

United States of America Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearing

‘Ivory and Insecurity: The Global Implications of Poaching in Africa’

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CITES stands at the intersection between trade, environment and development and the Convention is needed more today than it was back in March, 1973 when it was adopted right here in Washington, D.C.²

CITES regulates trade in close to 35,000 species of plants and animals, including listed timber and aquatic species, to ensure that such trade is legal, sustainable and traceable. CITES holds records of over 12 million trades, with about 850,000 legal trades being reported by CITES Parties to the Secretariat annually.³

The focus of this Hearing is on the illegal trade in wildlife, which is the focus of this testimony.

The United States of America hosted the Plenipotentiary Conference that adopted CITES in 1973 and it has been at the forefront of international efforts to stop the illegal wildlife trade.⁴

Illegal trade in wildlife is happening at a scale that poses an immediate risk to both wildlife and to people and their livelihoods. An even greater effort is required, and new approaches need to be taken, if we are to adequately address this risk, including through: employing more formidable and coordinated enforcement responses at Global, regional, sub-regional and national levels; making better use of modern enforcement techniques and technologies; attracting additional financial and human resources at national and international level, and through more effectively suppressing the demand that is driving illegal trade.

Strong and clear political messages from the highest possible levels are also required to combat the illegal trade in wildlife.

The 40th Anniversary of CITES on 3 March, 2013, which coincides with the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties in Bangkok, offers an ideal opportunity for Parties to take stock of their law enforcement efforts to date, to agree on enhanced enforcement measures, and to send strong and clear political messages on combating the illegal trade in wildlife.

¹ See: <http://www.cites.org/eng/disc/sec/SG.php>

² In some parts of the world, such as Japan, CITES is referred to as ‘the Washington Convention’.

³ See CITES Trade Data Dashboards: <http://dashboards.cites.org/>

⁴ *Including* through its strong support for the implementation of CITES, Congress appropriations for the African Elephant Conservation Fund, support for the establishment of regional and sub regional Wildlife Enforcement Networks in Southeast Asia, South Asia, and Central America and the establishment of the Coalition Against Wildlife Trafficking by the State Department in 2005.

Organized crime is involved in wildlife crime

Wildlife crime is a growing problem world-wide.

INTERPOL⁵ and the United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice⁶ have both recognized the increasing involvement of organized crime⁷ syndicates in wildlife crime - syndicates that: carry out detailed planning; have significant financial support; understand and utilize new information technology, and are often well armed.

These syndicates engage in the international management of shipments and do not hesitate to use violence or threats of violence against those who try to stand in their way. They constantly adapt their tactics to avoid detection and prosecution, making national borders increasingly irrelevant. And such tactics are particularly evident with illegal trade in African elephants and rhinos.

In doing so, these syndicates exploit people in rural communities in some of the poorest countries of the world, corrupt officials and kill and injure enforcers, which poses a serious threat to the stability, economy, natural resources and cultural heritage of these countries. These criminals are laundering their ill-gotten gains and in some instances using them to finance armed conflicts and other criminal activities. This in turn undermines good governance and the rule of law. They must be stopped.

Yet, all too often, the serious nature of wildlife crime is not sufficiently recognized and the resources devoted to addressing the threat are inadequate. Wildlife crime carries a lower risk of detection and prosecution, and often has relatively low penalties, making it an attractive target for criminal gangs. Stronger penalties and more effective enforcement measures are required.

In order to counter these criminals, it is critical for the enforcement community to have access to intelligence that will enable them to identify emerging trends in a timely manner, to address current trends, to plan for future activities, and to deploy the best available techniques and technologies.

The massive scale of wildlife crime

The effectiveness of CITES implementation at a national level is severely challenged by the extent of illegal trade. The CITES Secretariat does not place a value on illegal wildlife trade but it notes that others have valued it at anything between USD 5-20 billion⁸ and USD 8-10 billion⁹ a year (excluding timber and marine wildlife).

