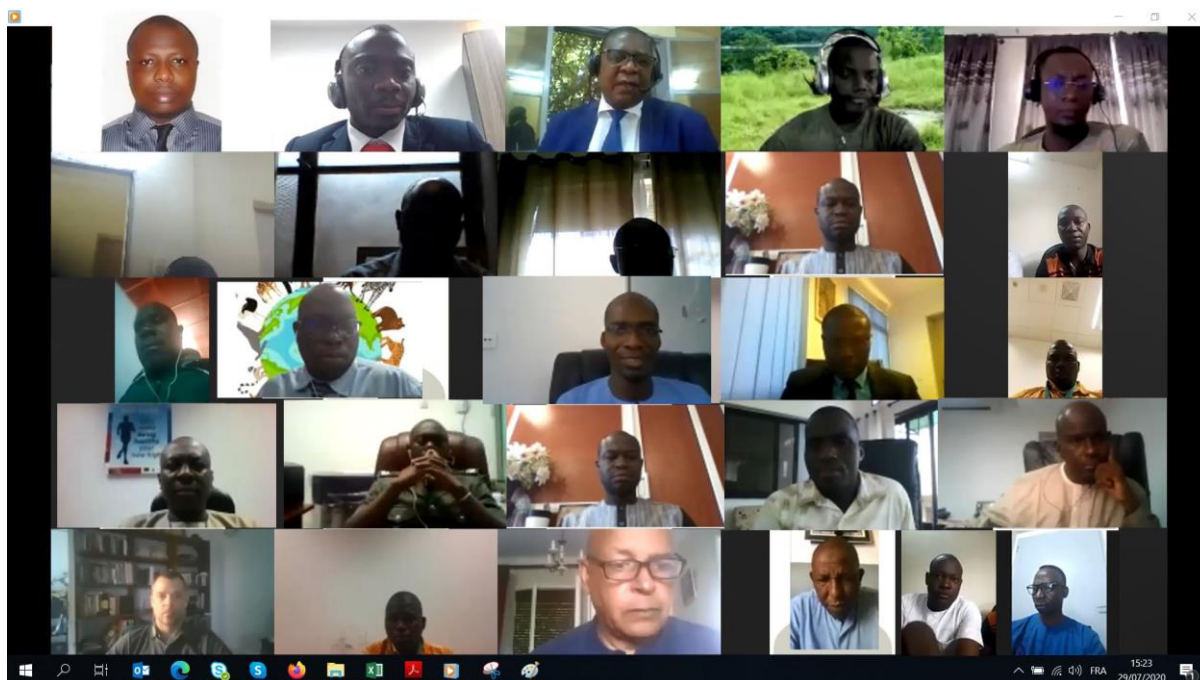




# REPORT

## TECHNICAL WORKSHOP OF STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED IN COMBATING ENVIRONMENTAL CRIME IN WEST AFRICA



**Date :** 28 July 2020

**Venue:** Teleconference/ Zoom

**Organized by:** The project « Regional Governance of protected areas in West Africa »

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## ACRONYMS

<b>AIRCOP:</b>	Airport Communication Project
<b>WA:</b>	West Africa
<b>PA:</b>	Protected Areas
<b>BIOPAMA:</b>	Biodiversity and Protected Area Management
<b>EC:</b>	Environmental Crime
<b>ECOWAS:</b>	Economic Community of West African States
<b>CITES:</b>	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
<b>EDF:</b>	European Development Fund
<b>CEC:</b>	Combating environmental Crime
<b>UNO:</b>	United Nations Organization
<b>ONODC:</b>	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
<b>PACO:</b>	Central and West Africa Programme
<b>PAPBio:</b>	Support programme for the preservation of biodiversity and fragile ecosystems, regional governance and climate change in West Africa
<b>RIP :</b>	Regional Indicative Programme
<b>UNEP :</b>	United Nations Environment Programme / ONU Programme pour l'Environnement
<b>IS:</b>	Information System
<b>ECIS:</b>	Environmental Crime Information System
<b>EU:</b>	European Union
<b>WAEMU:</b>	West African Economic and Monetary Union
<b>IUCN:</b>	International Union for Conservation of Nature

## I. INTRODUCTION

Environmental damage is a serious threat to our existence, our planet and future generations. They are caused by several factors, including environmental crime.

Environmental crime could include, in extenso, poaching, illegal wildlife trafficking, illegal water exploitation, illegal exploitation of forest resources or any other natural resources, and any act prohibited by national and/or international legislation that harms the environment. As a result, it is often inextricably linked to other offences such as corruption, money laundering and even murder.

Unlike other products of illicit trade such as drugs, natural resources are not inexhaustible and cannot be replenished by chemical processes. Sampling from the wild remains the predominant means of access. It is therefore urgent to put in place the necessary mechanisms and to consider appropriate synergies of action in order to effectively fight this scourge, which now thrives in West Africa, both as a transit zone and increasingly as a source of extraction.

Within the framework of the implementation of the Regional Indicative Programme (RIP) of the European Union in West Africa 2014-2020 (11th European Development Fund), it was adopted by the EU, ECOWAS and WAEMU, the PAPBio : PAPBio (ROC/FED/039-269) was adopted by the EU, ECOWAS and WAEMU, the "Support Programme for the Preservation of Biodiversity and Fragile Ecosystems, Regional Governance and Climate Change in West Africa" - PAPBio (ROC/FED/039-269) at the end of a consultation conducted in 14 countries, and financed by a contribution from the RIP 11th EDF-WA.

Component 2 of the PAPBio - Regional Governance of Protected Areas and Security - is implemented by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), through its Regional Programme for Central and West Africa (PACO). It aims at instilling a regional dynamic for the effective management of protected areas and climate risks, the sharing and capitalization of experiences and knowledge at all levels and the fight against environmental crime.

Under Result 6 of this component, several activities are planned, such as the establishment of an operational information system on environmental crime (SICE), the strengthening of the technical and strategic capacities of the actors involved, the harmonization of legal texts and the stimulation of cooperation between States, and the strengthening of regional capacities for the protection of threatened and endangered species.

It is in this perspective of development of the information system on environmental crime that the Regional Governance project organized a virtual technical workshop (webinar) on 28 July 2020 that brought together the actors in the fight against environmental crime in West Africa.

The purpose of this meeting was to inform participants on the activities planned within the framework of the Regional Governance project on regional cooperation in the fight against environmental crime and to discuss the modalities of involvement of the diversity of actors concerned by the theme.

## II. OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES OF THE WORKSHOP

### 2.1. Objectives of the workshop

The main objective of this workshop was to exchange with the stakeholders involved in combating environmental crime (CEC) in West Africa and to engage them in the process of implementing the activities of Result 6 of the Regional Governance project in particular.

Specifically, it was about :

- Linking the stakeholders involved in combating environmental crime in West Africa;
- presenting the cooperation activities in the fight against environmental crime planned within the framework of the Regional Governance project and in particular the regional information system (database and procurement master plan) under development;
- exchanging and carrying out the technical validation of the proposal for a protocol for collaboration and data sharing on environmental crime (EC);
- finalising the typology of information and identifying data sharing channels;
- proposing a roadmap for data analysis and exploitation;
- discussing and establishing the major axes of the data supply master plan;
- presenting the Lusaka Agreement on concerted enforcement operations against illegal trade in wild fauna and flora and verify the level of commitment of the countries in the accession process; subsequently present the possibility of facilitating the accession process provided for under the Regional Governance project;
- discussing the next steps leading to the signing of the EC Protocol for Collaboration and Data Sharing.

