

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

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DEVELOPING A COORDINATED RESPONSE TO WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING IN WEST AFRICA:  
RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEMBER STATES AT ECOWAS MEETING IN ABUJA

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

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RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEMBER STATES AT ECOWAS MEETING IN ABUJA

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# ABUJA RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF A COORDINATED COUNTER WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING RESPONSE IN WEST AFRICA

We, the representatives of Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo, having participated in the *ECOWAS meeting on the development of a coordinated counter wildlife trafficking response in West Africa*, Abuja, Nigeria, 2-4 July 2018:

**AWARE** that wild fauna and flora species from West Africa form an integral and irreplaceable part of humanity's natural heritage and must be protected for future generations;

**RECOGNIZING** that numerous species in the West African subregion are threatened with extinction as a result of illegal exploitation and illegal trade, including African elephants, African pangolins, African grey parrots, West African rosewoods, African lions, leopards, African vultures, chimpanzees and an increasing number of marine species such as West African manatees, sea turtles, sharks, rays, and others;

**FURTHER RECOGNIZING** that damage to ecosystems caused by illegal exploitation and illegal trade in fauna and flora has a negative impact upon the economies and livelihoods of communities across West Africa;

**MINDFUL** that illegal exploitation and trafficking of wildlife, involving transnational organized criminal networks, undermine good governance and the rule of law;

**MINDFUL FURTHER** that West Africa is also a transit area along trade routes used for trafficking wildlife specimens sourced from other regions of the world;

**CONCERNED** that rangers are losing their lives in the battle against poachers armed with sophisticated weaponry;

**COMMITTED** to supporting mechanisms adopted by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) to address the illegal trade and trafficking of wildlife;

**RECALLING** the Dakar Declaration on the Development of Subregional Wildlife Enforcement Collaboration adopted in Dakar, Senegal, 15-17 March 2016;

**FURTHER RECALLING** the Rio+20 Declaration "*The Future We Want*" document, endorsed by the UN General Assembly, which "recognized the economic, social and environmental impacts of illicit trafficking in wildlife, where firm and strengthened action needs to be taken on both the supply and demand sides";

**SUPPORTIVE** of the African Union's *African Strategy on Combating Illegal Exploitation and Illegal Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora in Africa* adopted in May 2015;

**APPLAUDING** the achievements of joint wildlife crime enforcement initiatives across other African subregions, including the Lusaka Agreement Task Force (LATF), the Horn of Africa Wildlife Enforcement Network (HA-WEN), the Wildlife Enforcement Network for Southern Africa (WEN-SA), and the Central Africa Wildlife Enforcement Network coordinated through the Central African Forests Commission (COMIFAC);

**APPLAUDING FURTHER** the achievements of joint wildlife crime enforcement initiatives in other regions of the world, including the Southeast Asia ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network (ASEAN-WEN), the South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network (SAWEN), and the North America Wildlife Enforcement Group (NAWEG);

**CONVINCED** that the most effective way of combating illegal exploitation and illegal trade in wild fauna and flora in West Africa is through a coordinated subregional response; and

**CONVINCED FURTHER** that ECOWAS member States need a common strategy and associated subregional coordination mechanisms to help West Africa combat illegal trade in wild fauna and flora.

**ENCOURAGE HIGH-LEVEL DECISION-MAKERS:**

- 1. To give the fight against wildlife crime the highest level of priority under the law**, and to review and amend existing national legislation and associated enforcement policies, as necessary and appropriate, so that offences connected to wild species of fauna and flora are treated as “serious crimes” as defined within the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC), and so that sanctions are harmonized across the subregion.
- 2. To harmonize existing wildlife crime laws and regulations** at the subregional level.
- 3. To support the development of coordinated national and subregional responses to wildlife crime, and to adopt measures to address the priority recommendations identified** in the document entitled *Strategic Areas of Interventions Identified as Pillars for the Development of a Counter-trafficking Response in West Africa* and the actions it proposes regarding training, coordination, political commitment, disposal of confiscated specimens, allocation of equipment and staff resources, and awareness raising.
- 4. To promote effective subregional cooperation and collaboration by supporting the development and adoption of a West Africa Strategy on Combating Wildlife Crime (WASCWC)**, which shall:
  - i. Analyze the illegal exploitation and illegal trade in wild fauna and flora across the subregion, including trade routes and seizure data;
  - ii. Analyze the impact that wildlife crime is having upon biodiversity and ecosystems;
  - iii. Analyze the impact that wildlife crime is having on local communities;
  - iv. Identify key areas of need for enforcement agencies tasked with combating poaching and wildlife trafficking in the subregion;
  - v. Establish and prioritize a series of Core Objectives and associated Key Activities to address all issues pertaining to wildlife crime in the subregion;
  - vi. Ultimately aim to prevent any further reduction in West Africa’s biodiversity as a result of illegal exploitation and illegal trade in wild fauna and flora.
- 5. To establish a West Africa Network to Combat Wildlife Crime (WANCWC), as an implementation mechanism for the WASCWC**, which shall:
  - i. Develop a platform and subregional tools to enable the sharing of confidential enforcement information, and facilitate effective collaboration to target, arrest, prosecute, and sentence perpetrators of wildlife crime;
  - ii. Enhance enforcement at the national level by overseeing the development of national strategies and action plans, and defining priorities and benchmarks to evaluate national progress;

- iii. Develop capacity-building programs and contribute to the provision of equipment and other resource tools in order to enable authorities to efficiently enforce wildlife laws across all ECOWAS member States;
- iv. Utilize investigative techniques already used for other forms of crime, such as controlled deliveries, detector dogs, ballistic analysis and other forensic capabilities.

**6. To create sustainable funding mechanisms ensuring that the WASCWC can be sustainably implemented in the long term, and to request financial and logistical support** from UN agencies, development banks, development partners, international organizations, inter-governmental entities, regional organizations, private sector, non-governmental organizations, academia and other relevant partners as appropriate.

**RECOMMEND ECOWAS** to organize subregional preparatory meetings before those of the CITES Conference of the Parties, and of other relevant international agreements, to facilitate coordination and the harmonizing of positions between ECOWAS member States.

**EXTEND** our sincere appreciation to the ECOWAS Environment Directorate, the government of Nigeria, and the United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) West Africa Biodiversity and Climate Change (WA BiCC) Program, for hosting this meeting.



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