

Web Release

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The African Union Commission and TRAFFIC sign a Memorandum of Understanding to combat illegal wildlife trade and support development

Protecting Africa's wildlife from unsustainable and illegal harvest and trade and the contribution legal trade and use can provide towards livelihoods and development of Africa's people is at the heart of a newly signed Memorandum of Understanding between TRAFFIC and the African Union Commission (AUC).

Under this agreement, the parties will collaborate to support the African Union Member States' policies for environment, wildlife management and trade, and conservation and recognise that wild flora and fauna loss affect African people's livelihoods, especially during post-pandemic recovery. It acts as a framework to combat the illegal exploitation and trade in Africa's rich wildlife with a joint goal of protecting flora, and fauna on land, wetlands, and marine ecosystems.

The Memorandum of Understanding is a significant step towards implementing the African Union's Wildlife Strategy and was signed by Her Excellency Ambassador Josefa Sacko, AUC Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment (ARBE) and Steven Broad, TRAFFIC Executive Director.

On the occasion of signing, the MoU, H.E. Amb. Josefa Sacko, AUC Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment (ARBE) states: "For the African Union, this is an important MoU for the safeguarding of Africa's wild biodiversity. We are looking forward to deepening our already great collaboration with TRAFFIC and are welcoming TRAFFIC's technical support and policy which stems from its evidence-based experience, on how to keep the use and trade of wild harvested flora and fauna at legal and sustainable and levels, and on how to best combat any illegal trade and overexploitation threatening our biodiversity."

"We are committed to improving the sustainability of Africa's wildlife, environment and legal trade to support national economies and local development across the continent alongside the African Union Commission. It is a promising and welcome step towards sustainable wildlife trade in Africa" said Richard Scobey, Executive Director for TRAFFIC.

With 45 years of experience, a global network of expertise and ongoing projects in the field, TRAFFIC will provide the AUC and its Member States with the latest evidence-based technical guidance to implement sustainable natural resource strategies that support national economies and local community development. Existing TRAFFIC projects like Reducing Illegal Timber Exports already work with communities living adjacent to forests with the legal knowledge and tools to reap the rewards of legal, sustainable forest management.

Additionally, TRAFFIC's growing portfolio of work with private sector companies along the supply chain including e-commerce, transportation and financial sector companies directly



support common interests and sustainable development agendas. TRAFFIC will also collaborate with and support the African Union Commission in the effective implementation of the Green Recovery Action Plan, providing support especially to the 'Biodiversity and Nature-based Solutions' component.

On the international front, TRAFFIC will also assist the AU and its Member States to prepare for and build relationships at multilateral summits such as The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). These crucial meetings can be informed by holistic and pioneering methods like the Trade in Wildlife eXchange (TWIX) platforms in Central, Southern and Eastern Africa to support the elimination of the illegal trade of Africa's fauna and flora. At the same time, other international TRAFFIC behaviour change projects work across the globe to reduce demand for illegally and unsustainably harvested wild fauna and flora at the end of the supply chain, whilst supporting choices for wildlife stemming from sustainable and legal sources.

H.E. Amb. Josefa Sacko continues to express: "The AU is further looking forward to co-operating with TRAFFIC in preparations for key multilateral and bilateral fora, such as for example for CBD and CITES, as well as for the environmental components of the Commission's frameworks and partnerships. We hope that African negotiators participating at such fora can be better capacitated." We also welcome TRAFFIC's commitment to collaborate with and support the Commission in the effective implementation of the Green Recovery Action Plan, providing support especially to the 'Biodiversity and Nature-based Solutions' component to which we can bring considerable technical expertise and international experience."

Existing intergovernmental relationships between the AU and the Member States allow coordination with the relevant ministry departments and other government sectors. In a post-pandemic world, not only will this be vital for conservation and development but will enable sound and evidence-based responses to zoonoses-induced threats stemming from wildlife trade.

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