

REPORT FROM UGANDA¹Report on measures being taken by Uganda to combat illegal ivory tradeBackground

At its 62nd meeting (Geneva, July 2012), the CITES Standing Committee adopted a number of recommendations concerning elephant conservation, illegal killing and ivory trade on the basis of information provided in document SC62 Doc.46.1 (Rev.). These include the following;

- *Parties identified in the ETIS analysis as being involved in substantial illegal ivory trade as a source, transit or destination country are requested to submit a written report, by the deadline for submission of documents for consideration by the Standing Committee at its 63rd meeting (1 January 2013), on their implementation of the provisions of Resolution Conf. 10.10 (Rev. CoP15) and Decision 14.78 (Rev. CoP15) concerning their controls of trade in ivory, including measures to control domestic ivory trade; and*
- *The Secretariat shall evaluate the reports submitted in compliance with recommendations in the above paragraph and convey its findings and recommendations to the Standing Committee at its 63rd meeting.*

In compliance with the above recommendation with regard to the provisions of Resolution Conf. 10.10 (Rev. CoP15) and Decision 14.78 (Rev. CoP15) and based on the findings of the study on “The status of elephant populations, levels of illegal killing and the trade in ivory” presented to the sixty second meeting of the CITES Standing Committee, Uganda wishes to report as follows;

Status of ivory trade in Uganda

Uganda does not allow domestic ivory trade and all her elephant populations are in CITES Appendix I. As such, there is no legislative and regulatory framework for domestic trade in ivory. All forms of ivory trade that may be occurring in Uganda are illegal and in contravention of the Uganda Wildlife Act (Cap. 200 of 2000).

The most recent analysis of MIKE data has indicated that the levels of illegal killing of elephants across the African elephant range are of serious and increasing concern. Uganda has equally suffered from the increased illegal killing of elephants over the last three years mainly for ivory as demand for ivory is widely recognized to be a key factor driving the illegal killing of elephants. Data from the ETIS Database has also indicated Uganda among the countries involved in illegal ivory trade as either source, transit or export country based on the large scale seizures in which Uganda has been implicated. Coupled with the recent increase in the illegal killing of elephants in Uganda’s protected areas over the past three years, Uganda may therefore not be just a transit country but also a source for illegal ivory. This calls for stringent measures from the government to control this illegal trade in fulfillment of CITES Resolution Conf. 10.10 (Rev. CoP15) and Decision 14.78 (Rev CoP15). Indeed the measures put in place by the government have resulted in the seizure of over 500Kgs of illegal ivory and arrest and prosecution of 22 suspects in connection with illegal ivory trade between 2011 and November 2012. Below are some of the measures put in place by the government of Uganda to control illegal trade in ivory.

Measures put in place to control illegal ivory trade in Uganda*1. Interagency awareness workshops about illegal ivory trade and other wildlife crimes.*

In collaboration with the Lusaka Agreement Task Force (LATF), Uganda Wildlife Authority, the key wildlife agency in Uganda has organized and executed three interagency awareness raising workshops in the northern, western and eastern regions of Uganda in 2010, 2011 and 2012 respectively to sensitize the main law enforcement officers on the importance of wildlife conservation, illegal wildlife trade and other wildlife crimes.

¹ *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.*

The workshops attracted a wide range of law enforcement stakeholders from Judiciary (Magistrates, Prosecutors), Police, the national Army, Intelligence organs, customs officials and wildlife officials involved in law enforcement activities. The key outcome of the three awareness raising workshop is the commitment the law enforcement agencies pledged in the fight against illegal wildlife trade. This has already started paying off as evidenced from the four ivory seizures at Entebbe Airport in 2012 mainly by Customs officials as a result of the sensitization about the illegal ivory and other wildlife specimen trade.

2. Acquisition of ivory detection tool kits

The Lusaka Agreement Task Force (LATF) provided two ivory detectors to Uganda Wildlife Authority. One of the detectors that is deployed permanently at Uganda's main International Airport has been instrumental in the ivory seizures that have been made at Entebbe Airport. The detectors have also been very handy and helpful for on spot checks along major high ways following intelligence tip offs of vehicles carrying ivory. The major challenge however is that there are very few ivory detectors to be deployed in all major ivory routes across the country. If we had enough of these detectors, they would be deployed at all major roads to the city to check all vehicles entering Kampala from upcountry as ivory is brought to Kampala mainly by road.