The estimates of the extent of wildlife crime is further reinforced by the published results of short-term intensive wildlife enforcement actions that are taken by organizations such as INTERPOL¹⁰ and the World Customs Organization,¹¹ as well as domestic operations such as

⁵ See: http://www.cites.org/eng/news/pr/2010/20101108_Interpol.shtml

⁶ See: http://www.cites.org/eng/news/sundry/2011/20110421_res_UNCCPCJ.php

⁷ See Un Convention against Transnational Organized Crime: <http://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/UNTOC/Publications/TOC%20Convention/TOCebook-e.pdf>

⁸ See Congressional Research Service Report: <http://openers.com/document/RL34395/>

⁹ See Global Financial Integrity Report: <http://transcrime.gfintegrity.org/>

¹⁰ See Operation TRAM: <http://www.interpol.int/layout/set/print/News-and-media/News-media-releases/2010/PR014>

And Operation RAMP: <http://www.interpol.int/layout/set/print/News-and-media/News-media-releases/2010/PR089>

'Operation Crash' in the United States of America.¹² Further, according to data submitted by CITES Parties to the Elephant Trade Information System (ETIS), large-scale ivory seizures, defined as seizures of more than 800 kg of ivory, are at an all time high. Such seizures serve as a useful proxy measure for assessing the involvement of organized crime in the trade.

The species affected by illegal trade are not only those in which international commercial trade is prohibited (Appendix I), such as the tiger, but also those in which such trade is regulated to ensure sustainability, such as the Queen conch (Appendix II). The Congressional Research Service Report for Congress of February, 2, 2009 identified some of the most lucrative illicit wildlife commodities as including tiger parts, caviar, elephant ivory, rhino horn, and exotic birds¹³ and reptiles – excluding marine and timber species.¹⁴

The depth of analysis of wildlife crime is poor in comparison to that of other areas of illicit trade - such as the analysis of the illicit trade in drugs through the UNODC World Drugs Reports.¹⁵ UNODC is now working on a series of environmental crime reports, with a focus on wildlife crime. There is a need for a more systematic and thorough global analysis of the illicit trade in wildlife.

However, a more detailed and thorough analysis is available on the illegal killing of, and trade in, African elephants. This is achieved through the four global monitoring and reporting systems for elephants and trade in elephant specimens recognized under CITES, namely:

- the programme for Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE), managed by the CITES Secretariat;
- the Elephant Trade Information System (ETIS), managed for CITES by TRAFFIC to track illegal trade in ivory and other elephant specimens;
- annual reports of CITES Parties on the authorized trade in specimens of CITES-listed species, including legal trade in all elephant specimens, compiled by UNEP-WCMC and available on-line through the CITES Trade Data Base; and
- the African and Asian Elephant Database, housing information on elephant population numbers and range, maintained by IUCN through the SSC African Elephant and Asian Elephant Specialist Groups.

These four monitoring and reporting systems are working closely together to deliver timely, integrated, evidence-based reports to the CITES Parties to inform their decision-making.

The CITES Parties and the Secretariat also derive valuable information from multiple other sources, including from intergovernmental bodies involved in tackling illegal wildlife trade, and from non-government organizations taking an active interest in these issues.

CITES' serious and increasing concern with illegal trade in elephants and rhinos

Last year, we witnessed seriously escalating levels of illegal trade in elephant ivory and in rhino horn, which is pushing these species towards extinction. Such trade is putting money in the hands

¹¹ See Operation GAPIN: <http://www.wcoomd.org/reports/?v=1&lid=1&cid=2&id=277>

¹² See: <http://www.justice.gov/usao/cac/Pressroom/2012/030.html>

¹³ See for example: <http://newswatch.nationalgeographic.com/2012/01/17/the-worlds-most-traded-wild-birds-senegal-parrots-color-morphs-and-the-wild-caught-bird-trade/>

¹⁴ See: <http://opencrs.com/document/RL34395/>

¹⁵ See: <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/WDR-2010.html>

of criminals - including those involved in armed conflicts. It is also depriving local people of livelihoods in many instances, and robbing countries of their natural resources and cultural heritage, as well as of potential revenue¹⁶ - not to mention the costs associated with taking enforcement measures. It must be stopped and elephant and rhino range States need further support to achieve this objective.

Illegal killing and trade in African elephants of serious and increasing concern

The latest analysis of the MIKE and ETIS data is currently being completed for the 62nd meeting of the CITES Standing Committee in July, 2012 and the documents will be publicly released on the CITES website in the coming weeks, in advance of the meeting.

Consequently, all of the relevant data and analysis cannot yet be fully shared but the Report will be provided to the Committee immediately upon release. The following key findings that emerge from the analysis can however be shared today:

MIKE:

- The currently escalating levels of illegal killing across the entire African elephant range are of serious and increasing concern;
- The number of elephants killed illegally in 2011 is likely to run into the tens of thousands;
- Poaching levels are now clearly increasing in all African sub-regions;
- The levels of illegal killing exceed what can be sustained in all four African sub-regions in 2011, with elephant populations now in net decline;
- The Central African sub-region continues to display the highest levels of elephant poaching;
- The ongoing increase in levels of illegal killing of elephants started in 2006, with 2011 displaying the highest levels of poaching since MIKE records began; and
- The rise in levels of illegal killing and the dynamics surrounding it are worrying, not only for small and fragmented elephant populations, but also for previously secure large populations.

At the site level: areas suffering from higher levels of poverty experience higher levels of elephant poaching.

At the county level: governance emerges as the single most important national-level correlate of elephant poaching, with higher elephant poaching levels where governance is weak.

At the global level: demand for ivory, which is widely recognized to be a key factor driving the illegal killing of elephants, is clearly on the increase. The observed increases in the levels of illegal killing of elephants are closely mirrored by trends in levels of consumer spending in major ivory consuming States.

¹⁶ The loss of revenue from illegal logging alone is estimated by the World Bank to be over USD 10 billion per year, with the value of illegally harvested timber being estimated at a minimum of USD 11 billion. See World Bank Study on 'Justice for Forests' at: http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTFINANCIALSECTOR/Resources/Illegal_Logging.pdf

ETIS:

- Three of the five years in which the greatest volumes of ivory were seized¹⁷ and reported to ETIS since 1989 occurred in 2009, 2010 and 2011, with figures still being compiled for 2012;
- Successive years of peak seizure volumes is not a pattern previously observed in the ETIS data and it stands as a very worrying indication that illegal trade in elephant ivory continues to surge in an unabated manner;
- There is value in using large-scale ivory seizures as a proxy measure for assessing the involvement of organized crime in the trade, with 2011 ending with more large-scale ivory seizures than any previous year in the ETIS data;
- The trend in large scale ivory seizures closely matches the poaching trend reported by MIKE;
- The criminal syndicates behind these large movements of ivory are believed to be highly adaptive and the emergence of new trade routes in the ETIS data are likely to be evidence of evolving tactics;
- Very few large-scale ivory seizures actually result in successful follow-up law enforcement actions, including investigations, arrests, convictions and the imposition of penalties that serve as deterrents; and
- Unregulated, or insufficiently regulated, domestic ivory markets are enabling the laundering of elephant ivory from illegal sources.

The ETIS data suggests that demand is principally coming from Asia, with the main destinations being China and Thailand, with East African ports remaining the paramount exit point for illegal consignments of ivory.

Overall, MIKE and ETIS are independently detecting very similar patterns at different points in the illegal ivory supply chain. This should give confidence as to the reliability of results being produced by the two monitoring systems.

Cameroon mass killing incident

In February 2012 the CITES Secretariat expressed its grave concern over reports of the poaching of close to 450 elephants in Bouba Ndjida National Park in northern Cameroon.¹⁸

The CITES Secretariat also worked through the existing networks of all of its partners in the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (see below) to alert all relevant national authorities of the incident in an effort to seize the contraband before it could be traded and thereby prevent the perpetrators profiting from their crimes.

Governments of the region were offered support to find, and bring to justice, the criminals responsible and to locate and seize the poached ivory. Potential transit and final destination countries were also been urged to remain extremely vigilant and to cooperate with one another.

It was reported that elephants had been slaughtered by groups from Chad and the Sudan over several weeks, taking advantage of the dry season. The poached ivory is believed to be exchanged against money, weapons and ammunition to support conflicts in neighboring countries.

¹⁷ This trend refers specifically to large scale ivory seizures (ie seizures of >800 kg of ivory >1,765 lb)

¹⁸ See: http://www.cites.org/eng/news/pr/2012/20120228_elephant_cameroon.php

The Secretariat contacted the Ministers for Forests and Wildlife from Cameroon, Chad, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan offering support to help galvanize enforcement efforts and transboundary anti-poaching mechanisms in Africa.

