

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 BY NIGERIA, BENIN AND NIGER

1. This document has been submitted by Nigeria, Benin and Niger on behalf of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and its member States.*

Background

2. In March 2016, representatives of Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo, Chad, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Central African Republic and Gabon adopted the Dakar Declaration on the Development of Subregional Wildlife Enforcement Collaboration¹, which identified the threat posed by wildlife crime and the need to develop a collaborative regional response.
3. On 2-4 July 2018, representatives from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) member States² attended a workshop in Abuja, Nigeria, and adopted the *Strategic Areas of Intervention and Priority Recommendations to Develop a Counter Wildlife Trafficking Response in West Africa*³. This document confirmed the 6 priority areas and 47 strategic priority recommendations that the ECOWAS member State representatives identified as necessary for countering wildlife crime in the West Africa sub region.
4. In the course of this meeting, ECOWAS member States also adopted the *Abuja Recommendations on the Development of a Coordinated Counter Wildlife Trafficking Response in West Africa*⁴ encouraging high-level decision-makers to support the development and adoption of a West Africa Strategy on Combating Wildlife Crime (WASCWC), the establishment of a West Africa Network to Combat Wildlife Crime (WAN), and the creation of sustainable funding mechanisms ensuring that the Strategy can be sustainably implemented in the long term. A *West Africa Strategy on Combating Wildlife Crime Steering Committee*, comprising

* The geographical designations employed in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the CITES Secretariat (or the United Nations Environment Programme) concerning the legal status of any country, territory, or area, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The responsibility for the contents of the document rests exclusively with its author.

¹ <https://www.fws.gov/international/pdf/Dakar-declaration-English-French.pdf>

² Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.

³ <https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/com/sc/70/Inf/E-SC70-Inf-02.pdf>

⁴ <https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/com/sc/70/Inf/E-SC70-Inf-03.pdf>

representatives of Senegal, Nigeria, Togo, Niger, Gambia, Liberia and Guinea Bissau was appointed to coordinate future work on behalf of the subregion in this regard.

5. At the 70th meeting of the CITES Standing Committee, Niger, Senegal and Nigeria, on behalf of ECOWAS and its member States, undertook a consultation process with all CITES Parties and other interested stakeholders, to seek input with regard to the development of the WASCWC and its associated implementation and funding mechanisms. This consultation, in the form of a Questionnaire, was published in CITES Notification 2018/087. A progress report on the development of the WASCWC and associated implementation and funding mechanisms was provided at the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES in document CoP18 Inf. 47.
6. At its 18th meeting (CoP18, Geneva, Switzerland, 17-28 August 2019), the Conference of the Parties to CITES (CoP18) adopted the following decisions on *Wildlife crime enforcement support in West and Central Africa*:

Directed to Parties of 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 to 18.90

7. Parties from ECOWAS member States are pleased to inform members of the Standing Committee that the following activities were undertaken to facilitate the regional implementation of CITES Decisions 18.88 to 18.90:
 - a) Validation of the West Africa Strategy on Combatting Wildlife Crime (WASCWC) by all ECOWAS Environment Ministers took place on 2 October 2020. This is a significant milestone for the region. The WASCWC recognizes wildlife crime as a serious crime and will form the cornerstone of all regional efforts to combat wildlife crime.
 - b) A West Africa Network to Combat Wildlife Crime (WAN) will be an implementing mechanism of the WASCWC. The WAN is being established with support from the ECOWAS Commission's Environment Directorate and the USAID *West Africa Biodiversity and Low Emissions Development* (WABILED) Project.
 - c) The WASCWC requires all ECOWAS member States to develop a National Wildlife Crime Strategy (NWCS) and Wildlife Law Enforcement Task Force (WLETF). An approved template for a NWCS is

included as an Annex to the WASCWC. To date, Nigeria (with support from UNODC) has drafted a NWCS. The USAID *West Africa Biodiversity and Low Emissions Development (WABLED)* Project and The Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs' (INL) *Enhancing Wildlife Law Enforcement in West Africa* project are supporting the establishment of a NWCS and WLETF in ECOWAS member States.

