

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



**African elephant meeting
Mombasa, Kenya
23-25 June 2008**

THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN *AFRICAN ELEPHANT ACTION PLAN*

The working document attached was compiled by the IUCN/SSC African Elephant Specialist Group at the request of the CITES Secretariat.

WORKING DOCUMENT

IUCN SSC African Elephant Specialist Group
CITES African elephant range State Meeting
June 23-25, 2008 Mombasa, Kenya

THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN *AFRICAN ELEPHANT ACTION PLAN*

1. Background

The purpose of this document is to assist African elephant range States in their efforts to develop an *African elephant action plan*.

At the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP14; The Hague, 2007), Decisions 14.75 to 14.79 concerning elephant conservation were adopted as follows:

Directed to African elephant range States

14.75 The African elephant range States shall continue their constructive elephant dialogue aiming to develop joint conservation policies and exchange of management experience in order to improve the management of elephant populations.

The African elephant range States through the African elephant dialogue process shall develop an overall *African elephant action plan* for improved elephant management aiming at:

- a) accessing and directing resources, towards strengthening enforcement capacity in African elephant range States to combat poaching and illegal trade in ivory;
- b) the implementation of the *Action plan for the control of trade in elephant ivory*; and
- c) enhancing capacity building, managing translocations, reducing human-elephant conflicts and enhancing community-conservation programmes and development programmes within or adjacent to the elephant range.

The elephant range States will report to the Standing Committee on progress made under this decision with a view to providing the information necessary for the reviews referred to in Decision 14.78.

Directed to Parties, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations

14.76 Parties, trading countries, the ivory carving industry, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and other donors are called upon to contribute significantly to the African Elephant Fund for the implementation of the *African elephant action plan* and the programme for Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE) to ensure their establishment and maintenance.

Directed to the Standing Committee

14.77 The Standing Committee, assisted by the Secretariat, shall propose for approval at the latest at the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties a decision-making mechanism for a process of trade in ivory under the auspices of the Conference of the Parties.

14.78 The Standing Committee shall conduct ongoing comprehensive reviews of the status of the elephant, trade in its specimens and the impact of the legal trade, based on data from MIKE, the Elephant Trade Information System and the implementation of the *Action plan for the control of trade in elephant ivory* and the *African elephant action plan* referred to in Decision 14.75.

Directed to the Secretariat

14.79 The Secretariat shall establish an African Elephant Fund that will be applied to the implementation of the *African elephant action plan*.

The Secretariat shall establish a steering committee consisting of representatives of the range States and donors to govern the African Elephant Fund and to support and advise African elephant range States on the implementation of the Action Plan.

The Steering Committee shall decide on the organization of the administration of the fund.

The Secretariat shall, as far as possible through MIKE funding, convene an African elephant meeting before 31 July 2008 and at later dates as necessary.

The interconnected Decisions on the development of an *African elephant action plan* and the establishment of an accompanying African Elephant Fund are directed to the African elephant range States and the Secretariat respectively. The two issues are complementary. The creation of the African Elephant Fund requires an understanding of the activities that should be supported, hence an African elephant action plan, while the development of a meaningful African elephant action plan needs to take the available resources into consideration, including those provided by an African Elephant Fund. The African elephant action plan may also determine the best *modus operandi*, structure, size and scope of the accompanying Fund.

In order to assist African elephant range States in their efforts to implement their components of the Decisions, the CITES Secretariat has requested the IUCN/SSC African Elephant Specialist Group [AfESG] to compile a draft *African elephant action plan* based on existing regional and national African elephant plans and strategies and the provisions in Decision 14.75.

The compilation process shall invite input from all African elephant range States, and working drafts will be circulated to the range States for further comments and input. The draft *African elephant action plan* will also guide the Secretariat in analysing options for the establishment of the African Elephant Fund.

2. *African elephant action plan* development process

It is hoped that the draft *African elephant action plan* will include the combined input from all African elephant range States. Beyond the discussions expected at the present meeting, drafts of the plan will be circulated for comment and input. The following table outlines a suggested timetable for the completion of the action plan. The development of the *African elephant action plan* will be highly inclusive, whereby all African elephant range States will have the opportunity to contribute initially in its development at the facilitated meeting convened by the CITES Secretariat and subsequently on drafts of the *African elephant action plan* forwarded to all relevant authorities (see development timeframe below).

Development timeframe

Apr/May 2008: Working document on the drafting of an <i>African elephant action plan</i> prepared by the IUCN/SSC African Elephant Specialist Group (AfESG)

23 - 25 Jun 2008: Presentation and facilitation of discussions on the production of an <i>African elephant action plan</i> at the African elephant meeting convened by the
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CITES Secretariat (Mombasa, 23-25 June 2008).

Aug 2008: Ongoing communication and incorporation by the AfESG of input and comments from African elephant range States into initial draft.

