



International Conference of Ministers of Defense, Security and Protected Areas on the fight against poaching and other cross-border criminal activities

23 - 25 January 2018, N'Djamena, Chad

Under the Distinguished Patronage of **His Excellency Mr. Idriss Deby Itno**, President of the Republic of Chad,

The Facilitation of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP) provided by the Kingdom of Belgium, the Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC) and the government of the Republic of Chad will be hosting a conference entitled:

"Threats posed by armed groups moving between the Sahel, Sudan and north of Equatorial Africa with its natural protected areas and local communities: Analysis and Action Plans"

Invitees to the conference include:

- Ministers of defense and territorial security;
- Ministers of authorities in charge of Protected Areas;
- The Ministers of livestock and animal products of Chad and Niger;
- Regional organizations and technical and financial partners dealing with wildlife conservation and anti-poaching issues: South Africa, Germany (GIZ, KFW), France, Norway, the UK, the AU, the EU, the US (USAID, USFWS), ECCAS, COMIFAC, ECOWAS, WAEMU, UN Africa, IGAD, CILSS, OCFSA, INTERPOL, UNODC, African Parks, AWF, TRAFFIC, WWF, the IUCN, the World Bank, UNDP, FAO, CBLT, CEBEVIRHA

Participating countries include **Cameroon, CAR, Chad, DRC, Niger, South Sudan, Sudan.**

Terms of Reference (TOR) of the Conference:

1. Background and rationale

Until a few decades ago, poaching was confined to subsistence hunting, or at most, small-scale commercial hunting as a source of animal protein for the local market. Nowadays, poaching of large mammals is much more driven by global demand for ivory and other trophies from protected species.

A CITES study says poaching of elephants for their ivory is increasingly linked to organized crime syndicates, and in some cases, armed rebellions. This is why wildlife protection now goes beyond biodiversity conservation. It has become a major national and international security challenge.

According to UNOCD Executive Director, Mr Fedodov, "The illicit trade in wildlife species is a form of organized crime comparable to trafficking in drugs, arms and humans, which have negative impacts on security and development". Trafficking in wildlife products is now the fourth largest internationally recognized form of criminal activity after drugs, counterfeit goods and human trafficking.

There are increasingly sophisticated cross-border poaching networks operating across countries in the Congo Basin, notably in Cameroon, Chad, CAR, and the DRC, often involving armed groups of transhumant pastoralists. With park rangers in protected areas no longer equal to the challenge on their own, there is a crucial need for them to be supported by the military and police forces of the different countries concerned.

These forms of organized criminal predatory activity that have taken hold in the sub-region call for concerted responses at the highest political level and increased cooperation between the defense and security forces of the countries concerned and protected area agencies both at the national and transboundary levels.

The cases of Garamba, Chinko, Bouba Ndjida and Binder-Léré have highlighted the growing scale of sophisticated poaching operations in Cameroon, CAR and northern DRC, with conservation areas at risk of becoming havens for armed groups that enjoy high degrees of financial and operational autonomy.

Indeed, the United Nations Security Council has acknowledged that wildlife trafficking in Central Africa fuels conflict and poses a threat to regional and national security, since it funds militias and terrorist groups. ²

This view has been echoed by sub-regional organizations such as the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Central African Forest Commission and the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Issues in Central Africa (UNSAC).

Hence, various initiatives listed below have been launched to tackle environmental crime in general and combat wildlife crime, notably those involving large mammals including elephants.

They include:

- The establishment of the Sub-Working Group on Protected Areas and Wildlife (SGTAPFS) (June 2012);
- The development of the COMIFAC countries' Sub-regional Action Plan to strengthen national wildlife law enforcement (PAPELCAF) led by COMIFAC (February 2012);
- The Yaoundé Declaration of Ministers of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) on the fight against poaching in Central Africa, and the Regional Emergency Action Plan against poaching (PAULAB) in Savannah and forest areas (March 2013)
- The Extreme Emergency Anti-Poaching Action Plan (PEXULAB);
- The signing of the Three-way Cooperation Agreement between Cameroon, CAR and Chad on the fight against cross-border poaching (November 2013)
- The development of the African Union Strategy on Combating Illegal Exploitation and Illegal Trade in wild flora and fauna products (May 2015);
- The Declaration of ECCAS Ministers on natural resource security, man/wildlife conflict and other land-use related conflicts in Central Africa (July 2017)
- The establishment of an information-sharing platform on wildlife crime (Africa TWIX);
- The holding of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, Johannesburg Action Plan (2016-2018)
- The signing of the March 2018 cross-border protocol between Cameroon, the CAR and Chad.
- The holding of the Joint High-Level Meeting of Ministers of Security and Livestock / Agriculture on pastoralism and transhumance in Abuja, Nigeria on 26 April 2018.

Also, the Conference will build on the whole range of relevant international efforts, including the London 2018 Illegal Wildlife Trade Conference (Oct. 2018) coming on the heels of the Paris Wildlife Summit held in December 2013, the "2014 London Wildlife Conference", and also meetings held in Kasane in 2013 and 2015, Washington in August 2015, Hanoi in 2016.

In spite of this political will and despite efforts made, poaching and the illegal trade in wildlife products (e.g. Ivory, etc.) have reached alarming proportions and are harming vulnerable species, especially the elephants and great apes of Central Africa. The phenomenon of large-scale poaching poses a real threat to peace and security in Central Africa.

Given the political, diplomatic, legal, security, ecological, socio-economic and cultural issues at stake, the Conference will gather Ministers of Defense, Protected Areas, and Livestock.

2. Aims of the High-level Meeting

In the face of increased activity of armed groups moving between the Sahel, Sudan and the north of Equatorial Africa, and engaging in poaching and other criminal activities, there is an urgent need to design and implement cross-border action programs and projects especially with a view to protecting transhumant pastoralists.

The overall objective of the high-level Ndjamen meeting is to conduct an in-depth analysis of the nature and scale of the threat and adopt a programmatic and operational road map, both at the regional and national levels.

Specific aims will include:

1. Identifying threats posed to protected areas and local communities by armed groups moving in the sub-region;
2. Developing cross-border action programs to address these threats;
3. Identifying potential funding sources for these programs.
4. Formulating a Declaration to signal the resolve expressed by the Ministers of the countries concerned to deal with the threat posed by armed groups to protected areas and local communities.

3. Conduct of the meeting

Held under the High Patronage of His Excellency Mr Idriss Deby Itno, President of the Republic of Chad, the Ndjamena Conference will run for 3 days, following a two-phase format:

- **Days 1 and 2 (23 and 24 January 2019):** meeting of experts and technical and financial partners;
- **Day 3-** (25 January 2019) - high-level political segment including Ministers (behind closed doors).

The conference will be organized by the CBFP Facilitation, which is managed by the Kingdom of Belgium in collaboration with:

- The Republic of Chad
- The Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC)

The Conference will be funded by the German Cooperation and other donors to be identified later.