



Remarks by His Excellency,

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President of Gabon

High Level Side Event at the UNGA

New York

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- **My Fellow Presidents,**
- **Mr. Deputy Secretary General,**
- **Ministers,**
- **Ambassadors,**
- **Distinguished Representatives of NGOs and Civil society,**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Once again, Gabon and Germany are honored to host a high-level side event on wildlife crime.

As we meet, the illicit trafficking of wildlife remains a lucrative criminal activity, accounting for over **US \$25 billions** annually.

Furthermore, the Illicit wildlife trade has become a security challenge. Those involved are ever more aggressive, and continue to attack and kill our wildlife rangers, in increasingly intense combat situations.

At sea, our parks staff and navy are faced by pirates, who pillage our fish stocks, and who even more alarmingly, have begun to attack boats and oil installations in the Gulf of Guinea.

- **Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Given the international and trans-border nature of these illegal activities, international and multilateral cooperation needs to intensify if we are to have a hope of resolving this problem.

Throughout 2013, we worked at different levels to explore the most effective solutions. In December 2013, Botswana hosted the African Elephant Summit, which decided on urgent measures to address the upsurge in poaching and illegal ivory trafficking.

Early this year, at a wildlife crime summit hosted by the United Kingdom Government and Princes Charles, William and Harry in London, Botswana, Chad, Ethiopia, Tanzania and Gabon launched the Elephant Protection Initiative.

- **Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I take this occasion to thank all the partners who are helping us tackle illicit wildlife trafficking.

As I did a few days ago at the Clinton Global Initiative, here I would like to call for concerted international action between source, transit and market countries.

I invite other countries to join the Elephant Protection Initiative and work with us to build it into an effective global partnership.

I praise the UNEP and the Economic Community of Central African States for putting the issue on their work agendas, and for nominating goodwill ambassadors, who happen to be African soccer stars.

I again encourage the UN Secretary General to appoint a Spokesperson for Wildlife Crime to spearhead a global response to this pressing issue. UN leadership is crucial along with that of regional organizations. Current discussions around a draft UN General Assembly resolution on wildlife crime is a welcome development.

- **Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Gabon will continue to work with other African Nations to develop a continental response to Wildlife Crime. I thank and commend all my African Brothers for their participation in this event.

I am in favor of a high-level African initiative with the African Union and other regional organizations that should be spearheaded by the very men and women who are fighting to protect wildlife on the ground. The Elephant Protection Initiative calls for African national parks and wildlife agencies to federate and work together.

Allow me, speaking in French, to touch on the human-wildlife conflict, an important aspect of our fight against poaching.

Mesdames et Messieurs les Présidents,

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La lutte contre le braconnage et le trafic des espèces protégées doit être menée en étant attentif aux préoccupations des populations.

L'une des préoccupations des populations rurales au Gabon est la destruction des champs agricoles par les éléphants. Cette situation provoque d'intenses frustrations de ces populations. Nous collaborons avec la FAO et d'autres partenaires sur les stratégies pour gérer ce conflit homme-faune.

Nous sommes entrain d'étudier la possibilité de mettre en place un mécanisme d'indemnisation.

Sachant que la chasse est une source de revenu et de nourriture, il nous faut différencier cette tradition et la lutte contre les activités illicites.

Whatever tactics we adopt in this struggle, our approach must integrate the concerns of rural populations.

I look forwards to hearing your views and to working with you to bring the power of the UN system to bear in our fight against wildlife crime.

Thank you **Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen**, for making time in this busy week to join us to discuss this important issue.