



**Remarks by His Excellency,**

**Ali Bongo Ondimba**

**President of Gabon**

**High Level Side Event at the UNGA**

**New York**

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- **My Fellow Presidents,**
- **Mr. Deputy Secretary General,**
- **Ministers,**
- **Ambassadors,**
- **Distinguished Representatives of NGOs and Civil society,**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Germany and Gabon are honored by your presence at this high-level side event on an issue of shared concern.

As you are well aware, the illicit trafficking of wildlife is now one of the top five criminal trade networks. Globally, it accounts for over **US \$25 billions**, annually.

The magnitude of illicit gains from rhino horn, ivory and other wildlife products, has made organized criminal networks more and more aggressive. Today, many of our wildlife rangers are involved in combat situations similar to that seen by Special Forces in armed conflicts.

Illicit wildlife trade is destabilizing entire countries, and is negatively impacting the growth of national economies.

Rebel armies are creating insecurity, funding their activities by smuggling rhino horn and ivory. Pirate boats pillage our fish stocks and are starting to attack boats and oil installations in the Gulf of Guinea.

- **Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The illicit trade of wildlife is no longer a simple environmental problem, nor a simple matter of national law enforcement. It is now a transnational crime and a threat to peace and security on our continent.

This is why the issue warrants global attention. And we are encouraged today by the presence of so many important stakeholders.

I take this occasion to thank all the government and NGO partners who are helping us tackle illicit wildlife trafficking, including the US, UK, France, and NGOs such as WWF, WCS, and others. Forgive me if I did not mention some of you.

I thank again member States who supported us during our recent mandate in the Security Council, when we held a debate on transnational crime and new threats to peace and security.

Germany and Gabon, together, recently raised the awareness of the Council on the problem of wildlife trafficking, under the Presidency of the United States of America.

- **Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

As I did just over an hour ago at the Clinton Global Initiative, here I would like to call for concerted action from the international community as a whole to tackle this issue. Source, transit and market countries all need to work together.

On behalf of both Gabon and our co-chairs, Germany, I call upon the UN Secretary General to appoint a Special Envoy for Wildlife Crime, who will be charged with spearheading a global response to this pressing issue.

We envisage that the UN must play a leadership role. The presence of high-level representatives of the UN system today is a strong indication that the UN and its Secretary General are engaged and committed.

I am also pleased that the United Nations Committee on Security questions in Central Africa examined the security aspects of wildlife trafficking during its last meeting in Kigali, Rwanda.

This UN leadership could translate into the convening of a global conference, and Gabon is willing to host such a meeting at a time that is convenient.

Furthermore, a UN General Assembly resolution on the issue could be passed following a high-level plenary debate.

- **Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

At the same time, Gabon is working with other African Nations to develop a continental response to Wildlife Crime. I thank and commend my African Brothers, **the Presidents of Tanzania and Uganda** for their participation in this event.

I will consult with my African colleagues on the necessity of a high-level African initiative with the African Union and other regional organizations.

This African strategy should be spearheaded by the very men and women who are fighting to protect wildlife on the ground. I have charged the Head of Gabon's National Parks Agency to work with his fellows across the continent to develop Environmental Peace Keeping teams who can be mobilized rapidly each time a wildlife crisis develops.

We have tested this concept successfully in CAR at the request of President DJOTODIA, and I feel confident that this approach will be extremely effective.

Thank you **Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,** for making time in this busy week to join us to discuss this important issue.

I look forwards to hearing your views and to working with you to bring the power of the UN system to bear in our fight against wildlife crime.