International engagement is key to stopping poaching crisis in Africa

Panel discussion ‘Wildlife Crime in Africa – from Crisis to Solution’ explores ways to counter current poaching surge

Berlin, 14 June 2016. Today, leaders from international conservation organizations spoke at an event co-hosted by the Governments of the United States and Germany, convened to honor American-German cooperation to combat wildlife crime. The groups jointly called for governments to step up and to coordinate their support to sub-Saharan countries in Africa in the fight against poaching and wildlife trafficking. The experts from the World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF), Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS) and the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) shared their organizations’ experiences and proposed solutions to the ongoing poaching and trafficking crisis.

Wildlife crime, poaching and trafficking of products such as ivory, rhino horn and others is a severe threat to iconic African species like elephant and rhino and the ecosystems they inhabit. It also undermines the livelihoods and well-being of local communities, national security and sustainable development.

The negative impacts of wildlife crime go far beyond biodiversity. The responsible criminal networks are also involved in other forms of illegal trafficking, money-laundering and financing of civil conflicts.

The U.S. Ambassador to Germany John B. Emerson thanked the German government and participating NGOs for their commitment to the cause of combatting wildlife trafficking: “Building on the network of American and German government agencies and civil society actors including our partners in this event today, Germany and the United States are the two leading nations in the fight against wildlife trafficking.”

“We welcome the leadership of the German and the US government to address wildlife crime,” said Eberhard Brandes, CEO of WWF Germany. “Coordinated financial and political support from governments is essential for counteracting wildlife crime. It’s a global problem that requires a global approach along the entire chain from poaching, to trafficking, to trading, and last but not least to reducing demand for illegal wildlife products.”

“On the ground, even in protected areas, the situation is often critical,” said Christof Schenck, CEO of FZS. “Because of the growing markets for illegal wildlife products in Asia, poaching has reached a new dimension with cornerstone species like elephants decimated in core parts of their remaining habitat.” FZS focuses on supporting the national authorities, for instance with much needed equipment for rangers like digital radio systems and training, but also basic items like uniforms and vehicles.

“Wildlife crime is a global crisis, with significant engagement of organized criminal networks. Our on-the-ground experience in Africa and Asia on wildlife crime at all levels shows that we must work together to solve this problem, working closely with range State governments, enforcement and Customs officials, international organizations, and local communities,” said Susan Lieberman, WCS Vice President, International Policy. “It is key to focus on both on-the-ground protection of wildlife and wild places, as well as interrupting criminal networks and stopping traffickers at all levels. German and US leadership and support are key to this effort.”
The speakers thanked Germany and the US for their financial and technical support to African governments in their efforts to end wildlife crime, and for their leadership in multiple intergovernmental fora on the issue, including the adoption of the United Nations General Assembly Resolution on Illicit Wildlife Trafficking in September 2015. They pointed to the upcoming meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) in September/October 2016 in South Africa as a venue to stimulate further action and take strong decisions. The event was made possible through support from the Robert Bosch Foundation.

Notes for editors

Event agenda and speakers:

| Date | Tuesday, June 14th 2016 from 17.30 to 20.30  
Where: GIZ Representation, Reichpietschufer 20, 10785 Berlin  
What: Panel Discussion Wildlife Crime in Africa – from Crisis to Solution |
| Welcome by | John B. Emerson, U.S. Ambassador to Germany  
Jochen Flasbarth, State Secretary, German Federal Ministry for the Environment  
Ingrid-Gabriela Hoven, Director General of Global Issues – sector policies and programmes, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development |
| Panelists | Dr. Christof Schenck, CEO of Frankfurt Zoological Society  
Dr. Susan Lieberman, WCS Vice President, International Policy  
Eberhard Brandes, CEO WWF Germany  
H.E. Jean-Marie Maguena, Gabonese Ambassador to Germany |
| Closing remarks | Kimberly Marteau Emerson, Member of the International Board of Directors of Human Rights Watch and former President of the Los Angeles Zoo Commission |

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The current poaching and trafficking crisis is severely endangering Africa’s wildlife, including elephant and rhino populations and the ecosystems they inhabit. Annually, around 30,000 elephants have been poached in recent years. In 2015, the number of African rhinos killed has increased for the sixth year in a row to more than 1300 animals.
Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS) is an internationally operating conservation organization based in Frankfurt, Germany. Our goal is to protect the natural diversity of species in important ecosystems across the globe – in partnership with and for people. FZS has a long-standing commitment to preserving wilderness areas in Africa and has been active on the continent since the 1950s. Current projects support the protection of outstanding wild places in Tanzania, Ethiopia, Zambia, Zimbabwe and the Democratic Republic Congo. For further information, please visit www.fzs.org

Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) saves wildlife and wild places worldwide through science, conservation action, education, and inspiring people to value nature. To achieve our mission, WCS, based at the Bronx Zoo, harnesses the power of its Global Conservation Program in nearly 60 nations and in all the world’s oceans and its five wildlife parks in New York City, visited by 4 million people annually. WCS combines its expertise in the field, zoos, and aquarium to achieve its conservation mission. Visit: newsroom.wcs.org Follow: @WCSNewsroom.

WWF is one of the world’s largest and most respected independent conservation organizations, with over 5 million supporters and a global network active in over 100 countries. WWF’s mission is to stop the degradation of the earth’s natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, by conserving the world’s biological diversity, ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable, and promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption.