

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

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

UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME:  
PROGRAMMATIC SUPPORT AND OTHER AREAS OF COOPERATION

This document has been submitted by the Secretariat on behalf of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in relation to agenda item 9.3.\*

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## **Programmatic support and other areas of cooperation**

### **Introduction**

The present report is submitted to the seventieth meeting of the Standing Committee of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (the Convention) pursuant to the Memorandum of Understanding between the Standing Committee of the Convention and the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme concerning secretariat services to and support of the Convention. The report provides an update on programmatic support provided by the United Nations Environment Programme for the implementation of the relevant outcomes of the seventeenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention since the sixty-ninth meeting of the Standing Committee.

Pursuant to resolution 2/5 of the United Nations Environment Assembly, the United Nations Environment Programme is setting the stage for a more coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals and providing links to other global environmental goals and strategies through the medium-term strategy for 2018–2021 and the programme of work for 2016–2017 and 2018–2019. The ecosystem management subprogramme is closely aligned with the priorities of the environmental issues of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other biodiversity-related conventions. Sustainable Development Goals 6, 13, 14 and 15 are at the very heart of the work conducted by the United Nations Environment Programme in such cross-cutting areas as poverty reduction, food, water and energy security, employment and gender equality.

As the custodian agency for 26 of the indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals, the United Nations Environment Programme is working to ensure that countries are well equipped and able to track their progress through the open-access platform. The United Nations Environment Programme is engaging with some 48 United Nations agencies on a system-wide framework on environmental strategies, with the aim of aligning their strategies to the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In the long run, that process is designed to support the Convention in delivering on Sustainable Development Goal 15, target 7, on urgent action to end the poaching and trafficking of protected species of flora and fauna and address both the demand and supply of illegal wildlife products.

#### **A. Tackling illegal trade in wildlife**

##### **1. Progress pursuant to United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 2/14 on illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife products**

In response to United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 2/14 on illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife products, the United Nations Environment Programme submitted a progress report to the United Nations Environment Assembly at its third session. The report included a thorough assessment of best practice in local community involvement in wildlife management, drawing from diverse examples from around the world and presenting lessons learned from various approaches as a means of tackling the unsustainable use of and illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife products. The assessment is available at <http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11822/22864>.

The United Nations Environment Programme supported the meeting of the Working Group on Rural Communities of the Convention, which was established by the Standing Committee of the Convention at its sixty-ninth meeting, held in Geneva from 27 November to 1 December 2017, with a mandate to recommend ways in which rural communities could be engaged in the decision-making of the Convention. The meeting, held in Nairobi on 26 and 27 February 2018, was attended by representatives of rural communities, delegations from parties to the Convention and the Convention secretariat. The Working Group is expected to submit its recommendations for consideration at the seventieth meeting of the Standing Committee.

On 27 and 28 March 2018, the United Nations Environment Programme hosted the expert meeting on implementation of the anti-poaching strategy entitled “Strategy to Combat Poaching, Illegal Trade and Trafficking of Wildlife and Wildlife Products” of the East African Community at the United Nations complex in Nairobi. The United Nations Environment Programme also continues to provide technical and financial support to the African Union Commission on the implementation of the African Strategy on Combating Illegal Exploitation and Illegal Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora in Africa.

Through its regional office in Panama, the United Nations Environment Programme also organized the Mesoamerican Dialogue on the Conservation of Wild Fauna and Flora (El Dialogo Mesoamericano Sobre Conservación de Vida Silvestre) in Panama City on 3 and 4 May 2018, with the participation of

stakeholders including representatives from environment ministries, public prosecutors' offices and customs and judicial powers from Belize, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Panama. The Dialogue was organized in partnership with the Central American Commission for Environment and Development, with the support of the Central American Network on Application and Compliance with Wildlife Regulations and the collaboration of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the United Nations Development Programme. The meeting took note of the alarming increase in illegal wildlife trade in the region, an issue that warrants the greatest attention, as it puts pressure on endangered species and natural heritage, undermines legitimate trade and provides income for international criminal networks. It was noted that putting an end to the illegal wildlife trade requires broad-scale commitment across the board, from Governments to the private sector, as well as training and the dedication of all legal stakeholders to prevent and prosecute crimes. It is also vital to educate and motivate citizens, who as consumers are responsible for boosting demand for wildlife, and to facilitate access to information, public participation and access to environmental justice, particularly for the most vulnerable populations.