3. Establishment of an intelligence unit for the Uganda Wildlife Authority.

Uganda Wildlife Authority the main agency responsible for wildlife management in the country has in the past relied on intelligence from other security agencies in the country. This was a major hindrance to detecting illegal wildlife trade and other wild crimes especially if involving the security agencies themselves. However, Uganda Wildlife Authority has now recruited an 80 man intelligence Unit since October 2012 and the recruits are currently undergoing a four month training on intelligence and other undercover operations at the UWA main training camp in Murchison Falls National Park. The Unit after training will be deployed in all regions of the country to gather intelligence on all forms of illegal wildlife trade and other wildlife crimes. The Unit that will be independent of the general park structures will be commanded by a Coordinator based at the Headquarters who reports directly to the Executive Director and will be facilitated to establish a network of informers across the country to detect crime and pass on information that would feed the main stream law enforcement to combat wildlife crime. This will greatly reduce the illegal ivory trade and other forms of wildlife crime that were previously happening unnoticed.

4. Ongoing process for the revision of the Uganda Wildlife Act

The Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities is spearheading the process to revise the main wildlife law in Uganda (The Uganda Wildlife Act (Cap 200 of 2000) with a view to domesticating and mainstreaming CITES into the national legislation and also addressing several gaps identified during the last decade of implementing the same law particularly the penalties to wildlife crime offenders that were originally not deterrent enough. The technical review of the Act has been completed and the draft is to be presented to the national stakeholders for their input in January/February 2013 after which it will be presented to the Cabinet to generate a bill to Parliament by September 2013. The revised Act provides for bigger and stringent penalties for wildlife offenders, which was not very deterrent and a major setback in the current law.

5. Coordination and collaboration with other security and law enforcement agencies

Uganda Wildlife Authority has intensified and strengthened her collaboration with other security and law enforcement agencies in monitoring the illegal wildlife trade. Both the national Army (Uganda Peoples' Defense Forces) and the national Police have appointed liaison officers to work with the wildlife agency in matters of security and law enforcement in the wildlife and Tourism sector. The Uganda Peoples' defense Forces has seconded a force of 600 soldiers to work alongside the wildlife rangers in national parks to combat wildlife crime while a national Tourism Police of 100 police officers has been assigned to work with the wildlife agency in not only providing security and safety to tourists but also assisting the wildlife body in the investigation and quick prosecution of suspects involved in wildlife crime. This coordination will greatly improve the efficiency in handling wildlife crimes and in turn result in reduced wildlife crime in the country.

UWA in coordination with Interpol, Uganda Revenue Authority and LATF successfully investigated a case in which a consignment containing about 1.5 tons of ivory shipped from Uganda was seized at Colombo in Sri Lanka in May 2012. As a result of good coordination, two suspects were in October 2012 arrested and prosecuted in Uganda. The case is still in court but there is overwhelming evidence to secure conviction.

6. Intensification of covert and clandestine operations based on intelligence information

Uganda Wildlife Authority continues to undertake special operations based on intelligence to prevent and avert wildlife crime and where it has happened to arrest and prosecute the offenders. As a result of such operations in 2012 alone, 6 pieces of raw ivory weighing 26Kg was in August 2012 seized while on transit to Kampala after tip off and the culprits arrested and successfully prosecuted in courts of law. In September 2012, three separate seizures were made involving 30Kg of worked ivory at Entebbe Airport and a Chinese national arrested, 2 pieces of worked ivory and 7 bracelets of worked ivory confiscated in a major operation in Entebbe and 279 pieces of worked ivory impounded in another operation in Entebbe. These operations will continue once intelligence information is received and with the Intelligence Unit officers deployed, we hope to get more information on ivory and other wildlife products being transported, packed or stored in various areas across the country.

7. Transboundary collaboration and coordination with sister wildlife agencies to combat wildlife crime

Uganda Wildlife Authority has a transboundary collaboration network with other wildlife agencies in the region particularly the Kenya Wildlife Service, The Rwanda Development Board and the Congolese Institute for the Conservation of Nature (ICCN). This collaboration enables sharing of intelligence information and coordination in cross border transboundary patrols and operations aimed at controlling wildlife crime in the region. Such efforts have led to the arrest of many wildlife offenders especially along the Uganda – Democratic Republic of Congo Border. More efforts will be made to strengthen this collaboration to prevent illegal ivory trade across borders as well as poaching and other wildlife crimes.

Uganda is also exploring the use of sniffer dogs at major exit points after getting success stories from Kenya which has successfully deployed sniffer dogs at the International Airport with positive results.

With the above measures, it is hoped that illegal trade in ivory and other wildlife products in Uganda will be contained and managed in fulfillment of CITES Resolution Conf. 10.10 (Rev. CoP15) and Decision 14.78 (Rev. CoP15).