The response from the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Tourism of the Democratic Republic of the Congo suggested the organization of a regional conference that would bring together the Ministers responsible for environment, defence, Customs and police, to put in place cross-border mechanisms against the illegal trade in ivory and to discuss measures to prevent the recurrence of annual poaching activities by organized groups. This suggestion is being further explored by the CITES Secretariat, in consultation with interested States, taking into consideration the role of existing structures such as the Central Africa Forests Commission (COMIFAC) and the outputs of the Central African Workshop on Wildlife Trafficking and Dismantling Transnational Illicit Networks (see below).

Gabon meeting for stronger local and regional approaches

The Central African Workshop on Wildlife Trafficking and Dismantling Transnational Illicit Networks,¹⁹ which took place from 2-5 April 2012 in Libreville, organized by the United States of America's Embassies in Gabon and the Central African Republic, in collaboration with the Government of Gabon, was an important step towards creating stronger local and regional approaches and collaborative platforms to combat wildlife poaching and trafficking. The CITES Secretariat participated in the meeting.

African Elephant Range States Meeting

In April 2012, the African elephant range States came together for the Fourth African Elephant Meeting, held in Nairobi, Kenya under the auspices of the CITES MIKE Programme. At the meeting, the range States recognized the seriousness of the ongoing escalation in levels of illegal killing of elephants and the illegal trade in ivory, as well as the need for an urgent and escalated response at all levels.

The range States further recognized the need for substantial resources, from both within and outside the range States, to address the emergency. The range States reiterated their commitment to the implementation of the African Elephant Action Plan²⁰ while calling for donors to support its implementation through the African Elephant Fund as well as MIKE and ETIS.

Rhinoceroses under serious threat

CITES does not have the same monitoring systems for rhinos as it does for elephants. However, given the limited number of rhinos and that the majority of the remaining animals are in South Africa (about 80%), reliable data on illegal killing is available. Comprehensive reports are being submitted to the 62nd meeting of the CITES Standing Committee on a range of actions being taken by the CITES Secretariat and others to combat the illegal trade in rhino horn, which will be also provided to the Committee.

¹⁹ See: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2012/03/187006.htm>

²⁰ See: <http://www.cites.org/common/cop/15/inf/E15i-68.pdf>

In 2007 there were 13 rhino poached in South Africa. This number rose to 448 in 2011 – with poaching levels reaching 220 so far this year, with 166 arrests, meaning that levels of poaching are likely to exceed 600 in 2012.²¹

In 2011, a subspecies of the black rhino was declared extinct in the wild in West Africa and we also witnessed that Viet Nam lost its last Javan rhino, which is understood to have been killed by poachers.

Based upon available information, the demand for rhino horn is principally coming from Asia, with the major destination appearing to be Viet Nam, where, according to a report commissioned by the CITES Secretariat, increasing levels of demand have been fueled by rumors of rhino horn being a cure for cancer, and with the horn being increasingly used in a manner akin to a recreational drug, such as ‘rhino wine’ to improve male sexual performance, and to cure the effects of over consumption, such as to cure a hang over - none of which form part of the traditional usage of rhino horn.²²

In parallel to organized crime being involved in rhino poaching and trade, there are clear indications that organized crime syndicates are also active across the European Union to acquire and trade rhino horns. This has prompted EUROPOL to launch a specific action on the illegal trading of rhino horns within the European Union.

In addition, theft of rhino horns from museums, auction houses or at antique or taxidermist shops has occurred in the European Union. Since 2011, the agency has recorded 56 successful and 10 attempted thefts. Criminals stole horns from museums and private collections in 15 countries, with many of the thefts believed to be linked to an organized criminal group “who are known to use intimidation and violence to achieve their ends.” The group is believed to be active in Asia, North and South America and Europe.²³

In the United States of America seven people were arrested on charges of trafficking in endangered black rhinoceros horn in February 2012, as part of “Operation Crash,” a multi-agency effort to investigate and prosecute those involved in the black market trade of endangered rhinoceros horn.²⁴

In South Africa, persons from Mozambique and Viet Nam seeking to smuggle rhinoceros horn out of the country were given long custodial sentences – sending out a powerful message to those who seek to engage in illegal wildlife trade. These convictions reflect the combined efforts of enforcement officials, prosecutors and the judiciary in South Africa where the whole system worked to bring these criminals to justice.