Through the national legislation project and in cooperation with the secretariat of the Convention, the United Nations Environment Programme is supporting the development and implementation of national legislation related to illegal trade in wildlife in four countries in Africa and in the Pacific. Plans are under way to extend technical legal assistance to other countries. A study on the status, trends and gaps in the prosecution of environmental crimes in Latin America has been prepared. In addition, the United Nations Environment Programme has co-sponsored the development and roll-out of a rapid-reference guide and standard operating procedures by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime for investigators and prosecutors of wildlife crimes in the United Republic of Tanzania (see section F below). Technical legal assistance to Eritrea and the Gambia on their CITES domestic legislation has been completed, while assistance to the Solomon Islands and Somalia is nearing completion.

In June 2017, the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute launched an expert process designed to examine institutional models and approaches for combating crimes that have a serious impact on the environment. Following contributions from national focal points designated by member States under United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 2/19 on the midterm review of the Programme for the Development and Periodic Review of Environmental Law (Montevideo Programme IV) and discussions with experts at a meeting held from 13 to 15 September 2017 in Rome, the United Nations Environment Programme published a report entitled "The State of Knowledge of Crimes that have Serious Impacts on the Environment" in July 2018. The United Nations Environment Programme also participated in an expert group that reviewed the guide on drafting legislation to combat wildlife crime, which will be presented to the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime at its session in October 2018.

The United Nations Environment Programme is currently working on the first global report on environmental rule of law. The report identifies trends in the development of environmental rule of law and its fundamental elements, along with effective environmental legislation and institutions. Within that context, the United Nations Environment Programme intends to facilitate an expert process designed to identify and document the current status of knowledge of crimes that have a serious impact on the environment, including illegal trade in wildlife, in particular in terms of their environmental impact, and to identify links between those crimes.

In order to strengthen the operational capacity necessary to support a coherent response to the proposal in decision 2015/1 of the Policy Committee of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for an integrated and holistic response to the rapid increase in poaching and the illicit trade in wildlife and forest products, in December 2016 the United Nations Environment Programme, along with the seven other United Nations entities concerned, agreed to establish a task force, which was formally launched in New York on 3 March 2017 as the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Illicit Trade in Wildlife and Forest Products, on the occasion of World Wildlife Day. The United Nations Environment Programme chairs the task force until January 2019, while the United Nations Development Programme provides its secretariat. The task force has held regular coordination meetings. There has been collaboration in the organization of such events as the Africa-Asia-Pacific Symposium on Strengthening Legal Frameworks to Combat Wildlife Crime, held in Bangkok on 4 and 5 July 2017 and the Symposium on Strengthening Legal Frameworks to Combat Wildlife Crime in Central and West Africa, held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, on 11 and 12 September 2018.

## **2. African Elephant Fund and its contribution to the implementation of the African Elephant Action Plan**

United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 2/14, on illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife products, requested the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, among other actions, to continue to collaborate with the Convention and other partners of the international consortium on combating wildlife crime, and with other United Nations entities, to support Member States in implementing their commitments, including by continuing to support the activities of the African Elephant Action Plan, in accordance with relevant resolutions of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention.

The tenth meeting of the Steering Committee of the African Elephant Fund was held in Kasane, Botswana, from 1 to 3 March 2018. The Steering Committee reviewed the progress made in the implementation of projects in support of the Action Plan, assessed thirty-one project proposals and approved seventeen new projects totalling over US\$ 1.3 million, funded by Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands and the European Union.

Highlights of the project achievements since the ninth Steering Committee meeting, held in 2017, included the arrest of 141 people in Nigeria for trespassing and poaching; training of over 300 enforcement personnel in Ethiopia and Ghana in the conduct of anti-poaching missions and the identification, collecting and handling of wildlife products; and the carrying out of aerial census surveys of elephants in north-west Namibia and Amboseli and West Kilimanjaro in Kenya. A 12-kilometre solar-powered electric fence was erected in Thuma Forest Reserve in Malawi and as a result crop raiding and the incidence of elephants moving outside the reserve have been reduced to zero. Gabon had become self-sufficient in the traceability analysis of ivory and in many range States beehive fences had been established, involving over 163 active bee colonies, which had improved the welfare of communities through increased household income from honey and enhanced food safety.

The twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, held in Manila from 23 to 28 October 2017, endorsed the African Elephant Action Plan as the principal strategy for elephant conservation under that Convention, as set out in its resolution 12.19, which can be accessed at the following link:  
<https://www.cms.int/en/document/endorsement-african-elephant-action-plan>.

## **3. Illegal trade in wildlife and forest products Communication Handbook**

In response to CITES resolution Conf.17.4 on demand reduction strategies to combat illegal trade in the CITES-listed species, the United Nations Environment Programme has built on the awareness raised and the momentum generated by the “Wild for Life” campaign to assist member States and other stakeholders in launching their own communication programmes to raise awareness and change behaviour at the local and national levels with regard to consumption of wildlife products from illegal trade. For that purpose, the United Nations Environment Programme has developed a handbook to help national communication planners to develop communication activities designed to reduce demand for wildlife and forest products.

The effectiveness of the handbook was tested at an initial workshop held in Viet Nam in October 2017. The workshop was co-hosted by the CITES Management Authority in Viet Nam and the Vietnamese Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. The main outcome of the workshop was the creation of a network of communication officers from the Government of Viet Nam. The CITES Management Authority in Viet Nam will host a follow-up meeting with all participants to formalize the network and agree on how best to proceed with the communication initiatives. The United Nations Environment Programme conducted a similar pilot activity in Malawi (a country supplying wildlife products) in

November 2017, with a view to scaling up the activity before regional workshops in both West Africa and East Africa in 2018. These activities all form part of the efforts by the United Nations Environment Programme to support the implementation of CITES resolution Conf.10.10 (Rev. CoP17) on trade in elephant specimens, through public awareness campaigns.

#### **4. Tackling illegal trade in wildlife through projects funded by the Global Environment Facility**

The United Nations Environment Programme, as a designated implementing agency, has been supporting the implementation of two projects funded by the Global Environment Facility at the regional level: strengthening law enforcement capabilities to combat wildlife crime for conservation and sustainable use of species in South Africa (targeting the rhinoceros), and engaging policymakers and the judiciary to address poaching and illegal wildlife trade in Africa (Gabon, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia).

#### **5. The Great Apes Survival Partnership**

The sixty-fifth meeting of the Standing Committee of the Convention mandated the secretariat of the Convention, as suggested in document 37 of that meeting, to collaborate with the Primate Specialist Group of the Species Survival Commission of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN SSC), the Great Apes Survival Partnership (GRASP) and other experts to prepare a report on the status of great apes and the relative impact of illegal trade and other pressures on their status, for consideration by the Standing Committee. In fulfilment of that mandate, GRASP and the IUCN SSC Primate Specialist Group, in consultation with other experts, produced a report which addressed the distribution and abundance trends related to all great ape species and subspecies, as well as threats to their conservation. The in-session working group of the Animals Committee of the Convention reviewed the report and provided comments, feedback and recommendations. GRASP and the IUCN SSC Primate Specialist Group are finalizing the report for onward submission to the Standing Committee at its seventieth meeting.

The Apes Seizure Database, developed by GRASP in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC), is the first global database to gauge the scale and scope of poaching and illegal trade in great apes. The database is an online reporting system to assist national authorities, civil society and businesses to monitor and act on illegal trade in live animals, body parts and bush meat. The database was initially launched at the seventeenth Conference of the Parties to the Convention in October 2016, where it received a positive response from participants and the media. The database is now fully operational and current efforts are directed primarily into two areas: validation of all data received by the Technical Advisory Group and development of a user manual for data providers and validators.

### **B. Support for strengthening cooperation, coordination and synergies between the Convention and other biodiversity-related conventions**

In United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 2/17, on enhancing the work of the United Nations Environment Programme in facilitating cooperation, collaboration and synergies among biodiversity-related conventions, the Assembly recognized the benefits to be gained by implementing the biodiversity-related conventions in a synergistic and coherent manner. The resolution requested the Executive Director to undertake further efforts to enhance synergies. The United Nations Environment Programme is primarily implementing the resolution through a project entitled “Environmental Treaties Programme – realizing synergies for biodiversity”, which has been developed in close consultation with the secretariats of the biodiversity-related conventions, including the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.

