



7th March 2011

Press Note

Strategy Discussion with International Experts on Tiger Protection Policy in India

To address the challenges of tiger conservation in India, the Ministry of Environment and Forests, through the National Tiger Conservation Authority had organized a meeting on “Strategy Discussion on Tiger Conservation”. The meeting was chaired by Shri Jairam Ramesh, Minister of State for Environment and Forests (I/C) and attended by international and national tiger biologists, conservationists and field officers from various tiger states. Dr. George Schaller (Vice-President, Panthera) and Dr. Alan Rabinowitz (President and CEO, Panthera), along with Dr. Joe Smith (Director of Tiger Program, Panthera) were among the international experts. Dr. K. Ullas Karanth, Dr. Raghu Chundawat, Valmik Thapar, Bittu Sehgal, Prerna Singh Bindra and Belinda Wright were among the tiger experts from India.

Dr. Schaller highlighted that tiger numbers in India had declined since the eighties but if India can set aside the space required for viable populations of wild tigers, and back it up with adequate on-ground protection then we can save the tiger. He emphasized the need for sound, rigorous, and modern scientific methods to inform and evaluate tiger conservation strategies, a point re-iterated by Dr. Alan Rabinowitz. India, said Dr. Rabinowitz, is the last bastion for the tiger, with the best landscapes and the best minds, but we need the political will and foresight. Dr. Rabinowitz also commented on the lack of communication and camaraderie between people working to save the tiger. He outlined the need for a standardized set of international evaluation criteria for independent evaluation of tiger conservation programs.

The participants deliberated at length on various issues of tiger conservation and arrived at the following points for future work

1. Securing trans-boundary cooperation on issues of poaching and trade in other tiger range countries like Bhutan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Myanmar with guidance from international experts.
2. Determine and finalize a strategy for protection of tiger populations outside Tiger Reserves.
3. Gap-evaluation of the 39 Tiger Reserves as per scientific norms of space requirements.
4. Analyze the feasibility of utilizing CAMPA funds for extension of tiger habitat by afforestation.
5. Evaluate and review the formation and functioning of Tiger Conservation Foundations on a state-wise basis.
6. Create a knowledge pool of international and national scientists at Wildlife Institute of India for improving and implementing cutting-edge science for tiger conservation.