Sept/Oct 2008: AfESG submits a first draft *African elephant action plan* to the Secretariat. The Secretariat ensures translation into French and English.

Nov 2008: Draft *African elephant action plan* circulated by the Secretariat to African elephant range States with a 4-week period for comments and input.

Dec 2008: Follow-up by AfESG, as necessary, on comments from African elephant range States. Circulation of a completed draft *African elephant action plan* to the African elephant range States by the Secretariat.

African elephant range States agree to the *African elephant action plan*. Following this agreement, the Secretariat establishes an African Elephant Fund that is to be applied to the implementation of the *African elephant action plan*.

The AfESG will collate all the thoughts, suggestions, comments and recommendations of the African elephant range States in the development of the initial and subsequent drafts of the *African elephant action plan*. There will be two key AfESG contacts during the development of the *African elephant action plan* (see contact details below): one based in Nairobi, Kenya – Dr Julian Fennessy who will coordinate discussions and input from Eastern and Southern African elephant range States; and the other in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso – Mr Lamine Sebogo, who will coordinate discussions and input from West and Central African elephant range States.

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3. Key issues for an *African elephant action plan*

Several key issues are recurring with respect to best practice for conserving Africa's elephants e.g. managing poaching and the illegal trade of ivory and bush meat, independent of which sub-region or country the population inhabits.

However, the management approaches in dealing with these issues may vary between and within countries and sub-regions. The intention of the draft *African elephant action plan* is to bring together many of these themes to develop a strategy that encompasses common practices and management measures. The African elephant range States shall identify elephant conservation and management priorities which will subsequently form the basis for the development and implementation of the African Elephant Fund (see Decisions 14.75 to 14.79 mentioned above).

The draft *African elephant action plan* is not intended to re-invent the wheel or propose new strategies and approaches for the continent. Much of these have been developed and articulated by African elephant range States with support from the AfESG and others in their sub-regional and national elephant management plans and/or strategies. The draft *African elephant action plan*

intends to achieve a broad consensus amongst African elephant range States on the content of the plan and in doing so highlight the key actions for managing the species and important habitats across its range. Additionally, it is possible that some of these key actions will differ between sub-regions and range States according to their distinct features.

3.1 Regional issues

Below is a brief overview of some of the key issues that occur in the four African sub-regions, which could provide a basis from which to develop the *African elephant action plan* collaboratively. It is important to note that the intention of the *African elephant action plan* is not to institutionalize the range States of each sub-regions into single units but rather encourage cross-regional and continental-wide cohesion.

Central Africa

There have been widespread reports in recent years of intense poaching of elephants for ivory and meat throughout much of Central Africa, and the sub-region is believed to be the main source of ivory currently supplying the world's illegal trade. Poaching is exacerbated by new roads for logging operations and mineral and oil extraction, which provide both access to deep forest and routes for the transport of ivory and meat.

A widespread lack of institutional capacity and resources, coupled with difficulties associated with monitoring in forests, result in a general lack of reliable information on the status of elephant populations in the region. While it is therefore difficult to ascertain the impact that the above threats may be having on elephant populations, it is feared that elephant numbers may be declining in Central Africa as a whole.

The Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP), established in 2002 under the aegis of the Council of Ministers in charge of the Forests of Central Africa (COMIFAC), received substantial funding from the United States of America over the 2003-2005 period. Funds were largely focused on 11 priority landscapes, all of which are in elephant range, and were aimed at improving capacity, regional cooperation and law enforcement efforts.

In 2005, Central African governments collaborated in the development of a regional elephant conservation strategy. The strategy aims to reduce the illegal killing of elephants, prevent the fragmentation of elephant populations, improve knowledge on the status of populations and their habitats, and change the negative perceptions of the wider public in the region with respect to elephants due to human-elephant conflicts.

Eastern Africa

As elephant populations in Eastern Africa recover from the poaching episodes of the 1970s and 1980s, human population growth and the concomitant loss and fragmentation of habitats are now the chief threats facing elephants in the sub-region. The resulting high levels of human-elephant conflict prevalent in many areas, coupled with the generalized lack of economic incentives for those sharing their resources with wildlife, highlight the need for sound land use planning policies and incentive systems to ensure the long-term viability of Eastern Africa's elephant populations. The viability of some populations, including those in Eritrea, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Somalia and certain parts of Uganda, is already uncertain while the status of elephants in Sudan is only starting to emerge (Fay *et al.*, 2007).

Tanzania has developed and implemented a national elephant management policy, whilst Kenya is currently in the process of developing a national elephant conservation strategy. As many of the challenges facing the conservation of elephants are common to several countries in the sub-region and since a number of important transboundary populations exist, the formulation of a regional strategy might be useful. Efforts have begun and approval obtained from all range States to

collaboratively develop an Eastern Africa Elephant Conservation Strategy which will strengthen the species conservation in the sub-region.

