

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

Seventy-eighth meeting of the Standing Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 3-8 February 2025

Illegal trade and enforcement

Wildlife crime enforcement support in West and Central Africa

REPORT OF THE SECRETARIAT

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.
2. At its 19th meeting (CoP19, Panama City, 2022) the Conference of the Parties adopted Decisions 18.90 (Rev. CoP19), 18.91 (Rev. CoP19) and 19.84 to 19.88 on *Wildlife crime enforcement support in West and Central Africa*,¹ as follows:

Directed to Parties importing CITES specimens from West and Central Africa

18.90 (Rev. CoP19) *Parties importing CITES specimens from West and Central Africa are encouraged to assist their counterparts in West and Central Africa, by implementing measures that will address wildlife crime and support legal trade that is limited to sustainable levels, in particular by:*

- a) *supporting efforts to determine and ensure sustainable levels of trade through scientific studies that can facilitate the making of robust non-detriment findings;*
- b) *undertaking due diligence as outlined in Resolution Conf. 11.3 (Rev. CoP19) on Compliance and enforcement and closely scrutinizing consignments of CITES-listed species imported from West and Central Africa and accompanying CITES documents to ensure that illegal species are not laundered into legal trade; and*
- c) *as a priority, raise any concerns about imports with the exporting State, or with the Animals Committee, Plants Committee, Standing Committee, or the Secretariat.*

Directed to Parties, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations

18.91 (Rev. CoP19) *Parties, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations are encouraged to provide financial and technical assistance to Parties in West and Central Africa and mobilize resources to support the implementation of Decisions 19.84, 19.85, paragraphs a) and b), 19.86, 19.87 paragraphs a), b) and c) and 18.90 (Rev. CoP19) and, as appropriate, take these Decisions into consideration in the development of work programmes or activities they initiate in the two subregions.*

¹ For the purpose of this document, the Secretariat reports on Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia (the), Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo for West Africa and on Angola, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and Sao Tome and Principe for Central Africa. (See [West and Central Africa Wildlife Crime Threat Assessment](#))

Directed to Parties

19.84 *Parties in West and Central Africa and Parties importing CITES specimens from West and Central Africa are strongly encouraged to enhance collaboration and communication regarding illegal wildlife trade affecting the two subregions, including by:*

- a) *using existing secure communication channels such as those provided by INTERPOL and the World Customs Organization for exchange of enforcement and illegal trade related information, and by drawing upon the enforcement focal point information available through the National CITES Authorities and Enforcement focal points webpages;*
- b) *actively pursuing international law enforcement collaboration through the mechanisms established by the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC); and other relevant information exchange platforms;*
- c) *reporting seizures on timber exported from West and Central Africa to the exporting countries as soon as practical, as appropriate, including sharing information described in paragraph 2.1 d) under Strengthen regional and international collaboration to address illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species in the outcome document of the Task Force on illegal trade in specimens of CITES-listed tree species; and*
- d) *actively pursuing the implementation of the measures and activities outlined in the Outcome document of the Task Force on illegal trade in specimens of CITES-listed tree species.*

Directed to Parties in West Africa and Central Africa

19.85 *Parties in West and Central Africa should:*

- a) *as relevant to them and where not yet done, continue to actively pursue the implementation of the Recommendations to Parties in West and Central Africa for consideration in their implementation of measures and activities to address wildlife crime affecting the two subregions.*
- b) *engage in regional and bilateral activities to share information on their national legislative and regulatory measures, exchange experiences and best practices, and identify opportunities for regional and cross-border cooperation and joint actions to address illegal trade in wildlife, taking into consideration paragraph 13 e) of Resolution Conf. 11.3 (Rev. CoP19) on Compliance and enforcement; and*
- c) *identify priority actions that could benefit from support, including activities referenced in Decisions 19.84, 19.85, paragraphs a) and b), 19.86, 19.87 paragraphs a), b) and c) and 18.90 (Rev. CoP19), and present these to the International Consortium on Combatting Wildlife Crime (ICCWC), donors and the development community, to seek support to implement them.*