### **C. Technical and scientific support from the United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre**

Since the seventeenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, all new listings and nomenclature changes resulting from the adoption of the 49 proposals for amendment of the appendices and the adoption of new Convention standard references, as per resolution Conf. 12.11 (Rev. CoP17), have been incorporated into Species+ (speciesplus.net), a centralized portal for access to key information on species of global concern, and the online Checklist of CITES Species (checklist.cites.org).

UNEP-WCMC maintains and continually updates Species+ and the Checklist of CITES Species. The two online platforms were developed by UNEP-WCMC in conjunction with the Convention secretariat and other partners, and provide parties with information related to key species required for the implementation of the Convention. Species+ contains taxonomic, listing and distribution information on all species listed in the Convention appendices; it also provides details on quotas and trade restrictions and now includes a document search facility for a selection of Convention documents (primarily relating

to listing proposals and the Review of Significant Trade). The database underpinning the CITES Checklist is linked with Species+ and, as designated by CITES resolution Conf. 12.11 (Rev. CoP17), serves as the official checklist of species under the Convention. Since its launch in 2013, Species+ has had over 988,000 visits from approximately 547,000 users, and the CITES Checklist has had over 617,000 visits from over 400,000 users. Both sites have global coverage, with users from over 200 countries and territories.

Data in Species+, the CITES Checklist and the CITES Trade Database are publicly available. In addition, UNEP-WCMC maintains an application programming interface designed to support the integration of the Convention Checklist and Species+ with national information systems. The interface, developed in collaboration with Belgium, France and Switzerland, provides a mechanism enabling national databases to link to and easily extract data from Species+ (including species names, Convention appendices and distributions) and to download them onto national platforms, with a view to assisting parties with the implementation of the Convention, thereby reducing duplication of data maintenance work and improving data quality and consistency of species information (see <http://api.speciesplus.net/>). Parties are encouraged to contact UNEP-WCMC for further information about this feature ([species@unep-wcmc.org](mailto:species@unep-wcmc.org)).

In support of the implementation of the Convention, and on behalf of the Convention secretariat, UNEP-WCMC had produced several documents to inform discussion at meetings of the Scientific Committee relating to the Review of Significant Trade and in support of the nomenclature specialists from the Animals and Plants Committees. Those reports were discussed by the Animals and Plants Committees at their thirtieth and twenty-fourth meetings respectively and at the joint session of the Animals Committee and the Plants Committee held in Geneva on 20 and 21 July 2018.

Under the Review of Significant Trade process, UNEP-WCMC produced detailed reviews of 19 animal and 8 plant species/country combinations that were selected for review following the seventeenth session of the Conference of the Parties<sup>1</sup> and an evaluation of the country-wide Review of Significant Trade process<sup>2</sup> under decision 17.111. Additionally, UNEP-WCMC produced a summary of taxonomic changes and nomenclature of CITES-listed animal species to inform nomenclature discussions at the thirtieth meeting of the Animals Committee and an information document for the twenty-fourth meeting of the Plants Committee, including a response to decision 17.315 on feedback on the *CITES Cactaceae Checklist* and a summary of *Dalbergia* names, synonyms and distribution information included in Species+.

Furthermore, as part of the Review of Significant Trade process, UNEP-WCMC produced detailed reviews of 33 taxon/country combinations that have been subject to suspensions related to the Review of Significant Trade for longer than two years, which will be discussed at the seventieth meeting of the Standing Committee.

The secretariat of the Convention has sought advice from UNEP-WCMC on levels and trends in trade, and on scientific and technical matters, such as the distribution of species and nomenclature, together with support on issues relating to reporting, information management, capacity-building and training. UNEP-WCMC provided support on decision 17.186 by assisting the secretariat to organize and participate in an international technical workshop on eels.

In close collaboration with the secretariat, UNEP-WCMC developed a proposal to increase the accessibility of data held in the CITES Trade Database by releasing a shipment output with anonymized permit numbers to preserve links between import and export shipments while avoiding concerns relating to the release of confidential permit numbers. That document will be discussed at the seventieth meeting of the Standing Committee.

