

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



Seventy-fourth meeting of the Standing Committee
Lyon (France), 7 - 11 March 2022

Interpretation and implementation matters

General compliance and enforcement

Wildlife crime enforcement support in West and Central Africa

REPORT OF THE SECRETARIAT

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.
2. At its 18th meeting (CoP18, Geneva, 2019), the Conference of the Parties adopted Decisions 18.88 to 18.93 on *Wildlife crime enforcement support in West and Central Africa* as follows:

Directed to Parties in West and Central Africa

18.88 *Parties of West and Central Africa should:*

- a) *draw upon the information and recommendations provided in the West and Central Africa Threat Assessment Report available as Annex 4 to document CoP18 Doc. 34 and the recommendations in Annex 2 of document CoP18 Doc. 34, to strengthen CITES implementation and address wildlife crime; and*
- b) *identify priority actions that could benefit from support and present these to the International Consortium on Combatting Wildlife Crime (ICWC), donors and the development community, in order to seek support to implement them.*

18.89 *Parties in West and Central Africa identified as affected by illegal trade in wildlife within the region should engage in regional and bilateral activities to share information on their national legislative and regulatory measures to address such illegal trade, exchange experiences and best practices, and identify opportunities for regional and cross-border cooperation and joint actions, including where appropriate the formulation of national or regional action plans as anticipated by paragraph 14 a) ii) and 10 f) of Resolution Conf. 11.3 (Rev. CoP18) on Compliance and enforcement, taking into consideration the provisions of paragraph 15 q) of the same Resolution.*

18.90 ***Directed to Parties importing CITES specimens from West and Central Africa***

Parties importing CITES specimens from West and Central Africa are encouraged to assist their counterparts in West and Central Africa, by implementing measures that will address wildlife crime and support legal trade that is limited to sustainable levels, in particular by:

- a) *supporting efforts to determine and ensure sustainable levels of trade through scientific studies that can facilitate the making of robust non-detriment findings;*

- b) *closely scrutinizing consignments of CITES-listed species imported from West and Central Africa and accompanying CITES documents to ensure that illegal species are not laundered into legal trade; and*
- c) *as a priority, raise any concerns about imports with the exporting State, or with the Animals Committee, Plants Committee, Standing Committee, or the Secretariat.*

18.91 Directed to Parties, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations

Parties, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations are encouraged to provide financial and technical assistance to Parties in West and Central Africa and mobilize resources to address the matters identified in the West and Central Africa Threat Assessment Report available as Annex 4 to document CoP18 Doc. 34; the recommendations in Annex 2 to document CoP18 Doc. 34, the guidelines in information documents SC70 Inf. 2 and SC70 Inf. 3; and any further recommendations made by the Standing Committee.

18.92 Directed to the Standing Committee

The Standing Committee shall:

- a) *consider the report from the Secretariat in accordance with Decision 18.93, paragraph d) and progress made by Parties in West and Central Africa in strengthening CITES implementation and make further recommendations as appropriate; and*
- b) *consider any report from the Plants Committee, in response to the recommendation agreed at its 70th meeting, concerning the inclusion of Pterocarpus erinaceus from all range States in the Review of Significant Trade and make recommendations as required.*

18.93 Directed to the Secretariat

The Secretariat shall:

- a) *draw to the attention of relevant United Nations agencies, the African Union, the Commission of Central African Forests, the Global Environmental Facility, and development agencies, the West and Central Africa Threat Assessment Report available as Annex 4 to document CoP18 Doc. 34 and the recommendations in Annex 2 to document CoP18 Doc. 34, and the guidelines in information documents SC70 Inf. 2 and SC70 Inf. 3; and encourage these to be taken into consideration in the development of work programmes or activities initiated by these entities in the two subregions;*
- b) *subject to external funding, work with its partners in the International Consortium on Combatting Wildlife Crime (ICWC) to support Parties in West and Central Africa in addressing illegal trade in wildlife, including addressing the matters identified in the West and Central Africa Threat Assessment Report available as Annex 4 to document CoP18 Doc. 34; the recommendations in Annex 2 to document CoP18 Doc. 34, the guidelines in information documents SC70 Inf. 2 and SC70 Inf. 3; and any further recommendations made by the Standing Committee;*
- c) *subject to the availability of external funds and upon request from Parties, undertake general and targeted capacity-building activities to strengthen the effective implementation of CITES in the two subregions, taking into consideration the contents of information documents SC70 Inf. 2 and SC70 Inf. 3;*
- d) *report, as appropriate, to the Standing Committee on the results of the activities conducted in accordance with Decision 18.93 paragraphs a) to c); and*
- e) *the Secretariat shall give priority to the guidelines agreed by West African parties as contained in information documents SC70 Inf. 2 and SC70 Inf. 3 in the course of the implementation of its capacity-building work.*

