

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



Sixty-ninth meeting of the Standing Committee  
Geneva (Switzerland), 27 November - 1 December 2017

Strategic matters

UNITED NATIONS WORLD WILDLIFE DAY:  
REPORT OF THE SECRETARIAT

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.

Background

2. The Conference of the Parties, at its 16th meeting (CoP16, Bangkok, 2013), adopted Resolution Conf. 16.1 which called on the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) to proclaim 3 March, the day of signature of CITES, as World Wildlife Day.
3. The United Nations General Assembly, at its 68th session, on 20 December 2013, adopted Resolution A/RES/68/205 proclaiming 3 March as United Nations World Wildlife Day and requested the CITES Secretariat, in collaboration with relevant organizations of the United Nations system, to facilitate the implementation of World Wildlife Day.
4. Reports on previous World Wildlife Day celebrations up to 2016 can be found in documents [SC65 Doc. 15](#), [SC66 Doc. 15.1 \(Rev. 1\)](#) and [CoP17 Doc. 19](#) which were submitted to the Standing Committee and the Conference of the Parties respectively.
5. Resolution Conf. 17.1 on *World Wildlife Day*, adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its 17th meeting (CoP17, Johannesburg, 2016), among other things, requests the Standing Committee to continue to work with the Secretariat to recommend the theme for each year's observance of World Wildlife Day.

Theme for World Wildlife Day 2017

6. Shortly after CoP17, the Secretariat consulted the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee on the theme of World Wildlife Day 2017, and youth engagement was chosen as the theme for World Wildlife Day 2017. The theme of World Wildlife Day 2017 echoed [Resolution Conf. 17.5](#) on *Youth Engagement*, originally proposed by South Africa, the host country of CoP17, which calls on Parties to engage and empower the youth in wildlife conservation and in decision-making processes. "Listen to the young voices" was subsequently chosen as the slogan.
7. The Secretariat announced the theme and slogan through a [press release](#) published in December 2016. In addition, Notification to the Parties No. 2017/001 was issued on 10 January 2017, which invites all Parties to:
  - a) observe and raise awareness of theme for World Wildlife Day in an appropriate manner, in accordance with national priorities;
  - b) associate World Wildlife Day celebrations to national wildlife conservation events, where appropriate;
  - c) organize campaigns to reduce the demand for illegally sourced wildlife and their products using targeted strategies in order to influence consumer behaviour;

- d) make use of the World Wildlife Day logo available on the World Wildlife Day website and support the social media campaign using official and individual accounts; and
  - e) advise the CITES Secretariat of any events and activities planned to celebrate World Wildlife Day, and the outcomes thereof.
8. In line with [UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/68/205](#), the Secretariat also reached out to all UN Member States, organizations of the United Nations system and other global, regional and sub-regional organizations, non-governmental organizations and all interested individuals, and invited them to observe and raise awareness of theme for World Wildlife Day 2017 in an appropriate manner and to associate World Wildlife Day celebrations to major national, regional and international conservation events.
  9. Given the theme on youth engagement, the Secretariat worked with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as the key partner among UN system organizations for World Wildlife Day 2017, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) as the main international conservation organization partner to benefit from its wide country representations, and [Youth for Wildlife Conservation \(Y4WC\)](#) as the leading youth organization, while in the also maintaining collaboration with all other relevant organizations, including those that have a focus on youth, such as [Jane Goodall's Roots & Shoots](#) and [One More Generation](#).

#### High level event at UN Headquarters

10. The Secretariat worked closely with the Office of the President of UN General Assembly on the organization of a high level event at UN Headquarters in New York on 3 March to implement UN General Assembly [Resolution A/RES/70/301](#) on tackling illicit trafficking in wildlife adopted in September 2016. The Resolution, among other things, invited the President of the General Assembly to work with the CITES Secretariat to organize “a high-level thematic discussion on the global observance of World Wildlife Day, including on the protection of wild flora and fauna and on tackling illicit trafficking in wildlife”.
11. Over 400 participants representing Member States, the UN system and other intergovernmental organizations, civil society and the youth gathered at the event to celebrate the Day and to address the various challenges confronting both wildlife and people in the wider context of sustainable development and the importance of youth engagement.
12. The President of UN General Assembly chaired the event. The Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Minister of Environmental Affairs of South Africa (as representative of the Host of CoP17 and co-sponsor of the CoP17 Resolution on *Youth engagement*), the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the CITES Secretary-General all attended and addressed the event.
13. The high level speeches were followed by two sessions of panel discussions, respectively on “Tackling illicit trafficking of wildlife and protecting wild fauna and flora” and “Listen to the young voices – presentations on the role of youth in protecting wildlife”. Ambassadors from New York missions to the United Nations from China, Gabon and Germany, representatives from UNESCO, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), INTERPOL, the World Customs Organization, the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), WWF and youth representatives were among the panellists.
14. A young conservation leader from Asia, representing Youth for Wildlife Conservation, and a representative from One More Generation (OMG), spoke on behalf of the young people of the world and shared their experiences in, and visions for, wildlife conservation. They made a unique contribution to the event.
15. Also at UN Headquarters, a side event led by the United Kingdom in cooperation the CITES Secretariat, WCS and others, highlighted the range of ongoing international actions to combat illicit wildlife trafficking and ways to incorporate the outcomes of major conferences into the future work of the UN and others. The panel discussion, which included Ambassadors or First Secretaries from Botswana, Germany, Thailand, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Viet Nam and the [CITES Secretary-General](#), as well as the discussion that followed, will help shape the elements to be included in a possible third UN General Assembly resolution on Tackling Illicit Trafficking in Wildlife to be considered by the General Assembly in September.

