

STANDARDS AND PETITIONS WORKING GROUP

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Standards and Petitions Working Group reports to the Biodiversity Assessments Sub-Committee and is responsible for ensuring the quality and standard of the *IUCN Red List*, focusing on the correct use of the IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria. As a guiding principle, the Standards and Petitions Working Group seeks to ensure that the original intent of the IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria is not compromised. To do this, the Standards and Petitions Working Group will:

- Develop and recommend what minimum standards the Red List Authorities should use for documenting taxa on the Red List;
- Advise on the interpretation of the Red List Criteria;
- Develop and keep updated the Guidelines for Using the IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria (<http://www.iucn.org/webfiles/doc/SSC/RedList/RedListGuidelines.pdf>);
- Advise on the use and adoption of any methods for using incomplete datasets on species and how to extrapolate from these datasets to apply Red List Criteria;
- Review and advise on Red List training materials and approaches;
- Review any proposed changes to the *Guidelines for Application of IUCN Red List Criteria at Regional Levels* put forward by the National Red List Working Group;
- Review all assessments made using only Criterion E, especially if Population Viability Analysis is used;
- Periodically review assessments made by Red List Authorities and comment on specific assessments forwarded by the IUCN Species Programme;
- Respond to requests for scientific advice and guidance from the Biodiversity Assessment Users Subcommittee, the IUCN Species Programme and from Red List Consortium Partners; and
- Report biennially to the Biodiversity Assessments Sub-Committee on progress against the above terms of reference.

The Standards and Petitions Working Group will normally meet once a year immediately prior to a meeting of the Biodiversity Assessments Sub-Committee. All formal decisions and recommendations of the Standards and Petitions Working Group will be sent to the Biodiversity Assessments Sub-Committee before final adoption, except where these decisions relate to petitions against IUCN Red List assessments of particular species (see below). Proposed changes to the Guidelines for Using the IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria will be reviewed by the Biodiversity Assessment Users Working Group prior to submission by the Standards and Petitions Working Group to the Biodiversity Assessments Sub-Committee for formal adoption.

In the event of any petitions against IUCN Red List assessments the Standards and Petitions Working Group will:

- Implement and oversee the formal process for handling disputes over the application of the criteria and the resulting listings, as outlined in Annex 1;
- Take final decisions on petitions, ensuring that these are based on sound scientific evidence, seeking appropriate specialist advice when necessary;

- Present decisions and documentation to the Chair of the Biodiversity Assessments Sub-Committee and the Chair of SSC;
- Issue written decisions on petitions to be forwarded to both parties, for publication on the IUCN SSC web site.

When making decisions on petitions, the Standards and Petitions Working Group acts as the final judge, and does not refer the matter to the Biodiversity Assessments Sub-Committee for a final decision. However, prior to publishing the result of a decision, the Chair of the Standards and Petitions Working Group will send a brief report to the Chair of the Biodiversity Assessments Sub-Committee confirming that the above process was followed to reach the decision, or outlining any deviations from the process that had to be made. The Biodiversity Assessments Sub-Committee is responsible for ensuring that petitions are handled professionally and impartially. In the event of the Biodiversity Assessments Sub-Committee being concerned about the process followed during a particular petition, it will request the Standards and Petitions Working Group to review this process and make improvements. Under no circumstances should the Biodiversity Assessments Sub-Committee involve itself in the substance of any petition.

The Chair of the Standards and Petitions Working Group is appointed by the Chair of the Biodiversity Assessments Sub-Committee and serves as a full member of the Biodiversity Assessments Sub-Committee. The membership of the Standards and Petitions Working Group is appointed by the Chair of the working group.

Annex 1. Procedure for Handling of Petitions against Current Listings on the IUCN Red List of Threatened SpeciesTM

Introduction

Status assessments presented in the *IUCN Red List of Threatened SpeciesTM* are open to challenge. Petitions may be made against current listings of species, subspecies or geographic subpopulations (petitions against historical listings (i.e., those that have since been updated with a new listing for the taxon in question) are not considered). However, such petitions may only be made on the basis of the IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria (version 3.1 - http://www.iucnredlist.org/info/categories_criteria2001.html) and in reference to any supporting documentation accompanying the listing. It is not possible to change listings for political, emotional, economic, or other reasons not based on the Categories and Criteria.

Disagreements with Current Listings

Any party may contact the IUCN Red List Programme Office (RLPO) at any time to express disagreement with any current listing. If this disagreement is based on scientific or technical grounds, the RLPO will put this party in contact with the relevant Red List Authority (RLA) or assessor (in the absence of an RLA) with intention of resolving the disagreement without entering a formal petition process.

The Formal Petitions Process

If the above process is not successful in resolving the disagreement, a formal petition may be submitted. This formal petition should be very brief, and just summarizing the points of disagreement (1-2 pages maximum). The process for filing petitions is as follows:

1. Petitions can be submitted to the RLPO at any time. The RLPO will acknowledge receipt of the petition, and will inform the petitioner of the date on which the petition was received.
2. The RLPO will consult with the SSC Biodiversity Assessments Standards and Petitions Working Group (SPWG) to determine whether or not the petition has been filed on the basis of the IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria. This determination will be made within three weeks of the receipt of the petition by the RLPO.
3. If the petition has not been made on the basis of the IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria, it will be returned to the petitioner by the RLPO with an explanation as to why the petition cannot be considered. This response will be sent to the petitioner within one month of the original receipt of the petition by the RLPO.
4. If the petition is made on the basis of the IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria, it will be referred by the RLPO to the RLA or particular assessor/s (if there is no RLA) responsible for the taxon assessment in question (the RLA or assessor/s are hereafter just termed the RLA). Within one month of the original receipt of the petition, the RLPO will request the RLA and the petitioner to discuss the petition with the objective of reaching an agreement between them. The RLA and the petitioner will be given four months to reach agreement from the date that the RLPO refers the petition to them. In seeking to reach agreement, the RLA and the petitioner should determine whether or not they are using the same underlying data. They should clarify whether or not the disagreements are due to factual discrepancies, as opposed to differences of either interpretation or application of the IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria.
5. If the RLA agrees with the petition, or if the petitioner and the Red List Authority come to agreement, then any changes to the listing will be accepted. The change will appear in the following update of the IUCN Red List.
6. If the petitioner and the RLA are unable to agree within the time period set in no. 4 above, the petition will then enter the next stage in the process.