### 2.2. Expected outcomes

Several outcomes were expected from this workshop, including the following:

- the establishment of a network of stakeholders involved in combating environmental crime in West Africa;
- the briefing of the stakeholders involved in combating environmental crime (CEC) on the actions of the Regional Governance Project on cooperation in the field of CEC;
- the technical validation of the protocol for collaboration and data sharing on environmental crime and discussion on the future steps leading to its signing;
- the completion of the typology of information on environmental crime;
- a proposed roadmap for data analysis and exploitation;
- the establishment of the major axes of the data supply master plan;
- the sharing of information on the Lusaka Agreement and the possibilities for the project to support the accession of States.

### III. WORKSHOP CONTENT

#### 3.1. Opening of the workshop

At the beginning of the workshop, Mr. George AKWAH NEBA, Regional Programme Coordinator, on behalf of IUCN, welcomed the participants and expressed IUCN - PACO's thanks for their participation. He also thanked the EU for its support to the stakeholders in the region for the establishment of operational frameworks for the coordination of biodiversity conservation. He also thanked UEMOA and ECOWAS for their ongoing support in the efforts to develop regional policies and mechanisms for regional management of biodiversity in general and the fight against environmental crime in particular.

The opening speech of the webinar was delivered by the representative of the UEMOA Commission, Mr. Christophe DEGUENON, Director of Environment and Water Resources, who also chaired the workshop. The latter insisted on the need to implement support and coordinated actions in favor of the WFD stakeholders of the region. He wished that, through this meeting, the actors would co-construct a sustainable dynamic allowing to efficiently address the WFD issue, before declaring open the webinar of the stakeholders involved in combating environmental crime in West Africa.

The moderator of the workshop, Colonel Abba SONKO, then facilitated the continuation of the workshop with the presentation of the members of the Regional Governance project team. The team comprises a Coordinator (Dr. Arsène A. SANON), a Wildlife Crime Expert (Dr. Ogoudje I. AMAHOWE), an Information System Expert (Mr. Souleymane TIEMTORE), a Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Officer (Mr. Frédéric DAYAMBA), a Communication and Advocacy Officer (Mr. Bara TOP), an Accountant (Mr. Luc KI) and an Administrative Assistant (Mr. Armel K. BADOLO).

Mr. DAYAMBA briefly recalled the objectives and expected results of the workshop (information largely presented in the above paragraphs) and proceeded to the presentation of the workshop agenda which was subsequently adopted by the participants.

It is important to note that the workshop was attended by more than sixty stakeholders from government institutions in thirteen (13) West African countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Togo and Senegal (Customs, Police, Forests, Protected Areas, National Parks, etc.)), specialized units (Country CITES Focal Points, Special Seaport Brigade, Special Airport CITES Brigade, Airport Anti-Trafficking Units, etc.), intergovernmental organizations (UEMOA, UNODC, INTERPOL, etc.), civil society organizations (EAGLE, Conservation Justice, Nature Tropicale, etc.).

The list of participants is annexed.

#### 3.2. Summary presentation of the PAPBio programme

Mr. Cheikh Tidiane KANE, Head of the Division of Conservation and Sustainable Development of Biodiversity at the UEMOA Commission gave a brief presentation of the PAPBio programme. He pointed out that the West African region abounds with important assets in terms of biodiversity, which unfortunately faces threats such as strong negative pressures on the environment and rampant environmental crime, which are detrimental to this biodiversity. But the region also has the advantage of having institutions such as the UEMOA and ECOWAS Commissions, as well as technical and financial partners, which develop and implement sectoral policies, broken down into strategies, related to the conservation of natural resources and biodiversity.

As a reminder, Mr KANE stressed that it is in the framework of cooperation between the EU and West Africa through the 11th EDF RIP that five (05) priority areas have been identified, including priority area three (03) which deals with Resilience, Food and Nutrition Security and Natural Resources. The related framework agreement led to the establishment of the Support Programme for the Preservation of Biodiversity and Fragile Ecosystems, Environmental Governance and the Fight against Climate Change in West Africa (PAPBio). The PAPBio programme is built on two (02) components, namely component 1 focusing on the sustainable management of protected areas and peripheral zones (component implemented through seven (07) projects

at the level of priority conservation landscapes) and component 2 on environmental governance (Regional Governance of Protected Areas in West Africa Project). It is therefore within the framework of the implementation of this component 2 that this meeting is taking place, in order to initiate activities focused on combating against environmental crime in West Africa.

### **3.3. Summary presentation of the Regional Governance Project**

Dr. Arsène SANON, the Coordinator of the PAPBio- Regional Governance of Protected Areas project briefly presented the project. Thus, the overall objective of the project is to promote an endogenous, sustainable and inclusive economic development, responding to the challenges of climate change. Specifically, the project aims to achieve integrated protection of biodiversity and fragile ecosystems and enhanced resilience to climate change through improved regional governance of transboundary protected areas and biodiversity. The project aims to achieve four (04) major results namely i) the provision of an operational and efficient management system for protected areas and their peripheral zones; ii) the exchange and capitalization of experiences, knowledge and skills at the territorial, national and regional levels; iii) the strengthening of cooperation in the fight against environmental crime and the improvement of the security of conservation areas and iv) the monitoring of the PAPBio programme.

The penultimate result relating to combating EC specifically aims, inter alia, at:

- developing and supplying a regional information system on environmental crime, accessible to the stakeholders involved in management and control;
- supporting the strategic and operational technical capacities of the chain of control and surveillance of conservation areas;
- harmonizing legal frameworks and stimulating cooperation between States in the fight against environmental crime;
- strengthening regional mechanisms, capacities and instruments for the protection of threatened and endangered species.

### **3.4. Environmental Crime Information System Project (SICE)**

The Wildlife Crime Expert from the Regional Governance Project presented the Regional Environmental Crime Information System project. He pointed out that to date there is no coordinated EC data management system at either national or regional level that can inform States on the extent and evolution of threats to biodiversity.

He then recalled the urgent need for the region to have a regional information system on the EC to facilitate access to the data and information necessary for West African States to take the best decisions to improve the effectiveness of the fight against environmental crime and the conservation of biodiversity. The Regional Information System on the EC is an important tool to help strengthen regional cooperation in the fight against the EC.

He further recalled that the Environmental Crime Information System is one of the strong recommendations of the AU Strategy on combating Illegal Exploitation and Illegal Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora in Africa, as well as the ECOWAS Strategy for combating Wildlife Crime in West Africa.

Beyond responding to needs expressed by the above-mentioned Strategies, it is of crucial importance to have a regional information system on the EC that will be fully integrated into the Regional Observatory for PAs and Biodiversity in West Africa (currently being operationalized by the BIOPAMA 2 project). This Regional Observatory, once operational and properly fed, should enable the regional PA coordination and management mechanism to better monitor the status of protected areas and biodiversity, and specifically threats to fauna and flora species. It will help facilitate decision-making processes related to the implementation of regional and national conservation policies and strategies.

The planned components and features of the regional environmental crime information system are:

- a dynamic and cartographic database to monitor the spatio-temporal trend of the various threats to biodiversity in the West African region;
- a system of connection to the Regional Observatory for Protected Areas, which can be used as a tool for informed decision-making;
- a master plan for data supply, exploitation and analysis.

In addition, a typology of data was presented as a reference example for data collection from data providers on the CEC. It is expected that the workshop participants will contribute to further consolidating and diversifying the types of data (poaching and illegal fishing, illegal wildlife trafficking, illegal logging, transhumance, pollution, etc.) that could be collected from providers.

Dr. AMAHOWE also referred to the existence, at the international level, of sources and/or information systems on environmental crime with which close links could be sought:

- EAGLE
- CITES
- TRAFFIC
- WILDEX
- The Customs Anti-Fraud Network (CEN) of the WCO (World Customs Organization r)
- ETIS
- Database I24/7 of INTERPOL

Finally, the proposed axes of the Data Supply Master Plan (DSMP) were presented and discussed:

- **Axis 1** Consolidation/Strengthening of the institutional, legal and organizational mechanism;
- **Axis 2:** Promotion of communication, dialogue and networking of environmental crime stakeholders;
- **Axis 3:** Mobilization, collection, monitoring and reporting of data related to environmental crime;
- **Axis 4:** Processing, use and analysis of data on environmental crime;
- **Axis 5:** Dissemination of information and intelligence on crime trends and pressure-t-on wildlife in West Africa;
- **Axis 6:** Establishment of a monitoring and evaluation mechanism for the information system on environmental crime.