Implementation of Decisions 18.88, 18.89 and 18.91

3. The Secretariat is aware of several initiatives undertaken by Parties in West and Central Africa since CoP18 to strengthen CITES implementation and address wildlife crime. Some of these initiatives are summarized in the paragraphs below.
4. Under the coordination of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the ECOWAS member States developed the West African Strategy for Combating Wildlife Crime (WASCWC). In June 2020, the Secretariat participated in and provided inputs to an online ECOWAS meeting for its member States to technically validate the WASCWC. The Strategy was subsequently formally adopted on 22 September 2020 at an ECOWAS Meeting of Ministers of Forestry. The WASCWC takes into consideration the findings from the [West and Central Africa Wildlife Crime Threat Assessment Report](#) and the associated [recommendations](#), respectively available in Annexes 2 and 4 to document CoP18 Doc. 34¹, and responds well to the provisions of Decision 18.88, paragraph a). The Secretariat notes that the technical validation of the WASCWC was a continuation of the work described in information documents [SC70 Inf. 2](#) and [SC70 Inf. 3](#), [CoP18. Inf. 47](#), as well as [CoP18. Inf. 85](#). The ambitious Strategy will require significant political support and financial investment from governments in the region, as well as from a broad range of partners. The WASCWC aims to promote a common, coordinated response by countries in West Africa to combat the illegal trade in wildlife. The overall objective of the WASCWC is “to reduce and prevent the illegal exploitation and trade in wild fauna and flora in West Africa through the domestication and implementation of a sub-regional strategic framework, endorsed and acted upon by the ECOWAS Commission and its Member States”. Parties in West Africa are encouraged to actively pursue the rapid and full implementation of the Strategy, including through the implementation of Decision 18.88, paragraph b). Parties, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations are further encouraged to mobilize support to Parties in West Africa, as anticipated by Decision 18.91, in support of the implementation of the WASCWC.
5. In October 2019, [Niger adopted legislation](#) to strengthen CITES implementation and enforcement. The Secretariat welcomes this development and, at the time of writing, was awaiting the final adopted text for assessment, to consider placing Niger’s legislation in category 1 of the CITES [National Legislation Project \(NLP\)](#). In November 2020, the Central African Republic also enhanced its legislation on wildlife management and protected areas.² In July 2021, Benin adopted legislation³ to implement the Convention, and has developed regulatory texts. The Secretariat is awaiting their final adoption for assessment, to consider placing Benin’s legislation in category 1 under the NLP. In July 2021, Liberia also provided the Secretariat with a draft amendment to the Law⁴ for comment. The Secretariat will review the final adopted regulatory texts before considering placing Liberia’s legislation in category 1.
6. The United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reported that, in 2021, at the request of Nigeria, it had commenced corruption risk assessments for the National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA) and Nigeria Customs Service (NCS), drawing on the [Guide on Addressing Corruption for Wildlife Management Authorities](#). UNODC is also in the final stages of facilitating the development of a national strategy to address wildlife and forest crime for Nigeria, supported through a bilateral project with Germany. The national strategy is anticipated to be launched in March 2022.
7. There were several activities conducted in West and Central Africa since CoP18 that *inter alia* supported the exchange of experiences and best practices, as well as regional and cross-border cooperation, as called for in Decision 18.89. This included [training delivered through the “AIRCOP” programme](#)⁵ in Côte d’Ivoire in November 2019, and an [e-learning module on wildlife crime and CITES](#) delivered in June 2020 to more than

¹ The recommendations in Annex 2 to document CoP18 Doc. 34 have been updated by the CITES Secretariat after the 18th meeting of the CITES Conference of the Parties to, where applicable, reflect the correct new paragraph numbers of Resolution Conf. 11.3 (Rev. CoP18) on Compliance and enforcement as revised at CoP18. The recommendations as updated by the Secretariat is available on the Enforcement introduction webpage on the CITES Secretariat website, at the following URL: https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/prog/enforcement/CoP18_Doc_34_Annex2_EN.pdf

² See Loi Number 20.026 'Portant Code de gestion de la faune et des aires protégées en République centrafricaine' enacted on 30 November 2020.

