

## **KENYA'S CONSERVATION EFFORTS PAY OFF AT CITES MEETING**

Kenya's conservation efforts in the last couple of years have paid off with a United Nations organization's meeting approving its exit from a group of countries with global concern on wildlife trafficking.

At the just-ended 70th meeting of the United Nations Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) Standing Committee in Sochi, Russian Federation, Parties to the Standing Committee approved Kenya to be removed from the requirements to implement and report progress in implementation of a National Ivory Action Plan (NIAP) as well as the National Ivory Action Plan Process.

Kenya was one of the Parties that had successfully participated in the NIAP process since May 2013 and substantially achieved its requirements. The meeting also commended the other Parties namely China, Philippines, Thailand and Uganda for substantially achieving their NIAPs and also those that have made good progress such as Tanzania.

Kenya was among eight (8) Parties, infamously referred to as Gang of Eight, identified at the 16<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES as countries most implicated in elephant poaching and illegal ivory trafficking and trade and requested to develop, implement and report on progress in implementation of respective National Ivory Action Plans.

The other seven countries included, Uganda and Tanzania (as source and transit countries for illegal ivory), Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam (as transit countries for illegal ivory) and China (including Hong Kong SAR) and Thailand as (destination/consumer countries for illegal ivory).

Hong Kong SAR, Malaysia and Vietnam are yet to satisfy CITES that implementation of their NIAP has been substantially achieved and therefore they remain subject to the NIAP process.

Since entry into the NIAP process in 2013, Kenya has consistently implemented and reported on progress in implementation of her NIAP. At the Standing Committee's meeting held in January 2016, the Secretariat recommended that Kenya be commended for having substantially achieved implementation of actions identified in its NIAP.

Kenya was encouraged to report on any further measures taken to implement the NIAP and if appropriate any other initiatives or policy developments to combat elephant poaching and illegal trade to the Secretariat by June 30, 2016 so that the Secretariat could make the reports available to the Standing Committee by its 69<sup>th</sup> meeting.

At the Standing Committee's 69<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Committee commended countries with substantively achieved NIAPs, (Kenya is in this category), for the positive progress they had made and encouraged them to submit report to the Secretariat before the deadline for submission of documents to the 70<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Standing Committee on any further measures taken and activities implemented to combat illegal ivory trade so that the Secretariat can make reports available to the Committee to consider whether they should exit the NIAP process.

The 70<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee concluded that, Kenya has complied with the requirements of the NIAP process and proved that the efforts put towards implementation of her NIAP process have contributed to controlling elephant poaching and illegal trafficking directly in the country and indirectly in the other implicated countries.

The Principal Secretary Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife, Dr. Margaret Mwakima, who led the Kenyan delegation to the meeting in Russia commended the CITES Secretariat for its recommendations and the Standing Committee for its consideration of the recommendation to exit Kenya from the NIAP process. She stated from Kenya's experience in implementing its NIAP, the country considers that the NIAP process is such a practical and important tool in improving efforts by Parties to tackle illegal ivory trade and that it believes when properly managed, the NIAP process can significantly assist in managing illegal ivory trade and poaching.

Through the NIAP process, Kenya has put in place systems that are sustainable and the commitment the Government has made and shown towards ensuring elephant poaching and illegal trade in ivory within its jurisdiction is addressed, informed the recommendation made by the Secretariat in its report and its argument that the country should be exited from the NIAP process.

The Kenya delegation called on Parties and partners to support Kenya to win the war against elephant poaching and illegal trafficking of elephant ivory. The delegation reaffirmed the Government and the people of Kenya's commitment to ensuring that the measures already put in place to combat elephant poaching and illegal trade in elephant ivory are sustained even when the country is outside the NIAP process.

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