Southern Africa

Southern Africa holds the largest African elephant populations on the continent, and many of the management challenges associated with high elephant densities in large populations are common to a number of the countries in the region. As elephant numbers continue to increase in the region's largest populations, the debate on the need for management action has continued in a number of countries, particularly Zimbabwe and South Africa.

In 2007, the Southern African range States drafted a regional strategy for the management of elephants, following an initial workshop undertaken in 2005. This strategy aims to foster regional cooperation in elephant management and monitoring, calling for coordinated surveys across borders.

To date, four countries in the sub-region, namely Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zambia have recently developed or updated their respective national elephant management policies.

The development of transfrontier conservation areas has continued in Southern Africa. In 2006, five African countries signed a Memorandum of Understanding to facilitate the development of the Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area (KAZA TFCA). This area holds nearly half of the continental African elephant population and spans some of the most important populations in Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

It is noteworthy that only three countries in Africa fund their regular survey programmes out of their national budgets: Botswana, Namibia and South Africa. Every other range State in the sub-region, and indeed on the continent, depends on external aid for elephant survey work.

West Africa

The common challenges which have long been facing West African range States are linked to small and isolated elephant populations surrounded by growing human populations. Human-elephant conflict and encroachment are pervasive problems throughout the sub-region. These common challenges led to the development in 1999, and revised in 2005, of a regional strategy for the conservation in West Africa, which has since become a reference for the development of international elephant conservation projects and programmes. Seven national action plans for the management of transfrontier elephant conservation and migration corridors in West Africa have been developed since within the framework of the West African Elephant Conservation Strategy, involving Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Niger and Togo.

The revised strategy in 2005 was signed by an interstate Memorandum of Understanding under the aegis of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS). The agreement states that all range States will work together to protect elephant habitats, boost numbers in fragile populations and set up elephant 'conservation corridors' in important transboundary areas.

3.2 Continental issues

With respect to the above regional synopsis, and highlighted in many of the sub-regional and national elephant management Strategies and Action Plans (see Annexes 1 and 2), five broad objectives with associated key issues might be considered for discussion in the development of the draft *African elephant action plan*. These issues have been described in the majority of current and historic strategies and action plans as priorities for African elephant conservation and management across the continent.

The issues under the objectives are expansive but not exhaustive, and the draft of the *African elephant action plan* intends to discuss and consolidate these with some cross-cutting issues such as building capacity and creating awareness at all levels. Additionally, the action plan would set the scene by providing an overview of the current status of the African elephant, including historical and current distribution, numbers and trends, threats and management constraints.

1. Improve knowledge of elephant populations, habitats and their management

- Assessing population numbers, trends and range estimates (distribution)
- Conducting repeated population surveys
- Assessing changes in habitat and range
- Researching and applying (new) survey methods for forest and savannah populations
- Re-introducing or enhancing depleted populations
- Managing locally overabundant populations, direct and indirect options
- Reducing human-elephant conflict
- Mitigating further habitat loss and fragmentation, including assessing the impact of climate change

2. Reduce the illegal killing of elephants and illegal trade in elephant products

- Understanding the nature of existing illegal killing for meat and ivory
- Reducing illegal killing and illegal trade in ivory and elephant products
- Reviewing and increasing implementation of appropriate law enforcement
- Developing or strengthening policies and supporting legislation at the international, sub-regional and national levels

3. Maintain and/or restore connectivity within and between elephant populations

- Managing transboundary/transfrontier populations
- Encouraging land-use planning approaches
- Developing or strengthening policies and supporting legislation

4. Enhancing range States understanding and cooperation

- Building and maintaining consensus at technical and political levels

5. Actioning the action plan

- Identifying the way forward e.g. implementation, funding, etc.

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**Overview of existing sub-regional, national and other African elephant strategies and action plans
(not including plans of 1991/2)**

	Strategy		Action Plan		
	Sub-regional	Country	Sub-regional	Country	Corridors
Central Africa	2005				
Cameroon		1997			
Central African Republic					
Chad					
Congo					
Democratic Republic of Congo					
Equatorial Guinea					
Gabon					
Eastern Africa	-				
Eritrea					
Ethiopia					
Kenya		<i>In draft</i>			
Rwanda					
Somalia					
Sudan					
Tanzania		1994			
Uganda					
Southern Africa	2007				
Angola					
Botswana		2003			
Malawi					
Mozambique		1999			
Namibia		2007			
South Africa					
Swaziland					
Zambia		2003			
Zimbabwe					
West Africa	2005		2003		
Benin		2005			
Burkina Faso		2003			
Cote d'Ivoire		2004			
Ghana		2000			
Guinea		2007		2006	
Guinea Bissau					
Liberia		<i>In draft</i>		2006	
Mali					
Niger		<i>In draft</i>			
Nigeria					
Senegal					
Sierra Leone					
Togo		2003			

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