³ See Loi Number 2021-04 du 8 juillet 2021 portant protection et règles relatives au commerce international des espèces de faune et de flore sauvages menacées d’extinction en République du Bénin

⁴ National wildlife conservation and protected area management Law, 5 October 2016

⁵ AIRCOP is a multi-agency project implemented by UNODC in partnership with INTERPOL and the World Customs Organization. It aims at strengthening the capacities of international airports to target and intercept high-risk passengers, including foreign terrorist fighters, illicit drugs and other illicit commodities, as well as to detect victims of trafficking in persons and smuggled migrants. It also aims at facilitating communication and coordination between origin, transit and destination countries to disrupt cross-border illicit flows and criminal networks.

20 officers from the Joint Airport Interdiction Task Forces (JAITFs) of Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo. In addition, since 2019, UNODC conducted several activities in Central Africa in collaboration with the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and various partners, including fostering national synergies and interagency cooperation to combat wildlife and forest crime in Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Congo and the Democratic Republic of the Congo; reinforcing the capacity of judges and prosecutors in Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Gabon; conducting wildlife crime scene management training in Garamba National Park, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the national park of Odzala-Kokoua in the Congo; strengthening the capacity of investigators in Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Congo and the Democratic Republic of the Congo; supporting the development of a national strategy for combating wildlife and forest crime in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in collaboration with the United States Agency for International Development Central African Regional Programme for the Environment; and conducting a study on the root causes of the illicit exploitation of natural resources in Cameroon, Chad and Gabon.

8. In November 2019, the West Africa Biodiversity and Climate Change Programme (WABICC) hosted a CITES enforcement 'Train the Trainers' workshop in Ghana, which included officers from customs, forestry, and wildlife authorities from Cabo Verde, Ghana and Guinea-Bissau. This comprised a week-long training initiative to enhance skills and knowledge on wildlife law enforcement.

Implementation of Decision 18.90

9. Initiatives, such as the online seminar on [Import and Export Management and Protection of Endangered Species](#) organized by the National Academy of Forestry and Grassland Administration (NAFGA) of the People's Republic of China from 8 to 21 June 2021, contribute to the effective implementation of Decision 18.90 and of the Convention. The Secretariat welcomes these initiatives.
10. It remains critical that Parties importing CITES specimens from West and Central Africa support their counterparts in these two subregions to determine sustainable levels of trade through scientific studies and non-detriment findings. Parties are also encouraged to continue to closely scrutinize consignments of CITES-listed species imported from West and Central Africa and accompanying CITES documents and seize any illegal specimens.
11. Implementation of Decision 18.90 is particularly relevant for trade in *Pterocarpus erinaceus*, which has been subject to significant levels of illegal trade as detailed in the [West and Central Africa Wildlife Crime Threat Assessment Report](#). At its 70th meeting (SC70, Sochi, October 2018), the Standing Committee agreed a recommendation requesting the Plants Committee to consider the inclusion of *Pterocarpus erinaceus* from all range States in the CITES Review of Significant Trade (RST). This matter was further addressed in document [PC 25 Doc. 15.5](#) and [the addendum to it](#), prepared for the 25th meeting of the Plants Committee (PC25, online, June 2021). As required under Decision 18.92, paragraph b), the Standing Committee should consider the report from the Plants Committee, presented in document SC74 Doc. 35.1.1 on *Inclusion of Pterocarpus erinaceus in the Review of Significant Trade: Report of the Plants Committee* and make recommendations as required.
12. In document SC74 Doc. 28.1 on *Implementation of Article XIII and Resolution Conf. 14.3 (Rev. CoP18) on CITES compliance procedures*, the Secretariat elaborates on and addresses the matter of illegal trade in *Pterocarpus erinaceus* from Mali.