Directed to Parties in West Africa and Central Africa

- 19.86**
- a) *Parties in West Africa are invited to, through the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Commission, request support from ICCWC for the implementation of the ICCWC Guidelines for Wildlife Enforcement Networks, to facilitate fully operationalizing the West Africa Network to Combat Wildlife Crime (WAN); and*
 - b) *Parties in Central Africa are invited to, through the Commission of Central African Forests (COMIFAC) or other appropriate platforms, request support from ICCWC for the implementation of the ICCWC Guidelines for Wildlife Enforcement Networks.*

Directed to the Secretariat

19.87 *The Secretariat shall:*

- a) *subject to external funding, work with its ICCWC partners to support Parties in West and Central Africa in addressing illegal trade in wildlife, including by promoting and facilitating collaboration and communication between Parties in West and Central Africa, transit and*

destination countries, through the convening of Wildlife Inter-Regional Enforcement (WIRE) and Regional Investigative and Analytical Case (RIACM) meetings as appropriate, and by supporting Parties upon request as anticipated in Decision 19.86;

- b) subject to external funding, work with ICCWC partners to expedite ICCWC Wildlife and Forest Crime Analytic Toolkit in West and Central African Parties to inform capacity building activities;
- c) subject to external funding and upon request from Parties, undertake general and targeted capacity-building activities to strengthen the effective implementation of CITES in the two subregions;
- d) issue a Notification to the Parties requesting them to provide information on their implementation of Decisions 19.84, 19.85, 19.86 and 18.90 (Rev. CoP19);
- e) report to the 78th meeting of the Standing Committee on the implementation of Decision 19.87, paragraphs a), b) and c), and the responses to the Notification in Decision 19.87, paragraph d), together with any recommendations it may have.
- f) support the Standing Committee in the implementation of Decision 19.88, paragraph a) and b).

Directed to the Standing Committee

19.88 The Standing Committee shall:

- a) establish a working group, with representation from all regions, to make recommendations on the development and adoption of procedures that will promote enhanced collaboration between source, transit and consumer countries, in particular to promote regular communication between source, transit and consumer countries;
- b) consider whether the establishment and administration of a CITES enforcement fund or other mechanisms that could provide targeted and sustainable financial support to combat wildlife crime and implement CITES to Parties that request such support is needed;
- c) consider the report of the Secretariat in accordance with Decision 19.87; and
- d) make recommendations to the Parties, the Secretariat, and the 20th meeting of the Conference of the Parties, as appropriate.

3. In the present document, the Secretariat provides reporting in accordance with Decision 19.87, paragraph e). The Secretariat also addresses other Decisions on *Wildlife crime enforcement support in West and Central Africa*, as relevant. Decision 19.88, paragraphs a) and b), was addressed by the Standing Committee working group on *Wildlife crime enforcement support in West and Central Africa* in document [SC78 Doc. 39.1](#).

Implementation of Decision 19.87, paragraphs a), b) and c)

4. Since CoP19, the Secretariat has worked with its ICCWC partners to support Parties in West and Central Africa. Activities conducted included collaboration with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the World Customs Organization (WCO) – Container Control Programme (CCP) to convene two regional trainings. This was done as part of a first phase of support to Parties in West and Central Africa based on Decisions adopted at CoP19, needs identified by Parties in West and Central Africa, and in response to the outcomes of the *CITES Task Force on illegal trade in specimens of CITES-listed tree species*. The trainings focused on species identification, increasing seizures through establishing risk profiles, as well as building capacity to detect document fraud and concealment methods used in wildlife trafficking, most notably regarding *Pterocarpus erinaceus*, ivory, pangolins and *Dalbergia* spp. It also addressed topics such as crime scene and evidence handling, the use of forensics, investigation and case management. The trainings further served to strengthen cooperation between relevant agencies including customs, police, prosecutors, and forestry authorities.
5. A second phase of targeted support implemented by UNODC and the Secretariat included a regional workshop and targeted national level activities. The regional workshop on strengthening investigative

capacity to combat crimes that affect the environment in West and Central Africa was convened in October 2023. Representatives from Cameroon, Chad, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea and Senegal participated. National level activities included a workshop on the strengthening of judicial capacity to prevent and respond to wildlife and forest crime cases in Senegal (June 2023) and Côte d'Ivoire (September 2023) and training on Rapid Reference Guide² use in Cameroon (June 2023), Chad (December 2023), and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (September 2023). Additional details can be found in the document SC78 Doc.38.2 on *International Consortium on Combatting Wildlife Crime* and in the [ICCWC annual report for 2023](#).

