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

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African elephant meeting
Mombasa, Kenya
23-25 June 2008

MEETING NOTE/NOTE VERBALE

1.   The CITES Secretariat convened an African elephant meeting in Mombasa, Kenya, from 23 to 25 June 2008 in compliance with Decision 14.79. It was funded through the Secretariat's programme on Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE). The meeting was attended by representatives of 34 of the 37 African elephant range States (invitees Angola, Nigeria and Somalia were not at the meeting), the CITES Secretariat and its MIKE programme, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Secretariat of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS), TRAFFIC and IUCN. (See annex 1)

2.   The meeting was chaired by Ms. Elizabeth Mrema, representative of UNEP Division of Environmental Law and Conventions (DELC), with four session co-chairs representing the Central, East, Southern and West African range States respectively. In an opening message presented by the CITES Secretariat, the Secretary-General of the Secretariat conveyed his welcome to the participants, thanked the European Commission for supporting the CITES MIKE programme in Africa and reiterated the general purpose of the meeting and the facilitating role of the Secretariat in this regard.

3.   The Secretariat gave an introduction to the African elephant meeting, explaining the relevant Decisions adopted at the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES in 2007 (CoP14), the overall meeting goals, the chairmanship and *modus operandi*. It summarized the differences between the present meeting and formal CITES Dialogue meetings conducted in accordance with Resolution Conf. 14.5 as follows:

	African elephant meeting (Decision 14.79)	CITES Dialogue Meeting (Resolution Conf. 14.5)
Convener:	CITES Secretariat	Conference of the Parties or Standing Committee
Participants:	All African elephant range States	Parties to CITES
Agenda:	*African elephant action plan* and African Elephant Fund; joint conservation policies and management experiences	Proposals to amend the Appendices
Reporting to:	Standing Committee	Conference of the Parties
Timing:	Before 31 July 2008 and at later dates as necessary	After deadlines for submission of proposals and before the meeting of the Conference of the Parties
Funding:	MIKE programme	External
Chair:	Selected by the Secretariat	Chairman of the Standing Committee, with two Vice-Chairmen to be elected from among the participants

Rules of Procedure:	Rules of Procedure of the Standing Committee as far as practicable	In Annex to Resolution Conf. 14.5

4. The agenda and working programme were adopted. (See annex 2)

Part 1: Towards an *African elephant action plan* (Decision 14.75)

5. Two meeting sessions were devoted to the first subject matter. The African elephant range States are directed, through the African elephant dialogue process, to develop an overall *African elephant action plan* for improved elephant management. In support of this assignment, the Secretariat had contracted the IUCN/SSC African Elephant Specialist Group (AfESG) to conduct background research for this subject, produce information materials and facilitate discussions.

6. In session 1, background information was provided with regard to the development of an *African elephant action plan* in compliance with Decision 14.75. This included a discussion on the process for achieving agreement on such a plan.

7. Session 2 focused on the content of a strategic framework for an action plan. A general overview on the conservation status of African elephants was provided, as well as summaries of existing sub-regional African elephant action plans and conservation strategies.

8. In subsequent discussions and working groups, the participants agreed that the *African elephant action plan* should cover the following general areas:

    Themes:

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

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

    3. Maintain African elephant habitats and restore connectivity

    4. Strengthen cooperation and understanding among elephant range States

    5. Reduce human-elephant conflict

    6. Assess the costs and benefits of African elephants to people

    Cross-cutting themes:

    a. Increase awareness on African elephant conservation and management across all levels

    b. Build capacity in African elephant conservation and management

    Implementation and monitoring of the African elephant action plan

7. The participants furthermore identified a number of key elements under each of these themes, which were presented and discussed. It was agreed that the Secretariat's consultant, the AfESG, should collate these inputs in July-August 2008 in close consultation with the range States; that the Secretariat would circulate a consolidated draft strategic framework for an *African elephant action plan* to all range States in October-November 2008 for further comments and input; that the AfESG would follow-up, as necessary, on the contributions from the range States to assist in the next compilation; and that the Secretariat would disseminate a strategic framework for an *African elephant action plan* to the African elephant range States early in 2009, prior to the next African elephant meeting.

8. The range States expressed their desire to have a detailed *African elephant action plan* but all realized that this could not be accomplished at the present meeting. They therefore concurred that this was the beginning of a process towards the development of such a comprehensive plan. While

realizing that the terminology was part of Decision 14.75, the range States also noted that the "*African elephant action plan*" could actually be called a "Strategic Plan for the Management of the African elephant". All range States agreed that the Secretariat and its consultant had done a good job in assisting them in identifying thematic areas that should be form the basis for an *African elephant action plan* and key elements within these themes. The range States also thanked the Secretariat for convening the African elephant meeting and for taking the initiative of preparing a draft strategic framework for the *African elephant action plan*. All agreed that further meetings would be necessary to elaborate on subsequent drafts, establish priorities and assess budget needs.