- d) A number of capacity building initiatives focused on the implementation of CITES were carried out with support from the USAID *West Africa Biodiversity and Climate Change (WABiCC)* project, including:
- i) *Train the Trainer courses on CITES for customs authorities*: Between 2018 and 2020, a total of 88 customs officers and representatives of CITES Authorities from Liberia, Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali, Nigeria, Ghana, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Benin, Togo, Gabon, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, Guinea, Mauritania and Cameroon attended Train the Trainer courses.
 - ii) *Customs Follow-Up Training*: Customs officers from Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, Ghana, Togo and Guinea who participated in the Trainer the Trainer courses for customs officers organized follow-up trainings for a total of 99 customs officers in their respective countries.
 - iii) *Judiciary and Prosecutors Training*: Between October 2019 and November 2020, four training courses were held on CITES for a total of 87 judges and prosecutors from The Gambia, Liberia, Ghana, Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo.
 - iv) *Training on CITES for Aviation Sector Personnel*: This awareness-raising training was aimed at equipping airline and scanning staff with the knowledge to recognize signs of wildlife trafficking. Two workshops took place in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana in November and December 2020 respectively. A total of 39 airport staff received this training.
 - v) *Development of Wildscan West Africa*: Designed as a tool for customs and border patrol officers, Wildscan is a user-friendly mobile phone application developed to aid in the identification of wildlife species and wildlife parts and products being trafficked across borders.
- e) In 2020, as a result of capacity building and enhanced enforcement efforts, the governments of Côte d'Ivoire and Benin made significant seizures of shark fins. Following concerns that these shipments were indicative of a wider problem across the region, the Côte d'Ivoire and Benin Management Authorities communicated with all ECOWAS member States, alerting them thereby facilitating enhanced wildlife law enforcement coordination. The seizures were as follows:
- i) In September 2020, the anti-trafficking cell at Cotonou Airport, Benin, intercepted a shipment labelled as fish food products. This shipment contained 106 shark fins weighing 50kg, which had been shipped from Pointe Noire in Republic of Congo. The fins were of multiple species, including Shortfin mako (*Isurus oxyrinchus*), Common thresher shark (*Alopias vulpinus*), Hammerhead spp (*Sphyrna lewini*, *Sphyrna mokarran*, *Sphyrna zygaena*) and Silky shark (*Carcharhinus falciformis*). The shipment had been sent as unaccompanied luggage on a passenger flight and was to be picked up at the airport by a third party, who intended to transport the shipment by road to Ghana for export to Asia.
 - ii) In October 2020, the Customs Services at Abidjan Airport, Cote d'Ivoire, seized a shipment of 116.4kg of shark fins, which had been shipped from Point Noire in Republic of Congo. Three days later, the Forest Inspection Service at Abidjan Airport intercepted a shipment of shark fins weighing 350kg belonging to the same suspect. This second cargo was to be exported to Asia from Abidjan. The seizures comprised parts of at least 10 species of shark, including 4 CITES-listed species: Hammer head sharks (*Sphyrna* spp), Silky shark (*Carcharhinus falciformis*), Shortfin Mako (*Isurus oxyrinchus*) and Long-tailed shark (*Alopias superciliosus*).
- f) In September 2020, Senegal and Nigeria, on behalf ECOWAS and its 15 member States led a consultation with European Union member States to explore potential areas of collaboration for wildlife law enforcement. A copy of the consultation document is included in Annex 3. Similarly, on 18 June 2021, Burkina Faso, on behalf ECOWAS and its 15 member States led a consultation with the People's Republic of China to discuss ways in which ECOWAS countries could strengthen wildlife law enforcement collaboration with the People's Republic of China in order to address recommendations made by the CITES Conference of the Parties while concomitantly setting ECOWAS countries on a path towards the successful implementation of the West Africa Strategy on Combatting Wildlife Crime.

These consultations were initiated in response to Decision 18.90, which calls on West and Central Africa to "...increase law enforcement cooperation with other Parties...".