6. Parties in West and Central Africa also participated in Wildlife Inter-Regional Enforcement (WIRE) meetings convened by UNODC in 2023 and 2024. WIRE meetings offer a platform for law enforcement and criminal justice officials from around the world to meet and intensify cooperation and collaboration on intercepting, investigating and prosecuting wildlife and forest crimes. The WIRE 2023 brought together representatives from 36 countries and territories, including eight Parties from West and Central Africa (Angola, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Senegal). In 2023, UNODC provided case coordination support for 11 joint investigations stemming from the WIRE meeting, some of which included or were related to Parties in West and Central Africa. The 2024 WIRE brought together 140 representatives from 36 countries and territories including nine Parties from West and Central Africa (Angola, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Nigeria, Senegal). During the 2024 WIRE, 65 bilateral meetings took place, enabling authorities to discuss previous and ongoing cases, exchange contacts, and identify opportunities for joint investigations; 22 of these meetings involved Parties from West and Central Africa.
7. Further, Operation SAMA (Saving African Wildlife through Multilateral Assistance) was organized by three Regional Intelligence Liaison Offices of the WCO, in collaboration with UNODC. Operation SAMA involved 35 countries and resulted in 104 wildlife seizures across 19 countries in 2024, including 10 countries from West and Central Africa (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria and Senegal). In total, 18 cases and 31 seizures were reported by West African countries; and nine cases and 14 seizures were reported by Central African countries, with related arrests and prosecutions of offenders.
8. In August 2023, INTERPOL organized a Regional Investigative and Analytical Case Meeting (RIACM)³ on Wildlife Smuggling in Shipping Containers from Africa to Asia. The RIACM brought together representatives from wildlife agencies, police, customs, and prosecuting authorities from Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Malaysia, Nigeria, Singapore, and Viet Nam. The meeting and focused on the smuggling of ivory and pangolin scales using sea routes from West and Central Africa to South-East and East Asia. Participants got an opportunity to map criminal networks and identify priority targets, share information and conduct joint analysis of cases, trafficking routes and *modus operandi*. They also identified information gaps and developed joint investigation plans. Overall, from 2019 to 2023, six operational and investigative meetings were organized to combat wildlife trafficking in shipping containers from Africa to Asia and three [INTERPOL Red Notices](#) have been issued for identified targets.
9. INTERPOL also organized meetings to support information and intelligence gathering and sharing. These meetings facilitated the sharing of information on new developments and updates about ongoing investigations. Authorities from Kenya, the Central African Republic and Indonesia discussed cases concerning ivory seizures during Operation Thunder 2023, with the aim to identify information gaps and to facilitate further follow up. An intelligence-exchange meeting was also conducted between Nigeria and Cameroon. Law enforcement authorities from these two countries held a bilateral meeting alongside an ICCWC activity in April 2024 to discuss an on-going investigation involving ivory, identify intelligence gaps and plan investigative activities.
10. INTERPOL further conducted two capacity-building activities to strengthen enforcement efforts in West and Central Africa. A training session on combating financial crime in connection with wildlife offences was held in Côte d'Ivoire from 28 August to 1 September 2023. This event brought together law enforcement representatives from Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Madagascar and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The objective of the training was to provide law enforcement personnel with necessary knowledge and skills to detect and disrupt financial crime networks

² A Rapid Reference Guide is developed for national level use and provides guidance to national authorities of the country concerned on the legislation to apply in wildlife crime cases and the points to be proved in court.