There are also technical exchanges between government officials from South Africa and Viet Nam, and the Secretariat is working to enhance international cooperation between range, transit and consumer States, namely China, Thailand, South Africa and Viet Nam.

²¹ See: <http://www.environment.gov.za/>

²² See paper to be presented to the 62nd meeting of the CITES Standing Committee.

²³ See: <https://www.europol.europa.eu/content/press/europol-and-ireland-identify-organised-crime-group-active-illegal-trading-rhino-horn-9>

²⁴ See: <http://www.justice.gov/usao/cac/Pressroom/2012/030.html>

It is clear that the increased levels of rhino poaching and rhino horn thefts has an impact on several continents and that a well coordinated law enforcement response, as well as high-level political responses, will be required to effectively addresses this trend.

With an estimated 25,000 rhinos left in the wild, these current rates of illegal killing could drive the species to extinction throughout the world during the lifetime of our children.

The need for collaboration in fighting illegal wildlife trade

Fighting poaching and illegal trade in wildlife is about fighting serious crime, especially when dealing with species that attract high returns such as elephant and rhinos. There is a need for collaboration and joint work at multiple levels, including: among range, transit and consumer States; among international entities involved in the fight against wildlife crime; among States at the regional and sub-regional level; and among multiple enforcement authorities at the national level.

Taking enforcement action is a national responsibility. And the men and women who work to protect elephants and rhinos in their habitats every day do extraordinary work under extremely difficult conditions. We applaud the tireless efforts of these officials, who are serving in the front-line. Yet, despite all of these courageous efforts, poaching, and illegal trade continue to increase.

The fight to save these species extends well beyond their habitat. The actual site where an animal is poached can be the start of a long chain of criminality – a chain that may stretch from forests, through rural villages, to large cities, across provincial and national borders, via land, air and sea ports or crossing points, until the animals tusks or horns are finally delivered to clandestine markets, dealers and consumers, often many thousands of kilometers from where the animal was killed.

Anti-poaching personnel acting alone can do little to break these links further up that chain. But Customs and Police can – and that is why the coordinated approach across agencies is critical, both nationally and internationally.

Given the nature and scale of the risk associated with the illegal trade in wildlife, it is now acknowledged that a more organized and sophisticated response needs to be taken by the law enforcement community to tackling the problem.

Responses to the current situation

Coordinated and formidable enforcement support through ICCWC

In recognition of this pressing need, five international organizations joined forces in late 2010 to create the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICCWC).²⁵ ICCWC exists to support those officers serving in the front line in carrying out their essential duties – and in doing so to work with regional wildlife enforcement networks such as the ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network (WEN) and South Asian WEN – networks that have benefitted greatly from support from the United States of America through the State Department and other agencies such as the Department of Justice. To date there are no such networks in Africa, and Central Africa in particular may benefit from such a network.

²⁵ See: <http://www.cites.org/eng/prog/iccwc.php>

ICCWC seeks to ensure that perpetrators of serious wildlife crimes will face a more formidable and coordinated response, as distinguished from the present situation where the risk of detection and punishment is all too low. It also seeks to deploy modern techniques and technologies that are applied in different areas to tackling wildlife crime, such as controlled deliveries and the use of wildlife forensics. It also seeks to 'follow the money' and address asset forfeiture and corruption.²⁶

ICCWC comprises the CITES Secretariat, INTERPOL, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the World Bank and the World Customs Organization (WCO). The CITES Secretariat chairs the Consortium.

CITES is encouraged by the level of commitment to tackling wildlife crime that has been demonstrated by each participating organization, including the strong personal commitment shown by each executive head – Secretary-General Noble of INTERPOL, Executive Director Fedotov of UNODC, President Zoellick of the World Bank and Secretary-General Mikuriya of WCO.

