



COUNTRY STATEMENT BY PROF. JUDI WAKHUNGU, CABINET SECRETARY MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES, DURING THE HANOI CONFERENCE ON ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRADE

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Wildlife occupies a special place in Kenya's collective national interest as a natural and cultural heritage with an increasing economic and social importance. Kenya and other African Countries have periodically experienced surges in wildlife crimes of poaching and illegal trafficking of wildlife. The latest hike in poaching in Kenya was experienced between 2011 and 2014 and was preceded by the poaching crisis in the mid and late 1980's. Despite increasing success in dealing with wildlife crimes, the threat to wildlife and biodiversity conservation has been sustained. This therefore calls for a concerted effort from the global community to remove the threat that may drive some of the world's most iconic species to extinction.

Kenya has continued to play an active role in combating illegal wildlife trade locally and internationally since the 1980s'. In 1989, Kenya was a key proponent for the global ban in ivory trade which led to the listing of the African Elephants under Appendix I of the Convention in Traded of Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora (CITES).The listing led to the collapse of ivory prices globally and contributed to the end of the poaching crisis in the 80's.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Kenya participated in the London Conference on Illegal Wildlife Trade in 2014 and The Kasane Conference in 2015 and signed both declarations. Kenya has also been a leader in the implementation of the London Declaration Commitments and the Kasane Statement Commitments.

In fulfillment of the London and Kasane Commitments, Kenya has taken a lead role in the fight to eradicating the market for illegal wildlife trade. In a bold gesture to demonstrate its commitment to fight IWT, Kenya destroyed its ivory and rhino horn stockpiles in April, 2016.



As a country, Kenya is fully convinced that eradication of markets is crucial in the fight against IWT.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The fight against poaching and IWT is also being addressed by amending legislation as necessary to criminalize poaching and wildlife trafficking and related crimes. The Wildlife Conservation and Management Act, promulgated in 2014 repealed and updated the previous legislation, Wildlife Conservation Act Cap 376 Laws of Kenya, and ushered in a more transformative legal regime. On the positive side, new crimes, offences and penalties not available under the old law were introduced keeping up with emerging and changing dynamics of wildlife crime.

The new law has also provided for public participation by providing mechanisms for the active involvement by the Kenyan public in decision making processes through the use of national media, relevant consultative mechanisms and public hearings. Prosecution of wildlife crimes has been boosted by use of auxiliary legislation such as Anti-Money Laundering Act (2010), the Prevention of Organized Crimes Act (2011), the Anti –Corruption and Economic Crimes Act (2003) and the Prevention of Terrorism Act (2012). Under these laws, the minimum penalties include 15 years jail and seizure of property and bank accounts. This has served as an additional deterrence which has contributed to decline in poaching and IWT in Kenya.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Government of Kenya has also invested heavily in ensuring that there is effective law enforcement capability. The capability of the wildlife protection unit is being enhanced through purchase of equipment, vehicles and related security accessories. The Government has also established inter-agency teams to implement and coordinate national and local actions and strategies. Kenya has strengthened cross-border and regional cooperation through coordination and participating in regional law enforcement networks such as the Lusaka Agreement Task Force (LATF), for which, Kenya is the host Nation. The new Wildlife Law has attracted huge interest in the Office of the Director of Prosecutions (ODPP) and the judiciary who have for the first time been actively engaged in addressing the IWT challenges and ensuring compliance with the new law. For example the creation of new Standard Operating Procedures for wildlife crimes, and the creation of a specialized wildlife crime prosecution team under the ODPP to handle the emerging transnational crimes and crimes against endangered species is a clear demonstration of the support the other arms of government are extending in the fight against wildlife crime.



Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Government of Kenya appreciates that the fight against poaching and IWT cannot be won without the support of the local people who co-exist with wildlife. Kenya adopted the community conservation approach in the 1990's. This approach has contributed to grass root people involvement in conservation and has been a huge success. The Government is also investing in community-oriented initiatives which are aimed at increasing the capacity of the local communities to pursue sustainable livelihood opportunities such as nature based tourism. In addition to this, the new wildlife legislation has provisions aimed at promoting the retention of benefits from wildlife resources by local people by granting user rights.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Combination of legal, enforcement and community interventions has contributed to a significant reduction in poaching and illegal wildlife trade in Kenya. These efforts have led to an 81% reduction in rhino poaching and 75% reduction in elephant poaching respectively in 2015 as compared to the peak in poaching in 2012 and 2013. In fact, elephant poaching was the lowest since 2007, while rhino poaching was also at its lowest since 2008. The Convening of the Hanoi Conference on Illegal Wildlife Trade is timely coming on the heels of the just concluded CITES COP 17. The Conference provides a good opportunity reflect and to review country commitments towards implementing the London Declaration and Kasane Statement. We are here to re-affirm our commitment for urgent need and action by the global community for comprehensive implementation of the existing commitments across the entire illegal wildlife trade chain.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I conclude, I wish to take this opportunity to sincerely thank the Government of the Republic of Vietnam for hosting this conference. I call upon the global community to take this opportunity to re-dedicate its commitment to work in concert and address the issue of illegal wildlife trade effectively.