

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



Seventieth meeting of the Standing Committee  
Sochi (Russian Federation), 1 - 5 October 2018

Strategic matters

COMMUNITY AWARENESS ON WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING:  
REPORT OF THE SECRETARIAT

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.
2. The Conference of the Parties, at its 17th meeting (CoP17, Johannesburg, 2016), adopted Decision 17.86 on *Community awareness on wildlife trafficking*, as follows:

***Directed to the Secretariat***

17.86 *The Secretariat shall subject to external funding:*

a) *contract a consultant to:*

- i) *engage with Parties that reported against Decision 16.85 paragraph c)\* and any other Parties as may be appropriate to identify best practices and challenges experienced by these Parties in their implementation of strategies or programmes to enhance community awareness about the economic, social and environmental impacts of trafficking in wildlife, and to encourage the general public to report wildlife trafficking to appropriate authorities for further investigation;*
- ii) *conduct a review of existing strategies or programmes to enhance community awareness; and*
- iii) *prepare a report on the basis of the findings made through the activities outlined in paragraphs i) and ii) in this decision, together with recommendations, on how to further enhance the effectiveness of such strategies or programmes to enhance community awareness; and*

b) *report progress on the implementation of the present Decision at the 69th and 70th meetings of the Standing Committee.*

3. Decision 17.86, paragraph a) i) follows from Decision 16.85, paragraph c) on *Rhinoceroses* (Rhinocerotidae spp.), and it is the interpretation of the Secretariat that this Decision is intended to focus on rural communities that live in the immediate vicinity of conservation areas in the range States. Awareness raising on wildlife trafficking in destination countries is already being addressed, to a large extent, by the work on demand reduction as mandated by Decisions 17.44 to 17.48. The scope of the study described in Decision 17.86 will therefore not include awareness-raising efforts in destination countries.
4. Generous funding support from the European Union enabled the Secretariat to commission a consultant recommended by the Sustainable Use and Livelihoods Specialist Group of the International Union for

---

\* *China, Greece, South Africa and Zimbabwe – document CoP17 Doc. 68.*

Conservation of Nature (IUCN-SULi) to conduct the work as described in Decision 17.86, paragraph a). Community-based responses to poaching and illegal wildlife trade have been the subject of research of IUCN-SULi that has led a series of studies and workshops with its partners to, *inter alia*, identify effective community-level interventions to stop poaching of and illegal trade in wildlife.

5. In order to assist the study, the consultant developed a questionnaire to gather information on strategies or programmes to enhance community awareness about the economic, social and environmental impacts of trafficking in wildlife and to encourage the general public to report wildlife trafficking to appropriate authorities for further investigation. The Secretariat made this questionnaire available to Parties as an Annex to Notification to the Parties No. 2018/053 of 28 May 2018.
6. At the time of writing (July 2018), the consultant is still working on the preparation of the study, that includes a desk study of literature, a review of responses received from Parties to the questionnaire and interviews with relevant Parties and organizations. The consultant has communicated to the Secretariat some key findings made to date. The final report is expected to be ready in September 2018, and will be made available as an addendum to present document.
7. The Secretariat's understanding of the scope of the study as mandated by Decision 17.86 is explained in paragraph 3 above. This is however not the understanding of all Parties. Some responses to the questionnaire prepared by the consultant refer to awareness building activities in the destination countries.

#### Key findings

8. The Secretariat draws the attention of the Standing Committee to the following key findings resulting from the work conducted by the consultant to date:
  - a) A number of Parties, as well as conservation organizations, both international and local, have been and continue to be engaged in raising awareness among rural communities regarding poaching and wildlife trafficking and its economic, social and environmental impacts.
  - b) At the community level, it is critical to understand the specific context and the relationship of the community to wildlife. Programmes must be context-specific to maximize chances of success. Likewise, awareness programmes need to have clear target audiences, with messages appropriate to each audience. Programmes instituted through primary schools may be very different to programmes instituted among farmers.
  - c) Without meaningfully engaging with communities on their concerns, which range from lack of benefits to high levels of human-wildlife conflict, awareness programmes alone are unlikely to have major success in community-level engagement against poaching and illegal trade. A holistic approach will be more effective if the strategy is going to work instead of focusing only on awareness building.
  - d) If the legal framework for dealing with wildlife crime is not in place, including capacity of the legal and judicial sector, then community-level awareness programmes about the legal consequences of engaging in poaching and illegal trade is unlikely to have major successes.
  - e) Communities that live adjacent to or with wildlife, particularly in places where poaching poses a serious threat to wildlife, are more often than not aware of poaching, wildlife trafficking, the penalties associated with it, as well as the various impacts of poaching and wildlife trafficking, although not necessarily in a comprehensive way.
  - f) Rural communities are on the front line and bear the costs of living with wildlife. Human-wildlife conflict and lack of economic incentives for wildlife protection and management often lead to retaliation killing of wildlife and poaching and trafficking.
  - g) The needs and rights of local communities are fundamental to the success of wildlife conservation. Effective engagement and benefit-sharing mechanisms, tangible incentives from wildlife and better understanding of local customs and traditions together with awareness raising will create a better chance of success.
9. In the longer term, poaching and illegal trade are a lesser threat to wildlife than rapid land transformation and increasing habitat loss. Governments need to provide incentives to local communities to support wildlife as an economically viable and competitive land use option.

## Discussions

10. The Secretariat agrees with the findings of the consultant, particularly the suggestion that efforts made to raise rural community awareness about the economic, social and environmental impacts of wildlife trafficking must be part of a holistic approach and a comprehensive strategy to engage and empower rural communities with due consideration of benefit sharing and economic incentives. Some of the key elements of these recommendations are reflected in Resolution Conf. 16.6 (Rev. CoP17).
11. The Secretariat recognizes the importance of providing useful guidance to Parties on effective and comprehensive strategies to combat poaching and wildlife trafficking, including efforts in raising awareness of rural communities about economic, social and environmental impacts of trafficking in wildlife. The strength of CITES, however, lies in its potentials to provide economic incentives, where feasible, to rural communities through engaging them in the process and value chain of well managed and sustainable trade in wild animals and plants, including ranching, captive breeding, artificial propagation, harvesting, storing and trade. This can be achieved through the ongoing work on CITES and livelihoods.

## Recommendations

12. The Secretariat invites the Standing Committee to:
  - a) note the developments in the implementation of Decision 17.86 as described in the present document; and
  - b) encourage Parties to take into account the findings outlined above when preparing and implementing strategies to engage rural communities in the fight against poaching and illegal trade in wildlife and when preparing draft documents for consideration at the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.