³ A RIACM is a meeting convened by INTERPOL to support investigations and operational analytical work., in particular to follow-up on transnational investigations linking organized criminal networks through information exchange and the development of operational plans to target these networks.

that allow illegal trade in wildlife products. INTERPOL also hosted a webinar for Nigerian law enforcement agencies, showcasing an e-learning Course on Intelligence-led Enforcement for Environmental Crimes. The course aims to equip law enforcement officers with fundamental knowledge about environmental crime, core investigative techniques, information collection, data analysis and international cooperation tools available through INTERPOL. Fourteen law enforcement officers were certified after undertaking this course and the project will be used as a pilot for other countries. The course is now available via the [INTERPOL Virtual Academy](#) platform.

11. Under the auspices of ICCWC, WCO provided targeted training support to address gaps identified in previous iterations of Operation Thunder (co-organized with INTERPOL) to strengthen the capabilities of Parties to execute Thunder 2023. Specific support for Parties in Africa included two regional workshops on WCO tools, seizure data and operational risk analysis to enhance risk profiling, detection, interception and reporting of seizures related to illegal wildlife trade. The first was conducted from 19 to 21 April 2023 and the second from 6 to 8 June 2023. Countries from West and Central Africa included Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal.
12. Under the [INAMA Project](#), WCO worked to equip targeted customs administrations with enhanced capabilities to enforce national and international legislation applicable to illegal trade and CITES and to combat wildlife crime. The INAMA project includes 15 beneficiaries, including five Parties in West and Central Africa (Cameroon, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria and Togo). In 2023, the project supported several national and regional activities. In July 2023, training was conducted for authorities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, raising awareness about wildlife crime trends and supporting the development of CITES training modules for the customs administration. A key output achieved was the development of a draft module on CITES for the Customs training curriculum. Moreover, in April and May 2023, four trainings were completed for authorities in Cameroon, Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Togo, to reinforce risk management processes related to illegal wildlife trade for customs officers. In addition, two multi-regional activities were conducted:
 - a) A risk management workshop enhanced the capacity of Parties regarding risk assessment and techniques to collect and analyse data and strengthened knowledge about how to transmit information from national to regional/global levels.
 - b) A train-the-trainer workshop was held to enhance training delivery techniques and skills of customs officers/trainers on CITES enforcement and to improve knowledge of CITES technical and legal frameworks and training modules.

In 2024, two regional activities were conducted: a multi-regional pre-accreditation workshop in which Cameroon participated, and Operation PRAESIDIO III targeting the smuggling of wildlife.
13. Since CoP10, the World Bank, through the Global Environmental Facility funded Global Wildlife Program, delivered six national and provincial workshops and trainings on anti-money laundering (AML) and combating the financing of terrorism (CFT) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This included training related to environmental crimes, with participation from the banking and environmental sectors. The World Bank also assisted the Democratic Republic of the Congo in developing and finalizing its AML/CFT National Strategy. AML/CFT National Risk Assessments and the implementation of the Environmental and Natural Resources Crimes Module have also been completed in Equatorial Guinea, the Central African Republic, Chad, Gabon and Sierra Leone.
14. In addition, ICCWC supported the implementation of the Wildlife and Forest Crime Analytic Toolkit and the Indicator Framework in countries in West and Central Africa, upon request. To date, Toolkit implementation has been completed in Congo, Gabon and Nigeria, and the Indicator Framework has been implemented in Angola, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea and Nigeria. A number of Parties also received support to implement Toolkit and Indicator Framework recommendations. These include Cameroon, Congo and Gabon. The ICCWC 2023 Annual Report provides further information on the implementation of the Toolkit and Indicator Framework and specific examples of support, including to Parties in West and Central Africa.
15. At the time of writing, support to Parties in West and Central Africa continues. The Secretariat is working closely with INTERPOL to convene three RIACMs focused on priorities for Parties in West and Central Africa. The first RIACM is scheduled to be convened before the end of 2024, and two additional follow-up RIACMs are envisaged to be organized in early 2025 to facilitate specific wildlife crime investigations.