Promoting Enhanced Collaboration on Combating Wildlife Crime in West Africa

8. West African Parties are extremely concerned about the ongoing high levels of wildlife crime taking place across the region, as evidenced by the West and Central Africa Threat Assessment Report (CoP18 Doc. 34 Annex 4). Illegal wildlife trade continues to cause significant, and in some cases irreversible, damage to biodiversity, ecosystems, communities and economies. Wildlife crime can be considered an emergency for the region.
9. In response to this emergency, the West African region (as demonstrated by paragraphs 7 a – f) are committed to combating wildlife crime. However, there are currently inadequate measures in place to ensure a whole-of-supply chain response, in which source, transit and consumer countries collaborate and communicate effectively. West African Parties are particularly concerned that illicit demand for CITES listed flora and fauna species from the region remains unsustainably high, whilst current collaboration with other regions implicated in the supply chain remains limited.
10. To address this problem, ECOWAS member States are exploring options for the adoption of measures which ensure that source, transit and consumer countries all play an equal role in the CITES compliance process, thereby ensuring more systematic enforcement collaboration between all countries across the whole illegal trade chain. Such collaboration would improve the capacity of ECOWAS countries to enforce CITES. For example, if consumer countries had a mechanism for sharing seizure data in real time with ECOWAS (through the West Africa Network to Combat Wildlife Crime), this would assist the WAN enforcement officers to identify and prioritize enforcement operations, ensuring that scarce resources are used to the fullest extent possible.
11. Regarding the establishment of the West Africa Network to Combat Wildlife Crime (WAN), the ECOWAS region would further welcome the expertise and guidance of other regional Enforcement Networks as the WAN becomes operational.
12. Senegal and Nigeria are therefore considering proposing two Decisions to the 19th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES (see Annex 1 and 2) and welcome the guidance of the Standing Committee in this regard.

Recommendations

13. The Standing Committee is invited to:
 - a) Review the information contained in this document; and
 - b) Consider the request for guidance detailed in paragraphs 8 – 13 and the associated draft Decisions in Annex 1 and Annex 2.

DRAFT DECISIONS OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

Strengthening Collaboration between Source, Transit and Consumer Countries

19.AA Directed to the Standing Committee

The Standing Committee shall establish a Working Group, with representation from all regions, to make recommendations for consideration at the 20th meeting of the Conference of the Parties on the development and adoption of procedures that will promote enhanced collaboration between source, transit and consumer countries including (*inter alia*):

- a) a secure mechanism for regular exchange of seizure data between CITES Management Authorities along illegal trade chains;
- b) the establishment of a CITES early warning mechanism (e.g. in response to heightened seizures, or identification of a new trade route) that will ensure all Parties along the supply chain are promptly made aware of priority enforcement needs and can respond accordingly;
- c) the establishment of a forum to promote regular communication between source, transit and consumer countries on priority issues (e.g. *Pterocarpus erinaceus*); and
- d) the need for *CITES guidelines on enforcement coordination between source/transit/consumer countries*

19.BB Directed to the Secretariat

The Secretariat shall support the Standing Committee in the implementation of Decision 19.AA, including through the provision of technical expertise, translation and interpretation as appropriate.

DRAFT DECISIONS OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

Strengthening Wildlife Law Enforcement in West Africa

19.AA *Directed to the Standing Committee*

The Standing Committee shall establish an inter-sessional Working Group, to be comprised of representatives of regional Wildlife Enforcement Networks, to provide the newly formed West Africa Network to Combat Wildlife Crime (WAN) with expert guidance and support as the WAN becomes operational.

19.BB *Directed to the Secretariat*

The Secretariat shall support the Standing Committee in the implementation of Decision 19.AA, including through the provision of technical expertise, translation and interpretation as appropriate.

Illegal trade questionnaire for the European Union concerning
illegal wildlife shipments from West Africa -
Implementation of CITES Decisions 18.88 - 18.93 on
Wildlife crime enforcement support in West and Central Africa

Confidentiality note: All information provided as part of this questionnaire will be kept strictly confidential and will be used solely to facilitate the implementation of CITES Decisions 18.88 - 18.93.

Please fill the questionnaire and send it to Mr. Abba Sonko, CITES management authority of Senegal (abbasonko@hotmail.com) and to Mr. Timothy Daniel John, CITES management authority of Nigeria (timdanjohn@yahoo.com) before 15 September 2020.

Background

At the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES, Decisions were adopted to strengthen wildlife law enforcement collaboration between Parties in West and Central Africa and Parties importing specimens from West and Central Africa or playing a role as a transit country.

In particular, Decision 18.89 provided that “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.”

Decision 18.90 encouraged Parties importing CITES specimens from West and Central Africa 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.”

