

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

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COMBATING WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING IN WEST AFRICA:  
A GUIDE FOR DEVELOPING A COUNTER WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING RESPONSE

This document has been submitted by Niger in relation to agenda item 30.4.\*

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# COMBATING WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING IN WEST AFRICA:

## A GUIDE FOR DEVELOPING A COUNTER WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING RESPONSE

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# GUIDANCE ON STRATEGIC AREAS OF INTERVENTION AND PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS TO DEVELOP A COUNTER WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING RESPONSE IN WEST AFRICA

Strategic areas of interventions identified as pillars for the development of a counter wildlife trafficking response in West Africa include the following:

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## PRIORITY 1 - TRAINING

**R.1.** Develop train the trainer curriculums and related reference materials for all relevant authorities and institutions involved in the enforcement chain and make them available for use by all countries in the region.

Authorities and institutions to target for training include:

- customs officers
- enforcement officers (Interpol National Central Bureaus, police units, airport security, seaport inspectors, military)
- water / forest / fisheries / environment authorities
- park and forest rangers
- judges and prosecutors
- parliamentarians
- NGOs and CSOs

Training curriculums should include the following modules:

- basic CITES requirements
- identification of CITES species
- processing CITES documents, examinations and detecting illegally acquired wildlife at the borders
- risk profiling / concealments methods / permit fraud
- how to process a crime scene
- how to safely handle confiscated specimens
- how to manage or dispose of specimens confiscated under CITES mandate

- how to humanely transport and care for live specimens (IATA rules for air transport and associated CITES guidelines for ground or sea transport)
- how to investigate poaching and wildlife crime incidents
- enforcement skills (modules on surveillance, informants, controlled deliveries, forensics, financial crime investigations, how to lead intelligence-driven investigations, how to handle evidence, searches, seizures, arrests)
- remote first aid and tactical skills to ensure safety during anti-poaching work
- relevant legislations that could be applied to wildlife trafficking (e.g. criminal law, anti-money laundering act, etc.) and understanding charging options in order to request the strictest possible penalties
- information sharing methodology, especially from community members to enforcement officers

Reference materials to develop for officers on the frontlines should include:

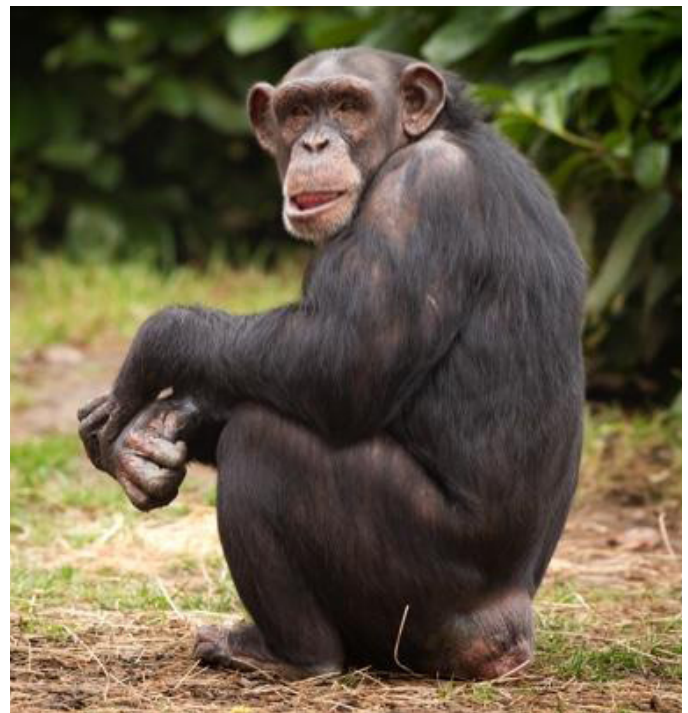
- tools facilitating the identification of CITES species e.g. identification guides, phone application, software, etc.
- guides clarifying CITES rules and how to enforce them
- guides detailing investigation techniques and basics of crime scene investigations
- outreach materials, including posters, brochures, fliers especially at exit/entry points informing the public about species that are protected and about applicable legal requirements
- national guides (to distribute at all border points) clarifying legislation requirements, the allocation of roles between all authorities involved in the enforcement chain, applicable procedures and relevant regional and national contacts

**R.2.** Strengthen existing training institutions to ensure that training provided incorporates wildlife law enforcement modules.