16. Parties in West and Central Africa also benefited from and/or participated in capacity-building activities and support provided by the Secretariat, through the CITES Compliance Assistance Programme and ongoing Article-XIII processes relevant to these Parties. The Secretariat for example organized the CITES regional workshop on non-detriment findings (NDF) and legal acquisition findings (LAF) for *Pterocarpus erinaceus* range States.
17. A number of other initiatives are also being implemented in West and Central Africa. For example, a multinational law enforcement operation codenamed '[Operation Jungle Shield](#)' was mobilized. Coordinated by the International Initiative of Law Enforcement for Climate (I2LEC),⁴ the operation uncovered extensive environmental crimes across the Congo Basin. Operation Jungle Shield saw the participation of law enforcement agencies from seven countries: Angola, the Central African Republic, Congo, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, South Sudan and Zambia. The operation was carried out between 28 October and 10 November 2024. Responses by Parties to the Notification to the Parties No. 2024/045, discussed in more details in the paragraphs below, also provide additional examples.
18. Noting the above and that additional activities are envisaged for 2025, Decision 19.87, paragraphs a) to c), has been implemented and can be deleted.

Implementation of Decision 19.87, paragraph d)

19. To implement Decision 19.87, paragraph d), the Secretariat issued [Notification to the Parties No. 2024/045](#) of 13 March 2024 inviting Parties to submit information to the Secretariat on their implementation of Decisions 18.90 (Rev. CoP19), 19.84, 19.85 and 19.86. In response to the Notification, the Secretariat received replies from Benin, Nigeria, Senegal, Thailand, Togo and the United States of America.
20. Key elements from these responses are summarized in paragraphs 21 to 35 of the present document. The full responses are compiled in an information document for the present meeting, in the language they were received.

Implementation of Decision 18.90 (Rev. CoP19)

21. Benin reported that it had not been contacted by Parties importing CITES specimens in the context of Decision 18.90, and strongly encouraged these Parties to do so.
22. Nigeria reported that a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Biodiversity Conservation and Cooperation in Combating Illegal Wildlife and Forest Crime have been drafted with Viet Nam. At the time of submitting its report, signature of the MoU was tentatively scheduled for September 2024. Nigeria reported to have initiated discussions with China and India concerning illegal trade in CITES listed species, with a view to identifying opportunities for collaboration. The Party informed that a progress update will be provided to Parties at the present meeting.
23. Senegal reported to have enhanced relations with some importing Parties such as Singapore, through communication exchanges between their Management Authorities, in particular for the control and verification of permits.
24. Togo reiterated its willingness to collaborate with importing Parties even though formal collaboration has not yet been established.
25. Thailand reported that, as an importing country, it has been monitoring trade volumes of wildlife imported from West and Central Africa since 2022. Imported wildlife mainly involved reptiles and birds listed in Appendix II for commercial purposes. Thailand indicated that, in accordance with the Wild Animal Reservation and Protection Act B.E. 2562 (2019), an import permit is required for all species listed in the CITES Appendices. This enables verification of export permits from Parties of concern prior to issuance of an import permit. The required permits and imported specimens are physically inspected. For the export of offspring of captive bred animals imported into Thailand, the process to issue a permit includes checking the number of captive-bred animals and ensuring legal acquisition to prevent the laundering of illegal specimens. Thailand stated that it will continue monitoring the trade of specimens from West and Central Africa as directed by the Decisions.

⁴ I2LEC is an initiative of the Ministry of Interior of the United Arab Emirates, established in partnership with UNODC and focused on generating intelligence for investigating transnational environmental crime networks.

26. The United States of America reported that its Scientific Authority has provided Parties in West and Central Africa with information and guidance on how to prepare proposals to amend Appendices I and II. All wildlife imported into the United States of America from any country, including those in West and Central Africa, is required to be declared to and cleared by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Law Enforcement (FWS/OLE) prior to entry. This is done by reviewing the supporting documentation, including any CITES documents, to determine if there is any reason to suspect that the wildlife in the shipment is not being traded legally. In the case of any suspicions of illegal trade, FWS/OLE investigates and takes appropriate enforcement action. FWS/OLE routinely contacts exporting countries with concerns about legality of particular shipments, or repeated occurrences of similar violations, in an effort to facilitate legal trade and interrupt the illegal trade at the source. Any issues that involve multiple Parties are raised with the appropriate national authorities for discussion and resolution.