7. Within one week of the expiration of the time period set in no. 4 above, the RLPO will notify both the petitioner and the RLA that each of them should submit justifications for their case to the SPWG via the RLPO. The justifications should reach the RLPO within four months from the date that the RLPO issues this notification. These justifications should not be longer than 8 sides of A4 (excluding the list of references), 12-point print, and should provide the data to support their position. The justifications should include a synopsis of the failed negotiations, a brief statement of the reasons for the dispute, and a clarification of any factual discrepancies (e.g., different sources of data or information used). All data used in these justifications must either be referenced to publications that are available in the public domain, or else be made available to the SPWG. The data provided should be clearly linked to the use of the IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria. If the petitioner fails to submit a justification within the set time period and in the required format, the petition will be dropped, and the RLPO will inform the SPWG of this. If the RLA fails to submit a justification within the set time period and in the required format, the petition will go forward. Requests for an extension to the deadline for submitting justifications will not normally be considered, unless there are exceptional circumstances. Any request for such an extension should be submitted to the RLPO at least two weeks before the deadline, who will refer it to the Chair of the Biodiversity Assessments Sub-Committee. In any case, the maximum time limit to any requested delay is one month, with only one such request being considered from each party.
8. The RLPO will send the justifications of each party to the other within one week of the time period set in no. 7 above. Both parties have two weeks in which to provide a 1-page addendum to their justifications, should they choose to do so. Any addendums received after the two-week period will not be considered.
9. At the end of this two-week period, whether or not an addendum is received, the RLPO will send the justifications to all members of the SPWG for review and confidential comment. The SPWG may choose to circulate the justifications to other independent expert reviewers for confidential comments. These comments should if at all possible be received within two months of the date of receipt of the justifications by the Chair of the SPWG. If needed, the SPWG may seek clarification of particular issues from the RLA and the petitioner. In instances in which the RLA failed to submit a justification, the SPWG will make every effort to obtain a balanced set of confidential comments from reviewers.
10. The SPWG will consider the justifications and the confidential reviews. It will make a ruling on each petition within three months from the time that the petitions were circulated to the SPWG members by the RLPO, and will issue a notification that will include a full rationale and explanation of each ruling, but will not include a record of the deliberations that the SPWG made to reach its decision, and the names of any reviewers will be kept confidential. Any changes will appear in the next update of the *IUCN Red List of Threatened Species*TM. The notification of the ruling on any petition, and any resulting change in listing, will be placed on the IUCN SSC Web Site.

Petitions Against Listings Based on an Old Version of the IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria

If a petition is made against a listing based on an old version of the IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria, and the petition is based on the Categories and Criteria, then the RLA in question will first be requested to update the listing so that it is based on the version of the Categories and Criteria currently in force. The RLA will be given six months to do this from the original receipt of the petition by the RLPO. Once the RLA has updated the listing, the petitioner will be so informed and asked whether or not they wish to proceed with the petition against the new listing. If the RLA fails to meet this deadline for updating the listing, the petition will proceed according to the process outlined in paragraphs 6-10 above, and the final ruling of the SPWG will provide

an updated listing for the taxon in question, using the version of the Categories and Criteria currently in force.

General Principles

Acknowledging Communications. During the formal petitions process, the petitioner, the RLA, the SPWG, and the RLPO should be acknowledge the receipt of all correspondence between them as soon as possible after arrival, so that any failure in delivery is detected as early as possible.

Confidentiality. While a petition is being considered, the associated documents (including justifications made by the petitioner and the RLA) are confidential documents that are not made available to third parties. The SPWG will circulate the justifications only to independent expert reviewers who agree to adhere to the confidentiality of the process and accept that their reviews will eventually be made public but not attributed. Final rulings on petitions made by the SPWG will include both justifications, and the reviews (without the names of the reviewers), in the documentation placed on the IUCN SSC website.

Repeated Petitions. In order to prevent continuing petitions on the same species, the SPWG will not accept a petition if it is not based on new information, or re-interpretation of existing information.

Reassessment of Species Following a Petition. The first time that a species is reassessed following a petition, the reassessment will be reviewed by the SPWG.

Deviations from the Process. All deviations from the process should be avoided as much as possible, and in any case all such deviations should be approved in advance by the Chair of the Biodiversity Assessments Sub-Committee.

Impartiality. The SSC Biodiversity Assessments Sub-Committee and the RLPO are responsible for ensuring that the process for handling petitions is adhered to, and that evaluations of petitions are carried out professionally and impartially. Prior to publishing the ruling on a petition, the Chair of the SPWG will send a brief report to the Chair of the Biodiversity Assessments Sub-Committee confirming that the above process was followed to reach the decision, or outlining any deviations from the process that had to be made.

Violation of the Petitions Process. The SSC Biodiversity Assessment Sub-Committee, the SSC Steering Committee, the SSC Chair, and the IUCN Secretariat (including the staff of the Red List Programme), have no rights to intervene in the petitions process, or to involve themselves in the substance of any petition, unless there is a formal and documented assertion submitted to the SSC Chair or the SSC Steering Committee that the above procedure has been violated.