

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 INTERSESSIONAL WORKING GROUP

1. This document has been submitted by Nigeria as Chair of the Standing Committee working group on Wildlife crime enforcement support in West and Central Africa.\*

Background:

2. The Conference of the Parties at its 19th meeting (CoP19, Panama City, 2022), *inter alia* adopted Decision 19.88, paragraph b), as follows:

***Directed to the Standing Committee***

**19.88** *The Standing Committee shall:*

...

- 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;*

...

3. The Standing Committee intersessional working group on Wildlife crime enforcement support in West and Central Africa in accordance with its mandate prepared document [SC77 Doc. 39.4](#) on *Wildlife crime enforcement support in West and Central Africa*. This document was considered by the Committee at its 77th meeting (SC77; Geneva, November 2023), and as presented in document [SC77 SR](#), the Committee based on its deliberations:

- a) *noted the discussions of the working group;*
- b) *requested the working group to continue its discussions with regards to Decision 19.88 paragraph b);*
- c) *requested the working group to consider and, if needed, finalize the questionnaire directed to Parties, inter-governmental organizations and non-governmental organizations, regarding existing access to finance mechanisms for CITES enforcement;*

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\* *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.*

- d) *requested the CITES Secretariat to issue a Notification to the Parties regarding existing access to finance mechanisms for CITES enforcement, once finalized by the working group; and*
- e) *requested the working group to report on the implementation of Decision 19.88 paragraph b) to the 78th meeting of the CITES Standing Committee.*

Working group discussions:

4. In January 2024, Nigeria as Chair of the working group communicated by email with working group members to seek feedback on the questionnaire available in Annex 3 to document SC77 Doc. 39.4. Following the email, only three responses were received on the questionnaire. Given these limited responses, an online meeting was held on 9 May 2024 to progress discussions regarding SC77 recommendations b), c) and d) and the questionnaire.
5. Five Parties (Belgium, Italy, Nigeria (Chair), Spain and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) and four observers (Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA), Fauna and Flora International, Pan African Sanctuary Alliance and the World Resources Institute) participated in the online meeting. The Secretariat joined the meeting to provide support as needed. During the online meeting, it was noted with concern that participation of Parties that are members of the working group are limited but agreed to continue discussions to advance on the work of the working group.
6. The working group noted the limited number of responses received on the request for feedback regarding the questionnaire, and discussed the need to issue the questionnaire. After some discussion, the working group concluded that there was no need to issue the questionnaire but agreed that a specific undertaking was needed to make Parties aware of existing funding opportunities available and how to access them.
7. It was agreed that targeted consultations will likely be more effective than a questionnaire. It was noted that awareness can be improved through targeted communication. It was further noted that this could be achieved by communicating information through for example, but not limited to, a dedicated webpage on the CITES website.
8. The working group recalled the conclusions presented in paragraph 11 a) to d) of document SC77 Doc. 39.4, which are as follows:
  - a) At this stage there is no need to create an additional funding mechanism as there are various funding mechanisms and initiatives available. These are however not sufficient and additional funding is needed to support the implementation of existing activities and programmes and Parties efforts to comply with CITES rules and regulations.
  - b) There is a lack of awareness of existing initiatives and how to access funds. There is a need to increase awareness and information on how to access funding. It would be useful if CITES could organize a workshop to brief all parties/donors on the various initiatives and funding sources and how to access these projects and funds.
  - c) CITES should look at available funding mechanism and make this information available on the CITES website to direct Parties to available funding sources/initiatives they can reach out for support. CITES should also explore with the donor community the possibility to increase funding for its existing programmes for activities to support Parties with CITES implementation.
  - d) Where possible, it is recommended that application for funds for initiatives be flexible so that Parties can access these funds.
9. The working group reaffirmed points a) to d) as presented in paragraph 11 of document SC77 Doc. 39.4, in particular that additional funding is needed to support the implementation of existing activities and programmes and Parties efforts to comply with CITES rules and regulations. The working group also agreed on the need to organize a forum (workshop or a similar endeavor), with involvement of key initiatives and donors that focused on how to access funds. The working group further highlighted that more information on funding opportunities should be made available to Parties. The conclusions reached are summarized as follows:
  - a) Regarding Decision 19.88, paragraph b) and SC77 recommendation b), the working group agreed to endorse the conclusions reflected in paragraph 11 a) to d) of document SC77 Doc. 39.4. The working

group propose that the CITES Secretariat reach out to potential donors and encourage that they increase the funding to be mobilized for combating wildlife crime and that further research be conducted on the needs of Parties in order to be able to continue discussions.