### National celebrations

16. In addition to high-level events, the Secretariat continued to make robust efforts to further mobilize countries and people around the world to embrace and celebrate World Wildlife Day. The Secretariat reached out to specific countries in all regions and encouraged them to observe the Day. Relevant information, promotional materials and other support were provided as requested.
17. Over 90 countries organized events in various forms to celebrate World Wildlife Day 2017, from major high level events to personal engagements. Initiatives were taken by many countries to hold national level events, including through the efforts of CITES Management Authorities.



Map of the events organized for WWD2017

18. More than 300 events were registered through the World Wildlife Day website and the graphic from the website showing the registered events is copied above. Organizers of the events ranged from national governments to small businesses, schools and individuals, in the forms of major conferences, street parades, TV talk shows, street banners, brochures, exhibitions, competitions, massive social media campaigns, as well as education programmes.

### Geneva event

19. To coincide with the high-level event held at UN Headquarters in New York, the Secretariat, in partnership with the Geneva Environment Network and the Wild Hearts Association, held a film screening and panel discussion on “Securing the Future of the World’s Wildlife with Youth”. Following a screening of “The Ivory Game”, the Chief of Enforcement Support of the CITES Secretariat, the coordinator of Project Wisdom of INTERPOL, a representative of the Environment & Sustainable Development Section of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs briefed the audience on current developments in illegal trade in wildlife and how each entity is working to involve youth in their undertakings. The event was moderated by the communications intern of the CITES Secretariat. As a youth representative herself, she effectively helped further strengthen the theme of youth engagement and participation.

### Photo competition

20. In an effort to inspire the youth across the globe to add their visions, as well as to use their artistic talents to galvanize other youth and citizens in wildlife conservation, the Secretariat launched a [photo competition](#) entitled ‘Through young eyes’. The competition encouraged young people from around the world (aged 10 to 24) to submit their original photos that either display wildlife or that depict youth engaging in conservation efforts. The Secretariat expresses its appreciation to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service that provided generous financial support to the photo competition.
21. The ‘Through young eyes’ photo competition brought in a total of 600 entries from youth across every continent. A judging panel narrowed down the entries to 10 photos as finalists. The quality of the works submitted to the competition exceeded expectations of the judges. The [10 finalists](#) of the competition came from Bangladesh, El Salvador, Hungary, India, Mexico, Pakistan, the Philippines, South Africa, Switzerland, and the United States of America, representing most continents. A 17 year old young man from Hungary was the grand prize winner. He was flown to New York to receive the certificate at the World Wildlife Day event at the UN Headquarters. The certificate was presented by the Minister of Environmental Affairs of

South Africa, the CITES Secretary-General, and the Assistant Director of International Affairs of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

### Outreach

22. A new interface of the [World Wildlife Day website](#) was launched one month before 3 March, with information on the background and theme of World Wildlife Day 2017, suggestions on various ways to get involved, messages from the UN Secretary General, and heads of other organizations, as well as youth representatives. Posters in all six UN languages, outreach videos, action cards, social media kit, news items and a map that allows online submission of events were made available on the website.
23. In order to promote the theme of this year's World Wildlife Day with impactful visual materials, the Secretariat recruited professional designers through the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme to design posters, action cards and social media banners.
24. The Secretariat also worked with youth organizations, film festival organizers and other organizations to create short outreach videos with young conservation leaders and school students sharing their visions in conservation and calling for actions by other youth. The outreach videos were shared thousands of times. A social media kit with suggested messages for Facebook, Twitter and Instagram was prepared in-house and shared with all partners. Key hashtags proposed were #youth4wildlife, #youngvoices and #DoOneThingToday.
25. Reaction and support on social media to this year's World Wildlife Day was phenomenal. According to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), in China alone 30 youth celebrities led to almost 500 million engagements on social media. A series of short awareness videos were viewed a total of 250 million times. The official World Wildlife Day Twitter account received over 5,000 new followers in 3 days. Celebrities such as Leonard DiCaprio supported the campaign on social media. Many major UN system organizations and conservation organizations joined the social media campaign, including the UN Secretariat, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, UNODC, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), WCS, WWF and all multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs).
26. A section of the World Wildlife Day 2017 website was dedicated to a message board, featuring messages from a range of prominent personalities and partners of the Day. The messages were from the UN Secretary-General, the UN Deputy Secretary-General, UNESCO Director-General, CITES Secretary-General, the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity; and the President and Chief Executive Officer of the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), as well as other supporting organizations.