Implementation of Decision 19.84

27. Benin reported that it had not been contacted by Parties that have seized exported timber as anticipated by Decision 19.84, paragraph c), and strongly encouraged Parties to contact it with any information related to timber seizures (or any other CITES-listed species) that implies export from or transit through Benin.
28. Nigeria reported that it was actively considering utilizing INTERPOL's tools for its Wildlife Law Enforcement Task Force. Regarding the illegal trade in *Pterocarpus erinaceus* and the current recommendation to suspend trade in this species from Nigeria, the Party reported to be committed to transitioning from manual to electronic permitting to strengthen its regulatory controls. Nigeria expressed its appreciation for the support provided for this process through the CITES Compliance Assistance Programme.
29. Togo reiterated its willingness to collaborate with importing Parties even though formal collaboration has not yet been established
30. The United States of America reported that FWS/OLE utilizes all available methods of communication to enhance collaboration with Parties in West and Central Africa regarding illegal wildlife trade, as appropriate for the circumstances of the situation.

Implementation of Decision 19.85

31. Benin reported a number of initiatives and activities:
- a) The new national CITES legislation was enacted on 8 July 2021, and that it is developing the implementing regulations. An update with the copies of the enacted law and draft regulations was shared with the Secretariat in February 2024 and Benin has been working to finalize and submit the implementing regulations. Benin reconfirmed its commitment to ensuring the CITES Category 1 status of its legislation, pending review of the final implementing regulations by the Secretariat.
 - b) The West Africa Strategy on Combating Wildlife Crime (WASCWC) was adopted by the Parliament and Council of Ministers of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in December 2023. Under this WASCWC, all ECOWAS countries are now required to develop National Wildlife Crime Strategies and to establish National Wildlife Crime Task Forces. In October 2023, with the support from the United States Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), Benin validated its 'National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Crime in the Republic of Benin 2024-2028'. The strategy is currently being processed for formal validation by the Government and a final copy will be shared with the Secretariat in due course. Benin reported that it established a multi-agency Wildlife Crime Task Force (ESNLCES) as the main mechanism for implementing the national strategy. The ESNLCES is composed of representatives from ten relevant different national agencies.
 - c) In January 2024, Benin participated in a Mutual Legal Assistance (MLA) workshop, alongside 10 other ECOWAS Member States, which aimed at strengthening regional capacity to coordinate wildlife law enforcement, including best practices for investigating, prosecuting, and convicting wildlife traffickers. This workshop was organized by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) West Africa Biodiversity and Low Emission Development (WABiLED) programme. In April 2024, the ESNLCES of Benin participated in a basic intelligence handling and management training supported by the INL. This training provided the ESNLCES with the basic skills for crime control, necessary for the units to operate proactively and effectively. Benin was informed that the WABiLED programme will provide additional trainings for ESNLCES in 2024/2025 in the following areas: advanced intelligence

handling and management; basic and advanced investigations; and combating transnational organized crime.

- d) In July 2023, Benin participated in an interregional meeting on strengthening cooperation regarding wildlife law enforcement between West and Central Africa held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, in which Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Ghana, and Nigeria also participated. The interregional meeting provided an opportunity for criminal investigators and case managers to discuss intelligence, challenges, and best practices on transnational wildlife trafficking, while developing capacity for law enforcement collaboration. The meeting also provided a mechanism for confidential information sharing and coordination of transnational investigations among participating countries.