**R.3.** Establish a unit of experts / core group of trainers specialized in CITES (formal group of CITES experts working within authorities directly involved in CITES enforcement) in each country to contribute to training and CITES implementation at the national level, including the development of a national action plan and budgeting for the next 5 years.

**R.4.** Provide CITES training on a regular basis at border posts with multi-agency participation; involve key stakeholders in the provision of training, including the security service, the main airlines, transport logistics, shipping and courier companies, to facilitate the CITES implementation.

**R.5.** Establish collaboration with other specialized wildlife training institutions such as South Africa Wildlife College, Garoua Ecole de Faune, etc.





## PRIORITY 2 - COORDINATION

### *\* At the national level*

**R.6.** Develop national protocols or create other formal structures that clearly define the responsibilities and roles of the various relevant authorities (e.g. police, customs, security, etc.) in the wildlife law enforcement chain.

**R.7.** Develop an inclusive national action plan/strategy for tackling wildlife crime with benchmarks and timeframes to strengthen coordination between relevant stakeholders, and ensure effective implementation.

**R.8.** Develop a Coordination Unit comprised of representatives from key enforcement agencies, with the aim of promoting the proactive gathering of intelligence, investigation of offences and prosecution of offenders.

This unit would be responsible for identifying a central point in one of their agencies which has the capacity and expertise to collate, analyze and disseminate information and intelligence nationally and establish processes to facilitate intelligence gathering and exchange including procedures to:

- develop risk profiles to target the illegal trade in wildlife at import and export
- ensure record-keeping (e.g. maintain registers for seizures, arrests, and case settlements) and relaying of the information to the country's designated central level (e.g. develop reporting procedures to ensure that all seizures are reported to the national hub)
- establish a central national database (nCEN or other) for collecting, storing and disseminating information on wildlife trafficking that can be analyzed to provide useable intelligence to generate enforcement operations; customs, police and Interpol to assist in this
- develop an intelligence and information sharing network focused on wildlife crime activities that could be used by customs to assist in targeting cargos and passengers

The Coordination Unit would also ensure that their respective agencies play their part in providing and passing information through this central point.

**R.9.** Develop the capacity of already established specialized enforcement units (e.g. Anti-Corruption Unit, Transnational Crime Unit, Financial Investigations Agency, Economic Crime Unit, etc.) and of Interpol National Central Bureaus to lead specialized national and cross border intelligence driven investigations focused on wildlife crime.

**R.10.** Establish an autonomous communication system between the country's various national parks, protected areas, law enforcement agencies, and local community authorities.

**R.11.** To recommend that ECOWAS strengthen collaboration with other regional entities such as SADC, ECCAS, EAC, COMIFAC, etc.

### *\* At the regional level*

**R.12.** Develop a regional strategy for tackling wildlife crime which identifies regional priorities and put in place an action plan to tackle them. Also, ensure that the



national strategies that are developed for fighting wildlife crime are linked into the one developed regionally.

**R.13.** Develop regional coordination processes to formalize wildlife law enforcement collaboration in implementing the regional strategy and associated action plan.

**R.14.** Explore ways in which existing mechanisms can contribute to the implementation of the regional strategy for tackling wildlife crime (e.g. the West African Coast Initiative – WACI – developed by UNODC, the United Nations Office for West Africa, the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, and Interpol which already includes organized crime as one of its priorities).

**R.15.** Recommend to foreign embassies based locally to provide support (e.g. set-up video conferencing for discussions between countries) that is helpful to regional coordination.

**R.16.** Identify a central point (e.g. Interpol or another entity) which has the capacity and expertise to collate, analyze and disseminate wildlife trafficking information and intelligence regionally and internationally, when needed. This central point should also be a member of the national Coordination Unit to ensure there is no duplication of effort and that everyone is working towards the same goals.

**R.17.** Equip Customs Regional Intelligence Liaison Offices (RILO) with CITES and wildlife law enforcement knowledge to forge links through the World Customs Organization (WCO) network within the West-Central Africa region and other countries to exchange information. They should also be represented in the Coordination Unit to avoid duplication of effort and ensure that agencies are working towards the same goals.