- b) Regarding SC77 recommendations c) and d), the working group agreed that a questionnaire was not needed, and therefore it did not request the Secretariat to issue a Notification to the Parties. The working group proposes that research on existing initiatives and specific funding needs could be conducted by the Secretariat prior to a potential meeting or workshop to help identify existing access to finance mechanisms for CITES enforcement as appropriate.
10. Given that a number of Parties that are members of the working group were not in attendance during the online meeting, it was agreed that the Chair should initiate bilateral consultation with Parties in West and Central Africa to seek any possible additional feedback and inputs on the conclusions reached. The Chair subsequently, on behalf of the working group, initiated this consultation with working group member Parties in West and Central Africa. In response to the consultation, replies were received from Benin and Togo. Both Parties largely agreed with the working group conclusions, but also continued to stress the need for a CITES Enforcement Fund.
  11. A subsequent online meeting of the working group was organized on 10 October to consider the additional feedback received. Five Parties (the European Union, Italy, Liberia, Nigeria (Chair), United Kingdom and the United States of America) and four observers (CMS, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and EIA) participated in online meeting. The Secretariat joined the meeting to provide support as needed. The working group again noted with concern the limited participation of Parties that are members of the working group and agreed it would not be appropriate to discuss the further inputs received without the participation of the concerned Parties.
  12. The working group noted that the Chair had made considerable efforts to attempt to secure engagement and participation of Parties in the discussions and to facilitate that all inputs could be considered and the work of the working group could progress. The working group concluded its work and maintained the outcomes agreed as presented in paragraph 9 a) and b) above.
  13. The recommendations of the working group prepared in accordance with SC77 recommendation e) for consideration by the Standing Committee, are presented in paragraph 14 below. Should the Committee agree to these recommendations, it can be recommended to the 20th meeting of the Conference of the Parties that Decision 19.88, paragraph b), has been implemented and can be deleted.

#### Recommendations

14. The Standing Committee is invited to:
  - a) note the conclusions reached by the working group as presented in paragraph 9 a) and b) of the present document, as well as the limited participation of Parties as members of the working group, in working group discussions;
  - b) consider and agree draft decisions 20.AA to 20.CC as presented in the Annex to the present document; and
  - c) agree that Decision 19.88, paragraph b), has been implemented and can be deleted.

DRAFT DECISIONS ON  
*WILDLIFE CRIME ENFORCEMENT SUPPORT IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA*

***Directed to Parties and donor organizations***

**20.AA** Parties and donor organizations are encouraged to:

- a) notify the Secretariat of any funding opportunities that should be included on the CITES website in accordance with Decision 20.BB paragraph a); and
- b) explore the possibility to make available additional funding for activities to support Parties with CITES implementation and efforts to combat wildlife crime.

***Directed to the Secretariat:***

**20.BB** The Secretariat shall:

- a) make information available on the CITES website about initiatives, projects and funding opportunities, to bring to the attention of Parties available funding sources they can reach out to for support in their efforts to implement CITES and combat wildlife crime; and
- b) organize a forum, in collaboration with relevant initiatives, partners and donors, focused on how Parties can access funds in support of their efforts to implement CITES and combat wildlife crime.

***Directed to Parties, governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and other entities***

**20.CC** Parties, governmental, intergovernmental, non-governmental organizations and other entities are encouraged to support CITES Parties in their efforts to implement the Convention and combat wildlife crime, in particular with the implementation of CITES Decisions relevant to them, national or regional strategies developed and being implemented by Parties and, as appropriate, consider such support in the development of work programmes or initiatives.