32. Nigeria also reported on a number of initiatives and activities:

- a) Nigeria's new Wildlife Protection Bill has passed First Reading in its House of Representatives. Updates will be provided to the Secretariat once the bill has been adopted.
- b) Nigeria adopted its 'National Strategy to Combat Wildlife and Forest Crime in Nigeria' (2022 – 2026) and subsequently established a National Combating Wildlife Crime Steering Committee and Wildlife Law Enforcement Task Force (WLETF) to support implementation of the strategy. The Task Force comprises 34 members representing 18 different national authorities. Nigeria is Co-Chair of the Steering Committee responsible for establishment of the regional West Africa Network to Combat Wildlife Crime (WAN). Nigeria anticipated that following adoption of the WASCWC by ECOWAS, the WAN will soon be launched. Nigeria encourages all Parties to engage with the WAN and provide support as it begins its activities in combating wildlife crime across the West African region.
- c) From 31 October to 2 November 2023, a training programme for seaport and airport stakeholders was carried out in Lagos, with support from the USAID WABILED programme. The goal of the training was to enhance the skills of the private sector representatives in the transport and financial sectors to fight against wildlife crime, in collaboration with law enforcement agencies responsible for the implementation of CITES and national wildlife laws. This training was carried out in response to a private sector needs assessment workshop conducted in May 2023 which mobilized over 60 participants from commercial banks, logistics and shipping companies, airlines, and law enforcement agencies.
- d) Nigeria has participated in several capacity-building activities including basic intelligence training for the WLETF (sponsored by INL); basic investigators training for the WLETF (sponsored by the USAID WABILED programme); and the MLA training mentioned in paragraph 31 c) above (sponsored by the USAID WABILED programme).
- e) Nigeria recently signed a Cooperation Framework Agreement with Cameroon, concerning Transboundary Ecosystems Conservation and Sustainable Management of Forestry and Wildlife Resources. This agreement includes numerous activities that will support CITES implementation, including *inter alia* the development of a common strategy to combat illegal exploitation of, and trade in forestry and wildlife resources; setting up an information sharing platform, joint criminal investigation units and intervention brigades; implementing joint actions to combat illegal logging and trade in forestry products; implementing joint actions to combat wildlife crime and illegal trade in wildlife products; and setting up a common platform to prosecute offences and follow up litigation arising from the fight against wildlife crime and unlawful exploitation of forest resources.
- f) In July 2023, Nigeria participated in the interregional meeting referred in paragraph 31 d) above.

33. Senegal reported that, through its CITES Management Authority (MA) and other field stakeholders such as judges and prosecutors, it took part in various capacity building programmes. Similar to Benin and Nigeria, it also reported on the validation of the WASCWC [see paragraph 31 b) above], as well as on the participation of the Senegalese MA in a regional meeting organized by the UNODC Regional Office for West and Central Africa on proactive investigations into transnational organized crime and illicit trafficking of natural resources, held from 24 to 27 December in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. The MA of Senegal participated in a regional workshop on MLA [see paragraph 31 c) above]. Senegal further reported on training from 22 to 26 January 2024 in Ghana, led by WABILED with the support of USAID, aimed to strengthen the regional coordination capacity in the fight against wildlife crime.

34. Togo reported that its authorities participated in various activities aiming at combating wildlife crime at the national and regional levels.
- a) In June 2023, Togo held a workshop with various national stakeholders, supported by USAID's WABiLED programme, to assess the country's needs and provide strategic guidance to develop a National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Crime (NSCWC). In March 2024, Togo held a two-day validation workshop, during which all stakeholders validated the implementation framework of Togo's NSCWC. Togo participated in a workshop on MLA [see paragraph 31 c) above]. Further, Togo reported on the designation of a National Task Force on Wildlife Crime as the main implementation mechanism for its national strategy. Togo's Task Force participated in an "Initial Survey Training" in February 2024, supported by USAID's WABiLED programme. Additionally, in January 2023, a needs assessment and awareness-raising workshop was held for private sector actors in the fields of transport and banking, highlighting the role of the private sector in combating illegal wildlife trade at both the national and regional levels. A training supported by WABiLED was organized in January 2024 to strengthen private sector skills regarding detection and reporting of suspicious transactions, in which 55 private sector representatives participated.
 - b) Within the framework of the NSCWC, Togo made seizures of Appendix-I CITES-listed species in February, March and April 2024.
35. The United States of America reported that, since 2020, it provided more than USD 18,000,000 to support efforts in the subregions through INL. INL programming in West and Central Africa is focused on combating wildlife trafficking through strengthening anti-poaching in national parks in Benin, Chad, the Congo and the Democratic Republic of the Congo; providing support to interdiction capacity in key source countries; training government agencies to investigate and prosecute instances of wildlife trafficking; supporting cooperation through the WASCWC, and building stockpile management systems to deter corruption and prevent leakages of wildlife products into the illegal market. In addition, the United States Department of State Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs (OES) provided USD 288,000 in 2023 to train law enforcement officers, investigators, prosecutors, and judges in Gabon and Cameroon responsible for interdicting, investigating, and prosecuting illegal logging and associated illegal trade.