Implementation of Decision 18.93, paragraph a)

13. To implement Decision 18.93, paragraph a), the Secretariat wrote to 34 organizations⁶ in March 2020, including relevant United Nations agencies, the African Union, the Commission of Central African Forests,

⁶ African Parks Network; African Union; Central African Forests Initiative Secretariat; Central African Forests Commission; Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, United Kingdom and Northern Ireland; Department for International Development, United Kingdom and Northern Ireland; Directorate General for the Environment, European Commission; Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development, European Commission; Economic Community of West African States; Egmont Centre of FIU Excellence and Leadership; Environmental Investigation Agency; Financial Action Task Force (FATF) Secretariat; Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations; Global Environment Facility; International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL); International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN); Lusaka Agreement Taskforce (LATF); Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, France; United for Wildlife Taskforces; United Nations Conference on Trade and Development; United Nations Development Programme; United Nations Environment Programme; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; United States Agency for International Development; United States Department of State; University of Wolverhampton, Centre for International Development and Training (CIDT); UN-REDD Programme Secretariat; Reducing Opportunities for Unlawful Transport of Endangered Species (ROUTES) Partnership; Virunga

the Global Environmental Facility and development agencies, to draw their attention to the [West and Central Africa Threat Assessment Report](#), the [recommendations in Annex 2 to document CoP18 Doc. 34](#) and the guidelines in information documents [SC70 Inf. 2](#) and [SC70 Inf. 3](#). The Secretariat encouraged these entities to explore, as appropriate, opportunities to take the matters outlined in these documents into consideration in the development and implementation of any relevant work programmes or activities that may be undertaken across the West⁷ and Central⁸ African subregions. The Secretariat has also taken the opportunity to implement Decision 18.93, paragraph a) by presenting these documents at several regional events, as well as various online forums⁹.

14. The Secretariat is pleased to confirm that it received confirmation from several organizations about relevant work planned and undertaken through their respective agency programmes across West and Central Africa.
15. The World Customs Organization (WCO) reported on various activities it supported, including a Train-the-Trainer and Accreditation Workshop for Customs¹⁰ in West Africa and Regional Customs-Police Workshops¹¹ incorporating CITES technical trainings. [Operational risk management work](#) and the development of a global illegal wildlife trade risk matrix¹² also have been undertaken throughout 2020, in addition to a series of online workshops focusing on illegal wildlife trade and CITES implementation for Parties¹³ as part of the preparatory work for Operation Thunder 2020.
16. UNODC reported on the continued implementation of its project involving ECCAS Member States aimed at strengthening national and regional law enforcement, prosecutorial and judicial capacity and cooperation to combat wildlife crime and trafficking in natural resources. Through this project that runs till 2022, UNODC initiated comparative analyses of national legal frameworks for addressing wildlife and forest crime across various Central African countries¹⁴.
17. TRAFFIC, amongst other NGOs, reported that it continued to work with the Commission of Central African Forests (COMIFAC) Secretariat in rolling-out the [Trade in Wildlife Information eXchange \(TWIX\)](#) system in several Central African¹⁵ countries. TRAFFIC also reported on assistance that it had provided to ten Member States from the COMIFAC region, as part of the evaluation of Parties' efforts under the regional Wildlife Crime Action Plan¹⁶, and other activities.

Implementation of Decision 18.93, paragraphs b), c) and e)

18. To implement Decision 18.93, paragraphs b), c) and e), the Secretariat developed a suite of activities that could be delivered in support of strengthening implementation and enforcement of CITES across the West and Central African subregions. The proposed activities are aligned with the findings emanating from the

Foundation; West Africa Biodiversity and Climate Change (WA BiCC); Wildlife Conservation Society; World Bank; World Customs Organization; WWF International.

⁷ **West Africa:** Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo.

⁸ **Central Africa:** Angola, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and Sao Tome and Principe.