And recommendation (m) in Annex 2 of document CoP18 Doc. 34 called on West African countries to “increase law enforcement cooperation with Parties in other regions identified as destination Parties for illegally traded CITES specimens originating from West and Central Africa, by using existing mechanisms, or where needed, putting in place appropriate new mechanisms, for example through the establishment of treaties on extradition and Mutual Legal Assistance in criminal matters, in order to address such illegal trade.”

In this context, the member countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) developed a questionnaire to strengthen their understanding of illegal wildlife trade involving the European Union as a transit or end-destination, and to identify opportunities for coordination. Information collected through this questionnaire will be used to propose measures to strengthen collaboration between the European Union and West African States to combat wildlife crime and implement the CITES Convention.

As previously reported to the 70th meeting of the CITES Standing Committee (SC70 Doc. 30.4) and to the 18th meeting of the CITES Conference of the Parties (CoP18 Inf. 47), ECOWAS member States are in the process of adopting a West Africa Strategy on Combating Wildlife Crime (WASCWC). The WASCWC has now been validated by the region and should be adopted by ECOWAS ministers in the course of this year. The WASCWC will be implemented at the regional level through the establishment of a West Africa Network to Combat Wildlife Crime (WANCWC or WAN), and the creation of sustainable funding mechanisms. One of the priority activities identified by West African States in the WASCWC is to strengthen cooperation and coordination with transit and

demand countries (Objective 2, Activity 8). Information collected through the present questionnaire and efforts devoted to strengthening the collaboration between ECOWAS member States and the European Union will positively contribute to the implementation of the WASCWC.

Findings from the regional wildlife crime threat assessment led in ECOWAS member countries, and reports from enforcement officers confirm that shark species from West Africa are commonly found in illegal trade with a special focus on fin trade to meet the demand of the Asian market with some consignments transiting through the European Union. A special section on sharks is therefore included in the questionnaire to explore means for stronger collaboration between West Africa and the EU on the implementation of the CITES shark listings.

Questionnaire

1) Information on seizures for violations involving CITES-listed species with a link to West Africa or of species endemic to West Africa.

Through information collected in the preparation of CITES illegal trade reports under paragraph 3 of Resolution Conf. 11.17 (Rev. CoP18), or any other information available, has your country identified any illegal shipments coming from or transiting through West Africa? Please describe.

Illegal Trade Incident # 1		
Species - Please enter the scientific name of the species or subspecies. If the specimens/species cannot be identified the name of the genus or a higher taxon.	Description of the specimen – Please describe as precisely as possible	Quantity – Please enter the numerical value for the quantity of items seized and the appropriate unit of measurement as appropriate
Date and location of the incident – Please date of the incident in the following format DD/MM/YEAR and specify the location where the seizure took place	Modus Operandi – Please provide details on mode of transport, how shipment was labeled, method of concealment and reason for seizure as appropriate	Trade route – Please indicate the name of the alleged country of origin, all known countries of transit and the country of final destination as appropriate
Illegal Trade Incident # 2		
Species	Description of the specimen/ form in trade	Quantity
Date	Modus Operandi	Trade route

NB: Please add more incidents as necessary.

2) Information on the development of international collaboration mechanisms to successfully intercept wildlife shipments from West Africa, transiting through or destined for the European Union.

CITES Resolution Conf 7 (Rev. CoP15) on transit and transshipment recommends that “Parties inspect, to the extent possible under their national legislation, specimens in transit or being transhipped, to verify the presence of a valid CITES permit or certificate as required under the Convention or to obtain satisfactory proof of its existence.” Findings from the regional wildlife crime threat assessment led in ECOWAS member countries confirm that the European Union is used as a transit and as a final destination for wildlife specimens traded illegally. In order to gain a better understanding of the mechanisms that could be developed to strengthen wildlife law enforcement collaboration between West African countries and the European Union, please provide information relevant to existing wildlife law enforcement controls and coordination mechanisms, and information on the implementation of CITES Resolution Conf 7 (Rev. CoP15) on transit and transshipment.

For illegal wildlife shipments that list your country as the final destination, does your country have regulations in place that require that the country of origin be informed of the seizure?
Does your country have regulations in place that allow for or encourage inspection of in-transit shipments?
Are wildlife shipments transiting through your country inspected?
For illegal wildlife shipments that are in transit, does your country currently have regulations in place that require that the country of origin be informed of a seizure?
For wildlife shipments in transit, what steps does your country take to ensure the validity of any CITES documentation accompanying the shipment?
Are there any bilateral or multilateral mechanisms currently implemented in your country to strengthen the likelihood of interception of wildlife shipments in illegal trade that are destined for or that are transiting through the European Union? Please describe

3) Information on the development of international collaboration mechanisms that could be developed to successfully dismantle and prosecute wildlife trafficking networks/offenders operating out of West Africa and using the European Union as a transit or end destination.