### Observations on World Wildlife Day 2017

27. The celebration of World Wildlife Day 2017 was a great success in terms of the scale and level of participation at national level, the further commitments from member States and international organizations demonstrated at the high level event at the UN Headquarters, and overwhelming public involvement particularly youth engagement both in physical events and on social media. Although only the 4<sup>th</sup> annual celebration, World Wildlife Day has quickly become the most important global annual event dedicated to wildlife. The youth theme was also very well received across the globe and served to implement Resolution Conf. 17.5.
28. At the 66th meeting of the Standing Committee (Geneva, January 2016), the Secretariat noted that it was mostly developing countries that had taken national action to celebrate the World Wildlife Day in the first two observances and the names of the 11 countries that, to the knowledge of the Secretariat, celebrated World Wildlife Day 2015, were shared with the participants as an incentive for other countries to follow suit. The above situation has changed since World Wildlife Day 2016 as more and more countries, including many developed countries are now observing the Day. The over 90 countries that have celebrated World Wildlife Day 2017 can be found on the [World Wildlife Day website](#). The Secretariat is highly appreciative of the efforts made by these countries, particularly through their Management Authorities and encourages all countries to keep the momentum in all coming years.
29. World Wildlife Day 2017 was on the theme of youth engagement, but this should not be a one-off engagement. The Secretariat respectfully encourages Parties to continue to engage youth in the celebration of future World Wildlife Day because youth will always be a main force in observing the Day and they are the future protectors of wildlife. The Secretariat also wishes to note that paragraph 4 of Resolution Conf. 17.1 on *World Wildlife Day*:

*ENCOURAGES all Parties, through their national ministries of education or other relevant authorities responsible for education, to consider making the observance of World Wildlife Day a regular event on the calendars of kindergartens, schools and universities, ...*

The Secretariat will appreciate any update on progress made by Parties in this regard.

30. Paragraph 2 of Resolution Conf. 17.1 further

*INVITES all Parties and non-party States, national and international organizations with an interest in wildlife conservation, to associate celebrations of World Wildlife Day to national, regional and international conservation events, where appropriate, and to communicate the planned activities to the Secretariat in advance.*

The Secretariat has been in contact with Botswana and suggested that they consider organizing the Giants Club forum, which Botswana will host in March 2018, in conjunction with World Wildlife Day 2018. The Secretariat encourages all other Parties and organizations to organize relevant events in such a fashion, when feasible.

31. Although the organization of World Wildlife Day has been very successful in the past few years, the Secretariat has facilitated the celebrations of the day with no additional financial resources and has relied upon existing in-house capacity and the support of many partners, including the valuable support from interns and UN Volunteers (UNV). As indicated in Resolution Conf. 17.1, the Secretariat and the celebrations will benefit from any additional financial or in-kind support to ensure the ongoing success of future celebrations of World Wildlife Day. The Secretariat has made contacts with several organizations to seek their sponsorship of World Wildlife Day. The Secretariat will update the Standing Committee on any progress made in this regard in the future.
32. Resolution Conf. 17.1 on *World Wildlife Day* requests the Standing Committee to continue to work with the Secretariat on the observance of World Wildlife Day. The Secretariat considers that this will be best done through a working group which existed before CoP17. A working group, with members from interested Parties in all regions, representatives from international and national conservation organizations, will create a sense of ownership by the Parties and organizations which jointly propose the theme of the Day and discuss how the Day is best observed. It may also serve as an incentive for the members to play a more active role in mobilizing the celebrations in their country or organization.

Preparation for World Wildlife Day 2018

33. Following consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee, big cats was agreed as the theme for World Wildlife Day 2018. The Secretariat issued a [press release](#) on 3 September, i.e. 6 months before 3 March 2018, to announce the theme of World Wildlife Day 2018 in order to allow all Parties and organisations sufficient time to prepare for the Day. All big cat species in Africa, Asia, and North, Central and South America are included in CITES Appendices and have close to global distribution. Big cats are represented in car logos, fashion and sporting clubs globally.
34. The Secretariat is again planning to work with the President of the UN General Assembly, interested Parties, relevant UN system organizations and international conservation organizations, *inter alia*, to organize a high level event at the UN Headquarters in New York to observe the Day. The Secretariat will partner with Jackson Hole Film Festival to organize an International Film Festival on Big Cats and winners will be announced the at UN Headquarters in New York.
35. In line with the UNGA Resolution A/RES/68/205, the Secretariat calls on all Parties, all member States and organizations of the United Nations system and other global, regional and sub-regional organizations, non-governmental organizations and all interested individuals, to: observe and raise awareness of the theme for World Wildlife Day 2018 in an appropriate manner; to associate the celebrations with major national and international conservation events, where appropriate; to organize campaigns to reduce the demand for illegal wildlife and their products using targeted strategies in order to influence consumer behaviour.

## Recommendations

36. The Secretariat recommends that the Committee establishes a World Wildlife Day working group with members from all regions, with the following mandate:
- a) contribute ideas on the celebration of World Wildlife Day;
  - b) in conjunction with the Secretariat, recommend a theme for World Wildlife Day 2019; and
  - c) report on its activities at the 70th meeting of the Standing Committee.