Implementation of Decision 19.86, paragraph a) and b)

36. The Secretariat notes that no requests for support as anticipated by Decision 19.86 were received. Support can be provided subject to the availability of funding and resources. Wildlife Enforcement Networks in West and Central Africa are invited to request support if needed.

Conclusions

37. The present document highlights a broad range of activities that have been undertaken or are planned to be conducted in West and Central Africa. However, wildlife crime affecting Parties in West and Central Africa continues to be of concern.
38. As noted in paragraph 18 of the present document, Decision 19.87, paragraphs a) to c), have been implemented and can be deleted. However, in light of the continued need for support to Parties in West and Central Africa, the Secretariat proposes draft decision 20.AA, as presented in the Annex to the present document.
39. In light of the continued need for support to Parties in West and Central Africa, support as envisaged by Decision 18.91 (Rev. CoP19) also remains essential. The Secretariat notes that the draft decisions proposed by the Standing Committee working group on *Wildlife crime enforcement support in West and Central Africa* in document SC78 Doc. 39.1 sufficiently address what is envisaged by Decision 18.91 (Rev. CoP19). Should the Committee agree to the draft decisions proposed by the working group, Decision 18.91 (Rev. CoP19) can then be deleted.
40. Regarding Decisions 18.90 (Rev. CoP19), 19.84, 19.85 and 19.87, paragraphs d) and e), the Standing Committee is invited to welcome the activities undertaken and progress by Parties in West and Central Africa and the support provided to these Parties. The Secretariat notes that most of the provisions in these Decisions are already reflected in Resolution Conf. 11.3 (Rev. CoP19) on *Compliance and enforcement*, most notably under the headings regarding: exercising due diligence, enforcement at national level, coordination and collaboration at regional and international levels and available tools, services and resources. Decisions 18.90 (Rev. CoP19), 19.84, 19.85 and 19.87, paragraphs d) and e) can therefore be

proposed for deletion as they have been implemented or are already incorporated in Resolution Conf. 11.3 (Rev. CoP19). Further, Decision 19.86 can be deleted, as support in this regard can be considered and mobilized in accordance with paragraph 28 c) in Resolution Conf. 11.3 (Rev. CoP19), should a formal request be received.

41. Lastly, as noted in paragraph 3 of the present document, Decision 19.88, paragraphs a) and b), were addressed through the work of the Standing Committee working group on *Wildlife crime enforcement support in West and Central Africa*. Should the Committee agree the recommendations of the working group, and considering the reporting provided in the present document, Decisions 19.87, paragraph f), and 19.88 can be proposed for deletion as they have been implemented.

Recommendations

42. The Standing Committee is invited to:

- a) welcome the activities undertaken by Parties in West and Central Africa and the support provided to these Parties as outlined in the present document;
- b) review and submit draft decision 20.AA in the Annex to the present document to the Conference of the Parties; and
- c) recommend to the Conference of the Parties that:
 - i) Decisions 18.90 (Rev. CoP19), 19.84, 19.85, 19.86, 19.87 and 19.88 can be deleted as they have been implemented or are already incorporated in Resolution Conf. 11.3 (Rev. CoP19) on *Compliance and enforcement*; and
 - ii) Decision 18.91 (Rev. CoP19) can be deleted, as it has been incorporated in the draft decisions prepared by the Standing Committee working group on *Wildlife crime enforcement support in West and Central Africa*.

DRAFT DECISION ON
WILDLIFE CRIME ENFORCEMENT SUPPORT IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

Directed to the Secretariat

20.AA Subject to extrabudgetary resources, the Secretariat shall work with its ICCWC partners to continue providing targeted support to Parties in West and Central Africa, to combat wildlife crime.