

CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA



Sixty-second meeting of the Standing Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 23-27 July 2012

Interpretation and implementation of the Convention

Compliance and enforcement

CENTRAL AFRICAN WILDLIFE TRADE LAW ENFORCEMENT INITIATIVE

1. This document has been submitted by the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo on behalf of COMIFAC (The Central African Forests Commission) member countries*.
2. At its Ministerial meeting in November 2010, COMIFAC agreed to work towards an action plan to strengthen law enforcement against illegal wildlife trade in Central Africa. The plan, known hererafter as PAPECALF, or 'Plan d'Action sous-régional des Pays de l'Espace COMIFAC pour le renforcement de l'Application des Législations nationales sur la Faune sauvage', was fully endorsed by representatives of all 8 COMIFAC Governments present at a specially convened workshop in Douala, Cameroon, in November 2011. The draft received further support in April 2012 at a special wildlife law enforcement conference in Libreville, Gabon, hosted jointly by the Gabonese and Central African Republic governments and supported by their respective Ambassadors of the United States of America. It will be tabled by COMIFAC for adoption at a Ministerial level in the coming months.
3. The draft plan is annexed (in French only). In summary, the outlines of its content include the following:

Objective 1: Cooperation and collaboration among relevant wildlife law enforcement and prosecution authorities is strengthened at the national level and between member countries to curb illegal trade in wild fauna

Actions to be undertaken under this objective would include:

- a) Establishment of an inter-agency task force in each member country;
- b) Establishment of a regional task force under the auspices of the Central African Biodiversity Working Group with the objective of overseeing implementation of the plan at the regional level.
- c) Development, in each COMIFAC member country, of a national wildlife trade law enforcement plan with defined priorities, timeline and budget.

Objective 2: Investigations are intensified, in particular at key border and transit points, domestic market places and transboundary areas.

Actions to be undertaken under this objective would include:

- a) Strengthening enforcement actions in transboundary zones;
- b) Ensuring effective and sufficient law enforcement staff presence on the ground;

* *The geographical designations employed in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the CITES Secretariat or the United Nations Environment Programme concerning the legal status of any country, territory, or area, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The responsibility for the contents of the document rests exclusively with its author.*

- c) Establishment of inter-States agreements to support joint units and joint controls in the transborder areas
- d) Development of national strategies to address cross border poaching
- e) Enabling better collaborative work with CITES, WCO, Interpol etc;
- f) Harmonizing of controls procedures at national and regional level;
- g) Ensuring that enforcement and judiciary staff are adequately trained;
- h) Integrating wildlife trade issues into existing bilateral and multilateral agreements to improve law enforcement cooperation.

Objective 3: *Effective deterrents to wildlife poaching and illegal trade are put in place and enforcement and prosecution results are monitored.*

Actions to be undertaken under this objective would include:

- a) Prohibition of unregulated domestic retail trade in ivory;
- b) Harmonization of sanctions at the regional level according to the gravity of the offence;
- c) Ensuring that investigations lead to sanctions; and
- d) Establishment of national and regional prosecution monitoring systems.

Objective 4: *Awareness on illegal wildlife trade issues is raised and the results of enforcement efforts are widely communicated.*

Actions to be undertaken under this objective would include:

- a) Communication to the public of the message that illegal harvest of fauna is a criminal activity and publicizing enforcement actions and resulting sanctions.
 - b) Ensuring maximum publicity for reports of the monitoring and evaluation group on progress with implementation of the plan; and
 - c) Providing regular updates to COMIFAC.
4. The Central African Republic is pleased to offer this report on progress towards adoption of PAPECALF to the Standing Committee, especially against the backdrop of Central Africa's ongoing struggle with the twin scourges of poaching and illegal trade.
 5. The Committee is invited to take note of the plan, while Parties, International Organizations and NGO observers are invited to partner with COMIFAC in ensuring its speedy implementation.