⁹ *Regional high-level dialogue on enhancing the protection and conservation of endangered species in West Africa with special reference to Rosewood (Ghana, 2019); 30th Meeting of the INTERPOL Wildlife Crime Working Group (WCWG) (Singapore, 2019); 2nd INTERPOL Regional annual meeting on illegal trade in wildlife in West and Central Africa (Cameroon, 2020); The Financial Investigations in Wildlife and Forestry Crime E-Workshop Series, EGMONT Group and ECOFEL (2020).*

¹⁰ *Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Congo, Gabon, and Togo.*

¹¹ *Officers from Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, and Togo.*

¹² *Participating countries in the preparatory workshops included Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, and Nigeria.*

¹³ *Benin, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Liberia and Nigeria. Burkina Faso and Togo released experts to deliver some webinars.*

¹⁴ *Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Gabon.*

¹⁵ *Countries of the Central African region use AFRICA-TWIX and the following countries are enlisted under this regional TWIX system: Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon and Rwanda. The TWIX consists of a centralised website which holds records on national, regional and international wildlife seizures, and a mailing list which allows government-mandated law enforcement officials to communicate, seek assistance and alert one another about relevant enforcement actions.*

¹⁶ *Plan d'Action sous régional des Pays de l'Espace COMIFAC pour le renforcement de l'Application des Législations nationales sur la Faune Sauvage (PAPECALF).*

West and Central Africa Threat Assessment Report, the recommendations in Annex 2 to document CoP18 Doc. 34¹⁷ and the guidelines in information documents SC70 Inf. 2 and SC70 Inf. 3.

19. The proposed activities include training on CITES implementation and enforcement; border control activities; activities to enhance national legislation and its application; activities to support national coordination and collaboration and international cooperation; and activities in support of addressing and mitigating corruption risks, amongst others. In November 2021, the Secretariat wrote to the Parties in the two subregions inviting expressions of interest to receive capacity-building support under this initiative. The Secretariat also held two online regional information sessions during December 2021, providing further information to Parties on the activities and the process for seeking support. The activities are expected to be implemented across two phases. Phase one involves primarily online delivery of capacity-building activities due to the ongoing COVID-19 situation. Phase two is anticipated to consist of in-person delivery, to the extent possible, counting on an improvement in the COVID-19 pandemic. The Secretariat will provide a further update on progress with this work at the 19th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.
20. The capacity-building activities mentioned in paragraph 19 above have been designed to be coordinated, cohesive, and well targeted, complementing other initiatives underway across the Secretariat, such as the CITES Compliance Assistance Program (CAP), the CITES Tree Species Programme (CTSP) and the CITES Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE) programme.
21. The CAP, adopted at CoP18, is intended to provide coordinated and targeted assistance to CITES Parties facing persistent and systemic challenges in meeting their obligations under the Convention, among others, in particular for Parties in the Article XIII process. The CITES Secretariat will provide technical assistance, advice and also help Parties participating in the CAP to mobilize funding from other sources to address their needs. Guinea, Nigeria, Suriname and Togo are amongst the first countries selected for inclusion in the CAP. The Secretariat is presently working with these Parties to develop capacity-building activities and address their compliance challenges. A further update is provided in document SC74 Doc. 29 on the *Compliance Assistance Programme: Report of the Secretariat*.
22. The Secretariat notes that the CTSP is supporting several Parties in West and Central Africa in implementing conservation and management measures to ensure that their trade in CITES-listed tree species is sustainable, legal and traceable. The CTSP is funding projects in Benin, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria and Togo, including a project on awareness raising and capacity-building for the sustainable management of *Pterocarpus erinaceus* throughout Benin, Nigeria and Togo. Further details are provided in document SC74 Doc. 14 on the *Tree Species Programme: Report of the Secretariat*, prepared for the present meeting.
23. Under the European Union (EU) funded Intra-ACP Wildlife Trafficking (MIKES+) project, the MIKE programme is supporting site-based efforts to strengthen management capacity to address wildlife crime in five key MIKE sites in West and Central Africa: Dzanga Sangha Protected Areas (Central African Republic), Mole National Park (Ghana), Nouabale-Ndoki National Park (Congo), Okapi Wildlife Reserve (Democratic Republic of the Congo) and Tai National Park (Côte d'Ivoire). Agreements relating to support for two additional MIKE sites are under consideration by the relevant authorities: Gourma MIKE site (Mali) and Minkébé National Park (Gabon). Specific capacity-building support is tailored to each site. Typical support includes activities to strengthen the effectiveness and efficiency of wildlife law enforcement patrols through the provision of training, equipment and supporting infrastructure; activities to improve the management of patrols through work focused on enhancing the planning and implementation of operations, including support for operations control rooms and communications; and other activities that are strengthening site-based intelligence to better inform law enforcement operations and local level investigations. Under the same EU funded project, national and site focal points from 15 African elephant range States (as well as representatives from customs and INTERPOL National Central Bureaus from some of the countries) participated in an online training session on ivory stockpile management on 13 October 2021. Further information on the MIKE programme can be found in documents SC74 Doc. 13 on *MIKE and ETIS programmes: Report of the Secretariat* and SC74 Doc. 68 on *Elephants (Elephantidae spp.): Implementation of Resolution Conf. 10.10 (Rev. CoP18): Report of the Secretariat*, prepared for the present meeting.