Additionally, in the context of the CITES Trade Database, UNEP-WCMC has been working to analyse the full CITES trade dataset (which now contains over 19 million records) using more systematic analytical approaches befitting a dataset of that size. In that regard, UNEP-WCMC produced a comprehensive analysis of 40 years of CITES data, which was published in the journal *Biological Conservation* and presented to parties to the Convention as an information document at the joint sessions of the thirtieth meeting of the Animals Committee and the twenty-fourth meeting of the Plants

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<sup>1</sup> See annex 2 (Rev. 1) to document AC30 doc. 12.2 (Report on species/country combinations selected for review by the Animals Committee following CoP17: CITES project no. S-520), available at <https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/com/AC/30/E-AC30-12-02-A2-Rev1.pdf>; and document PC24 doc. 13.2 (Report on species/country combinations selected for review by the Plants Committee following CoP17: CITES project no. S-520), available at <https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/com/pc/24/E-PC24-13-02-A2.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> See annex to document AC30 doc. 12.3/PC24 doc. 13.3, available at <https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/com/ac-pc/ac30-pc24/E-AC30-12-03-PC24-13-03.pdf>.

Committee, held in Geneva on 20 and 21 July 2018 (see <https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/com/ac-pc/ac30-pc24/Inf/E-AC30-Inf-04-PC24-Inf-04.pdf>).

In support of the Convention and in relation to decision 17.65, UNEP-WCMC has received funding from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service to work with the secretariat to develop a tool to better organize permit-related information on authorized international trade for the use of the secretariat for compliance purposes. The tool will provide the secretariat with an automated mechanism for checking trade records in the CITES Trade Database to identify cases of potential non-compliance with the Convention, its resolutions and any decision made by the CITES governing bodies, such as commercial trade in wild-sourced appendix I species, trade in taxa that are subject to a CITES trade suspension or trade levels in a particular taxon exceeding mandatory quotas approved by the Conference of the Parties.

UNEP-WCMC also provides continuing support to the European Union and its member States through the production of in-depth species assessments and an annual analysis of European Union wildlife trade. The most recent European Union trade analysis focused on 2016 European Union annual reports to the Convention and was produced in April 2018; the analysis of the 2017 European Union annual reports is due for publication in November 2018.

Additionally, UNEP-WCMC supported a workshop on non-detriment findings for amphibians and reptiles in Colombia and facilitated a workshop hosted by Spain on non-detriment findings for hunting trophies.

#### **D. InforMEA Initiative**

The InforMEA Initiative is facilitated by the United Nations Environment Programme, co-chaired by the Secretary-General of the Convention and covers some 20 global multilateral environmental agreements. The Initiative seeks to assist parties in implementing their obligations under the various conventions through interoperable information systems based on standards, interoperability and open-source technology. The secretariat of the Convention actively participates in the work of the Initiative.

Content concerning the Convention can be accessed through the biodiversity section of InforMEA and in the InforMEA learning tool. The free InforMEA e-learning platform caters to more than 15,000 learners from 190 countries, to whom over 5,000 certificates of completion have been issued. Most recently, the Convention secretariat has inspired the work of the Initiative in testing semi-auto indexing and enhancing the related thesaurus.

The secretariats of multilateral environmental agreements contribute to the enhancement of the InforMEA section on internationally agreed goals, demonstrating their collective contribution to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets of the Convention on Biological Diversity. The secretariats of multilateral environmental agreements in the field of biodiversity are supporting the development of DART (a Data Reporting Tool), which will allow those reporting data to biodiversity-related conventions to access a joint collaborative working space to store and manage documentation in preparation for national reports. Thanks to the contributions made by the Convention and other multilateral environmental agreements, users can search 10,000 governing body decisions, 5,000 national reports and 500 implementation plans alongside details of events, news, ratification information and information on national focal points.

During the most recent annual meeting of the Steering Committee of the Initiative, held in June 2018, representatives of the secretariats of multilateral environmental agreements agreed that the InforMEA goals section would be enhanced to highlight and help to communicate the collective contribution made by multilateral environmental agreements towards the Sustainable Development Goals. The learning section will be enhanced accordingly and cooperation with academic institutions globally intensified.

At the meeting, the Committee considered further partnerships and outreach possibilities with global and regional networks, including sharing a common knowledge base with global judicial networks and supporting capacity-building opportunities in the countries covered by the Programme related to Capacity-building for Multilateral Environmental Agreements in African, Caribbean and Pacific countries, including through the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans online forum. At the meeting, the Committee also agreed on the next steps for the DART data reporting tool.