**R.18.** Set up exchange program opportunities for enforcement officers from different countries in order that they can share experiences, learn best practices and build networks to aid future collaboration in wildlife enforcement work.

**R.19.** Encourage regional organizations (e.g. ECOWAS, African Union, etc.) and national authorities (e.g. parliamentarians, etc.) to advocate for a harmonization of national wildlife regulations to apply similar sanctions to wildlife traffickers crossing the border, and to ensure that wildlife crimes trigger extradition and mutual legal assistance where appropriate.

## PRIORITY 3 - POLITICAL COMMITMENT

**R.20.** Develop national strategies (with benchmarks and timeframes) to fight wildlife crime and to raise wildlife trafficking as a main priority to be addressed by the government.

**R.21.** Lead initiatives (e.g. workshops, official communications, social media messaging, etc.) to raise the awareness of senior managers about the importance of CITES and wildlife law enforcement and the need to support all authorities with necessary training and tools to tackle wildlife crime.

**R.22.** Use the existing systems for fighting corruption, fraud and money laundering to support the fight against wildlife crime; ensure that Interpol creates a desk for wildlife crime; and move beyond merely making wildlife confiscations to also making actual investigations, arrests and prosecutions of wildlife poachers, traffickers and vendors.

**R.23.** Lead advocacy initiatives to raise the awareness of parliamentarians about best legal practices and provide

legal support to fix gaps/shortcomings in national legislation.

**R.24.** Advocate for and support the endorsement of new wildlife legislation with stronger penalties; ensure that relevant regulations can be updated on a regular basis; and incorporate information about any new legislation (and sanctions) into future trainings.

**R.25.** Develop national action plans proposing priority activities to tackle related capacity issues contributing to the spread of wildlife crime including inquiry gaps, corruption, and development of alternative livelihoods.

## **PRIORITY 4 - DISPOSAL OF CONFISCATED SPECIMENS**

**R.26.** Ensure that authorities are granted the legal authority to confiscate/store wildlife specimens and engage forfeiture provisions for wildlife under the law.

**R.27.** Develop national protocols for the management of confiscated specimens in each country that is transparent and covers all seizures including live animals and plants, wildlife parts, products and derivatives, and timber. Ensure that each national protocol developed details the responsibilities of each agency with regards to the disposal of confiscated wildlife specimens and products and makes arrangements for the transportation of specimens from the seizure location to the disposal site.

**R.28.** Develop procedures to systematically report and record seizures in a central database.

**R.29.** Educate customs and other relevant law enforcement agencies about conservation concerns and train them on how to handle/transport live specimens and deal with confiscated specimens using agreed-upon procedures.

**R.30.** Identify or develop facilities in strategic border crossing points where live specimens can be examined safely and that are provided with the necessary equipment to ensure safe handling, examination and storage if needed.

**R.31.** Support governments in the development of funding proposals to build new rescue centers and wildlife sanctuaries or to support and strengthen existing facilities.

**R.32.** Provide support for an elephant ivory stocks survey, a system for securely storing and reporting confiscated ivory and a detailed plan for its disposal, as well as for the disposal of other confiscated products, post-enforcement action.

**R.33.** Develop a process enabling designated trainers to use confiscated wildlife specimens for training on the identification of protected species.

## **PRIORITY 5 - EQUIPMENT AND STAFF RESOURCES**

**R.34.** Each country should list and budget equipment needs for its priority control areas (airports, seaports, transboundary protected areas, remote border posts), in order to facilitate fundraising.

**R.35.** Establish a wildlife crime unit or network of highly trained officers at all priority entry/exit points, especially at airports and seaports.

**R.36.** Place wildlife and forestry officers at the major airports, seaports and land border crossing posts to assist customs on any wildlife cases; also set up logistical resources and a hotline system so that a wildlife officer can attend on short notice to other border entry/exit points whenever the need arises.

**R.37.** Provide wildlife enforcement officers with access to forensics technology resources and develop guidelines of best practices for forensic analysis (e.g. information on the available laboratories, which species analysis they can carry out, how to take samples and send them off whilst preserving evidence and keeping continuity of chain of custody, etc.).