Part 2:   The African Elephant Fund (Decision 14.79)

9.   The second subject matter concerned the establishment by the Secretariat of an African Elephant Fund that should be applied to the implementation of the *African elephant action plan*, as per Decision 14.79. The Secretariat presented the results of a consultancy that it had commissioned in this regard and which explored and analysed innovative financing mechanisms for the creation of a Fund, potential donors, ways to access funds, possible governance and structures of an African Elephant Fund, and ways forward.

10. The consultants had concluded that caveats for establishing a Fund included: traditional public funds which could not cover the total financial requirements for elephant conservation, noting that no new sources for funding (traditional or otherwise) could be identified; declining funding for biodiversity in general and single-species issues in particular; budget austerity within CITES, CITES Secretariat being a small trustee with very limited resources; and mandates for the Secretariat and the African elephant range States that go beyond the provisions of the CITES Convention. Possible opportunities and advantages included: proposals that would be based on a consensus action plan agreed to by all African elephant range States; continuous strong interest for elephant conservation in donor countries; options to gradually build up the Fund, e.g. initially as a small grants programme, while major funding could be pursued; and the unique role of elephants in ecosystems which could be emphasized.

11. The Secretariat generally concurred with the consultants that the following steps could be envisaged: consult the World Bank and the Global Environment Fund to team up with existing initiatives; explore further the development of a small grants fund and the creation of a 'virtual elephant fund' (database as decision making tool); approach other parties and donors to match the funds from the Netherlands; continue consulting a wide range of donors; prepare a 'building blocks' document for the World bank; adopt an implementation plan and perform outreach through an (interim) steering committee; explore the link between elephant conservation and climate change; and report regularly to the Standing Committee on progress.

12. The meeting participants generally welcomed the consultancy report. It was noted however that the public and private donor potential that existed within Africa had hardly or not been explored, and several suggestions were made on how funding could be mobilized from within Africa. The Secretariat emphasized that an African elephant action plan needed to be agreed upon before the establishment of an Africa Elephant Fund could be envisaged.

Part 3:   Conservation policies and management of African elephant populations (Decision 14.75)

13. Under this subject matter, an update on progress in the implementation of the MIKE programme in Africa was provided. This explained the current institutional and organizational set-up in Africa. A second presentation outlined technical and scientific issues that had been proposed by the MIKE Central Coordination Unit (CCU) for consideration by the MIKE Technical Advisory Group in March 2008, including on the equipment at MIKE sites and MIKE database applications. This had resulted in proposals for replacing the current MIKE database by MIST (Management Information System), which is a versatile, user-friendly and multi-species data collection and reporting system. A representative from Uganda, where MIST has been deployed for over 10 years, gave an overview of its main features and the experience of the Uganda Wildlife Service's with the programme. The MIKE CCU emphasized the need to improve data flows to and from range States, to which MIST could contribute.

14. The MIKE CCU presented an analysis of MIKE carcass data conducted using data from 47 MIKE sites in Africa collected between 2000 and 2008. The analysis suggests that the successful conservation of elephants rests largely on the authorities responsible for elephant management at the national level, but that other factors such as the state of governance and social welfare at the national level can also have an influence. The analysis further suggests an ongoing increase in the rate of illegal killing of elephants, but no relationship is apparent between trends in rates of illegal killing and CITES decisions regarding elephants.

15. During discussions following these presentations, the African elephant range Sates generally showed a great interest in MIST, and Kenya declared its intention to adopt it as its standard protected area management information system in the very near future. On the analysis, the range States requested that the MIKE CCU circulate a written summary of the analysis. This is included herewith in annex 3.

16. TRAFFIC presented progress in the implementation of ETIS in Africa, and commented on a recent analysis that it had conducted of the available ETIS data on ivory seizures and confiscations. It also gave an overview of developments in ivory markets and provided each range State with a national-level report. Generally, national reporting on seizures or confiscations of elephant ivory and other elephant specimens was poor in Africa. National unregulated, illegal ivory markets were documented to continue thriving in several countries in Africa. The main characteristic and trends regarding the illegal trade in ivory in Africa, as presented by ETIS at CoP14, remained largely unchanged. Although the improvement of the situation in Cameroon was noteworthy, Central Africa continued to be particularly problematic with regard to elephant poaching, source of illegal ivory and illegal domestic sales. Levels of illegal ivory trade over time could not be linked with CITES decisions.

17. The Secretariat provided an update on the implementation in Africa of the Action plan for the control of trade in elephant ivory, adopted at CoP14 under Decision 13.26 (Rev. CoP14). It stressed that African countries with illegal internal ivory markets should do much more to address the problems, and that to the extent possible, the Secretariat would be willing to assist in such actions within its means. These concerns are specified and further elaborated in document SC57 Doc. 33.2, to be presented at the Standing Committee in July 2008. The Secretariat also highlighted its collaboration with the forensic science laboratory of the U.S. Fish and wildliffe Service with a view of establishing a refernec collection of elephant samples for determining the origin of ivory through DNA profiling and other techniques.

Closure of the meeting

18. In conclusion, the Secretariat indicated that through its MIKE programme, it would be able to convene a meeting for African elephant range States in 2009 to promote collaboration and discuss, amongst other issues, the status of the *African elephant action plan*, the MIKE and ETIS monitoring programmes, and common issues, problems and solutions relating to elephant management.

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