New members and observers were welcomed to the InforMEA Initiative. They included the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (as host of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea) and the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean. The International Monetary Fund, Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services and Global Judicial Institute on the Environment joined as observers.

## **E. Communication activities and World Wildlife Day 2018**

In its sustained campaign to strengthen international efforts to combat illegal trade in wildlife, the United Nations Environment Programme launched the United Nations “Wild for Life” campaign (*#WildforLife*) at the second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, with the aim of raising awareness and reducing the demand for illegal wildlife products. The Wild for Life initiative was launched in all six United Nations official languages, as well as Vietnamese and Portuguese. The initiative is aimed at collaboration, policy implementation and grassroots participation to raise awareness in communities in both source and destination countries of the war on poaching.

The 16 endangered species for which the campaign raises awareness are the lion, jaguar, snow leopard, tiger, rhino, vaquita, sawfish, sun bear, Tibetan antelope, hyacinth macaw, elephant, helmeted hornbill, orangutan, pangolin, sea turtle and rosewood. Several species in the campaign have received greater protection under the Convention, including pangolins, rosewood and helmeted hornbills.

The campaign has so far reached more than 1.5 billion people around the world and engaged 10 million in a deeper level of involvement through morphs, pledges and social media interaction. In addition to being named one of Weibo’s top 10 most influential campaigns in China in 2016, in 2017 “Wild for Life” was awarded a prestigious Webby Digital Arts & Sciences award for best green website. The campaign has created a *Communication Handbook to Combat Wildlife Crime* for use by Governments at the national level, which has been tested in Hanoi and Malawi. The campaign has also contributed to advances in advocacy and legislation, including a full ban on commercial ivory in China in 2017 and the recent passing of the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants (Amendment) Bill 2017, popularly known as “the Hong Kong Ivory Ban Bill”, which will take effect over the coming three years in Hong Kong.

In compliance with CITES resolution Conf. 17.1 and General Assembly resolution 68/205 on World Wildlife Day, the United Nations Environment Programme celebrated World Wildlife Day on 3 March 2018, primarily through the *#WildforLife* campaign, with a focus on “Big Cats”. The Big Cats Team Challenge, launched on World Wildlife Day 2018, generated thousands of pledges of action and 3.5 million social media interactions, 3 million of which were in China, where the Challenge was the number 1 trending topic. The winner, Team Snow Leopard, led by Dia Mirza, received a cash contribution for the Snow Leopard Trust. The other three celebrity teams, led by Aidan Gallagher, Ellie Goulding and Michelle Yeoh, received runner-up prizes. In China, six celebrities participated, with accompanying exhibitions in Beijing and Shenzhen airports.

## **F. Technical support for strengthening national legislation under the national legislation project**

The United Nations Environment Programme and the Convention continued to collaborate with a view to strengthening national legislation and ensuring that the Convention was effectively implemented by parties. Attention was given to countries identified as requiring priority under the national legislation project.

Small-scale funding agreements signed with Eritrea and the Gambia resulted in agreed texts of draft legislation in accordance with the requirements of each of the countries, which draft texts are now being finalized. A small-scale funding agreement signed for the provision of assistance to the Somali Wildlife Directorate for the development of implementing legislation for the Convention resulted in draft legislation which was found not to be in accordance with the requirements and is currently pending revision by the Wildlife Department. Consultations with Lesotho for the provision of assistance are ongoing.

In July 2017, senior officials from 22 countries in Africa and the Asia-Pacific regions attended the Africa-Asia-Pacific Symposium on Strengthening Legal Frameworks to Combat Wildlife Crime, held in Bangkok, at which they advanced their common understanding of the key elements and provisions needed for effective legal frameworks and coordinated efforts to dismantle criminal networks involved in the illegal trade in wildlife and forest products. The symposium was the first major event convened by the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Illicit Trade in Wildlife and Forest Products. The participants identified and recommended key elements that should be included in national legal

frameworks to prevent and combat wildlife crime.<sup>3</sup> The symposium provided a valuable opportunity for collaboration between the two regions, with the aim of strengthening legal frameworks and cooperation to address the illicit trade in wildlife and forest products.

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<sup>3</sup> See the portal at <https://cites.org/legislation>.