ECOWAS member States are in the process of developing a regional wildlife law enforcement network (West Africa Network to Combat Wildlife Crime or WAN) which will be hosted by the ECOWAS Commission and which will facilitate regional coordination on wildlife law enforcement. Who would be the designated focal point in your country for coordination with the WAN?
What mechanisms would be the most appropriate to facilitate intelligence sharing on wildlife trafficking incidents between the European Union and ECOWAS member States? Please specify contact details for relevant Interpol and Customs focal points as appropriate.
What rules apply to seek Mutual Legal Assistance (MLA) for matters related to the prosecution of wildlife crime offences in your country?
Would your country consider the development of a formal agreement with ECOWAS concerning wildlife crime useful (for example, in the implementation of bilateral or multilateral enforcement operations, or data sharing)? Please provide any details/rationale.

4) Information on the implementation of the CITES listings of shark and ray species

Various CITES-listed shark and ray species range in West Africa including in particular oceanic whitetip sharks (*Carcharhinus longimanus*), hammerhead sharks (*Sphyrna* spp.), porbeagle sharks (*Lamna nasus*), basking sharks (*Cetorhinus maximus*), whale sharks (*Rhincodon typus*), great white sharks (*Carcharodon carcharias*), thresher sharks (*Alopias* spp.), silky sharks (*Carcharhinus falciformis*), mako sharks (*Isurus oxyrinchus* and *Isurus paucus*), guitarfishes (*Glaucostegus* spp.), sawfishes (*Pristidae* spp.), manta and mobula rays.

Findings from the regional wildlife crime threat assessment led in ECOWAS member countries, and reports from our enforcement officers confirm that these species are commonly found in illegal trade, with a special focus on fin trade to meet the demand of the Asian market with some consignments transiting through the European Union.

CITES Resolution Conf. 12.6 (Rev. CoP18) on the *Conservation and management of sharks*:

3. *ENCOURAGES Parties to improve data collection and reporting (where possible by species and gear type), adopt management and conservation measures for shark species, and enhance implementation and enforcement of these actions through domestic, bilateral, RFMOs or other international measures;*
8. *REQUESTS Management Authorities to collaborate with their national customs authorities to expand their current classification system to allow for the collection and reporting of detailed data on shark trade including, where possible, separate categories for processed and unprocessed products, for meat, cartilage, skin and fins, and to distinguish imports, exports and re-exports and between shark fin products that are dried, wet, processed and unprocessed fins. Wherever possible, these data should be species-specific;*

CITES Decision 18.218 direct Parties to:

- c) *inspect, to the extent possible under their national legislation, shipments of shark parts and derivatives in transit or being transhipped, to verify presence of CITES-listed species and verify the presence of a valid CITES permit or certificate as required under the Convention or to obtain satisfactory proof of its existence;*

Please provide information on the implementation of these safeguards and other provisions applicable to the implementation of the CITES shark and ray listings by responding to the following questions and providing any other relevant information.

Does your country currently implement measures to secure the inspection of shipments of shark specimens in transit? Please describe
Has your country ever intercepted shark shipments illegally transiting through the EU from West Africa to Asia? Please describe (with particular emphasis on shipments seized in the past 5-7 years).
What collaborative mechanisms could be developed between the EU and ECOWAS member States to strengthen the successful interception of illegal shark shipments in transit? Please describe
Are you aware of any illegal shark shipments from West Africa destined for the EU market? What measures could be implemented to strengthen collaboration between the EU and West Africa to decrease the likelihood of such incidents? Please describe

5) Other relevant feedback

Please make any suggestion(s) you consider appropriate to support ECOWAS member countries in the development of mechanisms and strategies they need to implement to combat wildlife trafficking and intercept illegal wildlife consignments transiting through or destined for the European Union.

Are there any suggested contacts you recommend that ECOWAS member States link with for further discussions on this issue?

**Thank you for your kind participation in supporting the efforts led by
ECOWAS member States on combatting wildlife crime!**