¹⁷ As updated by the CITES Secretariat following CoP18:
https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/prog/enforcement/CoP18_Doc_34_Annex2_EN.pdf

24. The Secretariat has also supported or contributed to several regional activities by presenting the findings of the West and Central Africa Threat Assessment. The Secretariat participated in the 2nd INTERPOL Regional annual meeting on illegal trade in wildlife in West and Central Africa¹⁸ (February 2020); the Egmont Centre of FIU Excellence and Leadership (ECOFEL) online workshop on Financial Investigations in Wildlife and Forestry Crime (June, 2020); an INTERPOL training in criminal intelligence analysis for Central and West Africa (22-26 March 2021); and an Africa-TWIX webinar on fulfilling CITES reporting obligations, hosted by TRAFFIC on 26 March 2021¹⁹. From June to September 2020, the Secretariat participated in and presented information during a WCO webinar series designed to support Parties in preparation for [Operation Thunder 2020](#) that engaged Parties in the two subregions²⁰. The Secretariat continues to prioritize supporting initiatives that raise awareness and contribute to addressing the threats and needs of Parties in the subregions.
25. Further activities are underway in West and Central Africa under the auspices of ICCWC. In July 2021, UNODC, in collaboration with the *Institut Congolais de Conservation de la Nature* (ICCN), supported the implementation of the [ICCWC Indicator Framework for Combating Wildlife and Forest Crime](#) in the Democratic Republic of Congo. At the time of writing, UNODC is liaising with national counterparts in Cameroon, Guinea, and Nigeria to implement the ICCWC Indicator Framework and is also preparing for the implementation of the [ICCWC Wildlife and Forest Crime Analytic Toolkit](#) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Nigeria.

Conclusion

26. It is encouraging to note that the growing recognition of West and Central Africa as a source and transit region for illegal wildlife products has led to increased awareness amongst some of the Parties concerned, as well as an increase in interest and support amongst the international community and technical partners. However, West and Central Africa continue to be significantly affected by wildlife crime and further strengthened efforts and support are needed to improve CITES implementation and enforcement in the two subregions.

Recommendations

27. The Standing Committee is invited to:
- a) note the broad range of activities reported upon and support available to Parties in West and Central Africa;
 - b) encourage Parties in West and Central Africa, as well as organizations and other entities implementing projects in the two subregions, to build upon this through continued exploration of synergies and by leveraging on collective action to strengthen responses to wildlife crime affecting the subregions;
 - c) further encourage Parties in West and Central Africa to further step up efforts to strengthen CITES implementation and enforcement by actively pursuing the implementation of the Decisions adopted at CoP18 and implementing the recommendations in [Annex 2 of document CoP18 Doc. 34](#);
 - d) welcome the adoption of the West Africa Strategy on Combating Wildlife Crime (WASCWC) and encourage Parties in West Africa to actively pursue its rapid and full implementation; and
 - e) encourage Parties, governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and interested stakeholders to provide support to the West Africa subregion in its implementation of the WASCWC.

¹⁸ Attendees from Benin, Cameroun, Central African Republic, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Gambia, Guinee Bissau, Equatorial Guinea, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo.

¹⁹ Parties attending: Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon and Rwanda.

²⁰ Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria and Togo.