The Consortium came together in Shanghai, China last year to provide training in controlled deliveries for Customs, police and prosecutors from close to 20 countries and across Africa and Asia.²⁷ This workshop built the capacity of participants to use this effective enforcement technique to target and identify criminals who engage in transnational smuggling of wildlife contraband. The Consortium also convened the heads of Customs and police from across the 13 tiger range States on tiger crime in early 2012²⁸ - meetings led by the WCO and INTERPOL respectively. UNODC has also led the development of an ICCWC Wildlife and Forest Crime Toolkit, the national implementation of which is being explored with several States.

At international level, bold steps are being taken to practice what is being preached regarding better coordination, which is to the benefit of national authorities and regional and sub-regional networks. Further technical, financial and political support is required to continue this effort.

The same level of cooperation is required at the national level if we are going to seriously tackle wildlife crime. And while it takes considerable effort, it is being done, as is evident from the efforts being made in South Africa and the United States of America. Recent significant moves towards national collaboration are also evident in China through the establishment of the National Inter-Agency CITES Enforcement Collaboration Group (NICECG) of China, which has just completed a major nation-wide enforcement operation.²⁹

CITES implementation has also recently been brought to the fore at the highest political level. In the joint statement issued after the fourth round of the U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue held from 3 to 4 May in Beijing, article 47 states that: "We decide to jointly support the wildlife law enforcement efforts and to combat the smuggling of endangered and protected

²⁶ The CITES Secretariat participated in the side event on "Corruption, Environment and the UN Convention Against Corruption (Marrakesh, October 2011) and the resulting UNODC publication. CITES paper available at:

http://www.unodc.org/documents/eastasiaandpacific/indonesia/publication/Corruption_Environment_and_the_UNCAC.pdf

²⁷ See: http://www.cites.org/eng/news/sundry/2011/20111219_cd_workshop.php

²⁸ See: http://www.cites.org/eng/news/pr/2012/20120214_tiger_bkk.php

²⁹ See: http://www.cites.org/eng/news/pr/2012/20120509_certificate_cn.php

species. China and the United States will attend the Special Investigation Group Meeting held from 20 to 21 June 2012 in Nanning, China, led by ASEAN-WEN. At the meeting, wildlife investigators and forensic experts will identify and recommend improved enforcement and inspection efforts.”³⁰

ICCWC is also working to raise the profile and awareness of wildlife crime among politicians, diplomats, policy-makers and decision-makers, as well as the judiciary, so that they may better understand why this area deserves to be a high priority for law enforcers and why they should devote further human and financial resources to it.

The threat posed by wildlife crime was brought to the attention of the United Nations Security Council by the Executive Director of UNODC, Yury Fedotov, in his Briefing on ‘Emerging Challenges to International Peace and Security’ in November of last year.³¹

ICCWC is taking the fight against wildlife crime to another level through sharing data, analysis, intelligence, enforcement techniques and resources. Further support is required to enhance this collective effort.

Moving beyond seizures - linking the entire ‘enforcement chain’

As reported through ETIS, and noted above, very few large-scale ivory seizures actually result in successful follow-up law enforcement actions, including investigations, arrests, convictions and the imposition of penalties that serve as deterrents. This comment applies to wildlife crime more generally.

While they are essential, enforcement efforts to stop wildlife crime must not just result in seizures – they must result in prosecutions, convictions and strong penalties to stop the flow of contraband. The whole ‘enforcement chain’ must work together. And this is why the work of ICCWC is so essential in supporting States and regional and sub-regional networks, as the ICCWC partners collectively deal with the entire enforcement system. The recent training by ICCWC (led by WCO) in controlled deliveries is an excellent example of the sorts of measures that are required to track down the criminal syndicates.

Increasing financial resources

In light of the scale of wildlife crime, and the risks to wildlife and people associated with this crime, the financial resources to tackle wildlife crime are clearly inadequate. ICCWC is working with the donor community, as well as with governments, agencies and institutions that may have the money and know-how to assist range, transit and consumer States, and to supply the logistics that many of them need so badly.

All Parties to CITES have also invested their own resources in establishing Management Authorities and putting into place necessary legislation and enforcement measures, some of which require additional support from the international community.

³⁰ See: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2012/05/189287.htm>

³¹ See: <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/speeches/security-council-briefing-23-nov-2011.html>

African Elephant Conservation Fund

The United States of America has been active in its support for the African Elephant Conservation Fund,³² which has benefited from appropriations from the United States Congress, and its support is greatly appreciated and continues to be desperately needed. It can help support the sorts of specific measures that are referred to below.