**R.38.** Introduce incentives for law enforcement officers to prevent bribery and corruption. Consider developing an award system to ensure that good work (whether by an individual or team) is recognized; the reward could vary depending on the circumstances (e.g. a letter of appreciation or a certificate presented by a government official, or the award of a financial reward, etc.).

## PRIORITY 6 - AWARENESS

**R.39.** Draft national strategies for wildlife law enforcement outreach, identifying priority activities and targets over the next 5 years to facilitate fundraising.

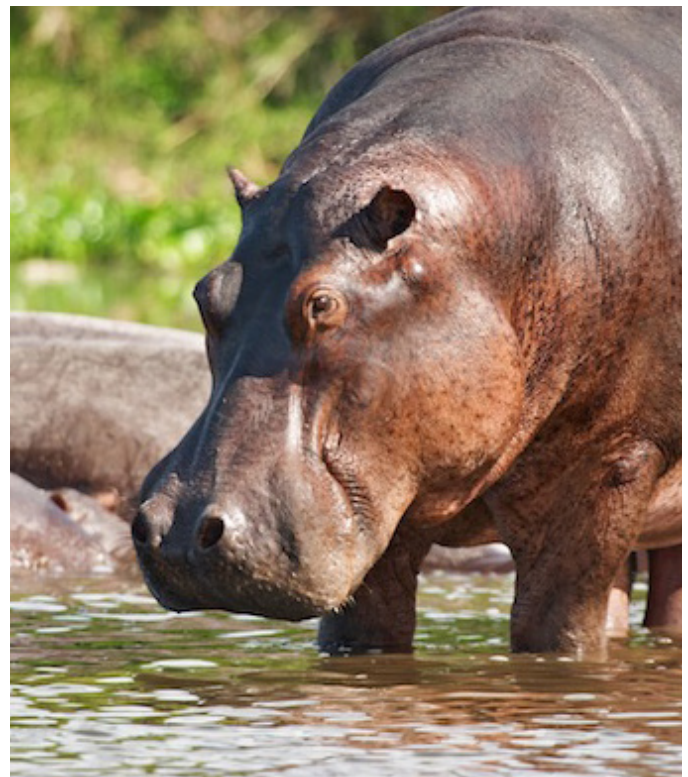
**R.40.** Place billboards/posters in or near all border control points (including at the international airport's arrival and departure halls and land border crossing posts), at offices of law enforcement officers, and near national parks and other protected areas, that list details of wildlife restrictions and penalties applicable in the context of wildlife trafficking, depict the species that are banned from hunting/trade, and state: "Wildlife Trafficking Is A Crime, Offenders Will Be Prosecuted".

**R.41.** Lead awareness and information campaigns (in the local languages with the messages spread through radio, video clips, billboards, posters, banners, leaflets, fliers, schools) to inform the population (e.g. forest fringe communities, wildlife traders, etc.) of species that are protected, the damaging impact that wildlife trafficking has on biodiversity/security/economy, their own roles and responsibilities, and applicable laws. Target as a matter of priority the local markets where protected species are openly sold, using a mixture of enforcement action and education.

**R.42.** Use informants in villages near national parks and border entry/exit points to notify authorities when poachers and wildlife traffickers are active.

**R.43.** Use the media to publicize successful arrests, prosecutions and seizures of protected wildlife, ensuring that the message is always one of inter-agency cooperation.

**R.44.** Lead campaigns and explanatory sessions to raise awareness on new laws. Collaborate with local CSOs and NGOs working closely with local communities and/or





that have led similar outreach campaigns.

**R.45.** Develop a guide on national laws relevant to wildlife and deliver training for the judges and prosecutors (see recommendations under Priority I - Training, above).

**R.46.** Develop communication channels between the country's CITES authorities and foreign diplomatic representations based in the country to ensure that they are provided the opportunity to write letters encouraging the application of sanctions in the most severe cases of wildlife crime, and congratulating authorities for successful enforcement efforts.

**R.47.** Establish a process whereby a “watching brief” is carried out by a sufficiently trained person to ensure that cases submitted to court are followed through and sentences carried out, and to ensure that prosecutors and judges are challenged when this is not being done.



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