, and was re-elected for a second term during the 4th General Assembly, at Kathmandu, Nepal, in April 2007.

As per the Statutes and Regulations of GTF, the Executive Committee will comprise of four members from tiger range countries (TRC), two members from non-tiger range countries (NTRC) and one member from international NGOs/inter-governmental bodies. Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Vietnam are the current members of the Executive Committee from tiger range countries, UK is the Executive Committee member from a non-tiger range country and WWF from international organizations. Earlier Bhutan and Myanmar also served as Executive Committee members of GTF from TRC's, and International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) from International NGOs. As per the Statutes and Regulations of GTF, the tenure of Executive committee members is three years. The members of the next Executive Committee are required to be elected in the General Assembly, for the next term of three years.

As per the existing Statutes, the Chairman of the Executive Committee will be a senior knowledgeable person from the government of the country which is elected as the Chairperson of GTF in the meeting of the General Assembly. The name of the actual incumbent who will function as the Chairman of the Executive Committee would be left to the discretion of the Chairperson of the GTF.

DISCUSSION:

Bangladesh stated that the Chairperson of the GTF should be someone who has a keen interest in tiger conservation and since the present Indian Minister for Environment and Forests is very keen in tiger conservation, India should be the Chairperson of the GTF.

The suggestion made by Bangladesh was concurred to by all members.

Bangladesh further stated that it would like to be a member of the Executive Committee.

Bhutan informed that since it would be hosting the 6th General Assembly of GTF in 2013, would like to be a member of the Executive Committee.

Myanmar also expressed willingness for becoming a member of the Executive Committee.

U.K. stated that since it is the only non-tiger range country member, would be pleased to continue as a member of the Executive Committee.

International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) expressed its willingness for becoming a member of the Executive Committee.

Nepal stated that as the outgoing Chair of the GTF, it was pleased that a dedicated and energetic Minister of Environment and Forests, Government of India, has been elected as the new Chairperson of the GTF. With active participation and support from members and non-members, Nepal expected that the GTF would achieve its objectives for preserving wild tigers. Nepal also thanked the members for their active participation and support during its tenure as Chairperson of the GTF.

DECISION:

The Assembly unanimously elected India as the Chairperson of GTF till the 6th General Assembly.

The Assembly decided that Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Myanmar would be members of the Executive Committee from tiger range countries, UK would continue to be a member of the Executive Committee from Category – B members, and the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) would be a member of the Executive Committee from International NGOs, till the 6th General Assembly.

AGENDA ITEM No. 10: ANY OTHER BUSINESS WITH THE PERMISSION OF THE CHAIR

The Secretary General submitted that India would continue as an Interim Secretary General till the appointment of a new Secretary General of GTF. He further submitted that IUCN was keen to join the GTF and would soon be sending the application for the same. The IUCN was also willing to provide support staff to the GTF Secretariat. He also stated that for effective monitoring of the GTRP, GTF is in the process of appointing a full-time Technical officer/Monitoring Officer and Communication Officer. The Terms of references will be circulated at an early date.

U.K. suggested that the issue of tiger conservation should be included in the agenda of the regional meetings of the CBD in Asia.

Bangladesh suggested that a 2- 3 weeks training for wildlife officials should be developed and organized by the GTF.

CLOSING REMARKS:

The Secretary General, GTF, thanked all the members, international NGOs and observers for their active participation in the General Assembly, and expressing their opinion on various issues in a constructive manner in helping the Forum to reach at unanimous decision on most of the topics discussed for conserving wild tigers. He stated that the GTF would soon be organizing GTRP monitoring workshop.

The 5th General Assembly was declared as closed after the closing remarks.

5TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GLOBAL TIGER FORUM
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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