African Elephant Fund

The African Elephant Fund has also been established³³ in support of the implementation of the African Elephant Action Plan,³⁴ a plan supported by all 38 range States of the African elephant, and further support is sought for the Fund. The Action Plan includes as its first priority objective: “reduce illegal killing of elephants and illegal trade in elephant products.”

Global Environment Facility

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) does not serve as a financial mechanism for CITES, making it extremely difficult to secure GEF funding in support of CITES and enforcement actions in particular. This situation does not reflect the importance of tackling wildlife crime and is being considered by the CITES Standing Committee,³⁵ which is addressing whether GEF should serve as a financial mechanism for CITES. Any change to existing arrangements would require decisions by the CITES Conference of the Parties and the GEF Assembly.

The CITES Secretariat raised the issue of providing additional funding to tackle wildlife crime in a presentation to the Council of the GEF, in November, 2011.³⁶ Making GEF a financial mechanism for CITES would open up additional financing opportunities for Parties to enforce the Convention.

In the meantime, the CITES Secretariat has worked with South Africa to develop a CITES-related GEF project that will support the use of modern forensics in tackling poaching of rhinos and the illegal trade in rhino specimens. The project has been signed off by the Chief Executive Officer of GEF and will be considered by the GEF Council in June, 2012.

The World Bank

The World Bank has been very active in mobilizing resources for wildlife crime issues, including illegal timber trade and tiger conservation, and in perusing major initiatives to ‘follow the money’, which is vital to ensure that criminals do not benefit from the proceeds of their criminal activities.

³² See: http://www.fws.gov/international/DIC/pdf/Afe_fs.pdf

³³ See: http://www.cites.org/eng/news/pr/2011/20111221_cites_za_elephant.php

³⁴ See: <http://www.cites.org/common/cop/15/inf/E15i-68.pdf>

³⁵ See: <http://www.cites.org/eng/com/sc/61/E61-16.pdf>

³⁶ See: http://www.cites.org/eng/news/SG/2011/20111108_GEF.php

Foundations, the private sector and non-government organizations

The CITES Secretariat is also seeking to mobilize support from foundations and the private sector to support enforcement actions, and in particular to support the use of modern forensic techniques.³⁷

The non-government sector has been very active in raising financial resources in support of elephants and rhinos.

Creative and innovative capacity building

The CITES Secretariat has created affordable capacity-building through the open CITES Virtual College³⁸. The recent release of the updated 'Enforcement module' has been of great benefit to enforcement officials, as is evident from the feedback from the Royal Thai Customs,³⁹ which introduced CITES to 60 Customs officials through the Virtual College.

Some very specific issues needing further attention

A number of specific, and important, issues will come to the attention of CITES Parties, the Standing Committee and the Conference of the Parties for their consideration over coming months, *including*: domestic controls over ivory sales; the absence of reporting from some range States on African elephant issues; the need for enhanced legislation in some States; and the need for better controls at known ports being used as exit ports for illegal shipments.

There are also opportunities to work with States to consider new regional and sub-regional wildlife enforcement networks, such as for Central Africa.

Further technical and financial support at international and/or national levels is required to address such issues.

The 40th Anniversary of CITES - 'the Washington Convention'

The 40th Anniversary of the adoption of CITES on 3 March, 2013⁴⁰ presents an ideal opportunity to further evaluate the extent of illegal trade in wildlife, to agree upon any further measures to combat such trade that the Parties may wish to initiate, to request the GEF to serve as a financial mechanism for CITES,⁴¹ and to send very strong and clear political messages on combating the illegal trade in wildlife.

CITES Secretariat
22 May, 2012

³⁷ See: http://www.cites.org/eng/news/pr/2012/20120209_innovative_finance.php

³⁸ The CITES Virtual College has experienced almost global access with 4,900 unique visitors from 168 countries and territories representing 78 different language groups. See: <https://eva.unia.es/cites/>

³⁹ See: http://www.cites.org/eng/news/sundry/2012/20120503_vc_thailand.php

⁴⁰ This coincides with the opening of the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES to be held in Bangkok.

⁴¹ In the event the Parties take a decision to make such a request.