### **3.5. Protocol for collaboration and data sharing on environmental crime**

Mr. TIEMTORE Souleymane, Information Systems Expert of the Regional Governance Project presented the draft of protocol for collaboration and data sharing on environmental crime. He recalled that the capacity of the EC information system to make credible information available to support informed decision-making depends on the relevance of the data entered into it, but also on the frequency with which the associated databases are populated.

It is therefore aware of the crucial role that actors working in the fight against the EC in West Africa must play in the mobilization and sharing of data to feed the information system on the ELC that a draft protocol for collaboration and data sharing has been initiated by IUCN. This document will enable the formalization of agreements between IUCN and the organizations generating data on the CEC in order to facilitate collaboration and secure data sharing. The draft protocol has been submitted to the participants' opinion before further consolidation and finalization by the project team according to the provisional agenda below:

- **Step 1:** Collection of amendments from participants and other stakeholders: 6 August 2020
- **Step 2:** Consolidation of the Protocol by IUCN: 27 August 2020
- **Step 3:** Beginning the signing process: 1 September 2020

### **3.6. Presentation of Lusaka agreement**

The Wildlife Crime Expert shared with the participants information on the Lusaka Agreement on Co-operative



Enforcement Operations Directed at Illegal Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora. As a reminder, the Agreement was adopted on 8 September 1994 and entered into force on 10 December 1996. The said Agreement, also registered with UNEP, is dedicated to all African States and has the major objective of making available, at the level of the continent, a legal instrument to facilitate transboundary cooperation in the implementation of operations to fight environmental crime.

At the present stage, at the West African level, only Liberia has acceded to this Agreement, despite its importance.

Possibilities for supporting West African States in their efforts to accede to the Lusaka Agreement, provided for within the framework of the Regional Governance of Protected Areas in West Africa project, were presented. The project team is already in contact with the Authorities of the said Agreement who are in favour of the participation of representatives of West African States in the 13th Governing Council of the Lusaka Agreement as Observers, with a view to preparing their accession.

### **3.7. Presentation of the Africa/UNODC AIRCOP project: support to the Airport Anti-Trafficking Units (CAAT)**

The AIRCOP Project (Airport Communication Project), implemented by UNODC in partnership with INTERPOL and the World Customs Organization (WCO), was represented by Mr. Thierry THIMON, Africa Coordinator of the Project. The latter stressed that the AIRCOP project aims at establishing real-time operational communication between international airports to fight transnational crime in countries of origin, transit and destination. The project aims to strengthen the capacity to detect and intercept drugs and other illicit products, as well as high-risk passengers. The network thus in place covers 36 countries and 41 airports, and operates mainly on inter-agency cooperation. Its modus operandi focuses on the targeting of high-risk passengers, cargo and mail (postal and express) and the exchange of operational information in real time. In West Africa, the project has supported the establishment and operationalization of 14 Airport Anti-Trafficking Units (CAATs) which are made up of mixed forces (customs, water and forestry, police) in order to strengthen these States in the fight against illicit trafficking, including wildlife trafficking.

In terms of the results obtained, the AIRCOP project teams seized approximately 1 tonne of ivory and 1.8 tonnes of pangolin scales, among others, during the month of February 2020.

#### **IV. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE WORKSHOP**

As a result of the communications and discussions, recommendations were made to improve the effectiveness of the implementation of future actions.

These recommendations target various stakeholders:

##### **To IUCN :**

- To set up a regional network for coordination, collection, processing and dissemination of data and information on combating environmental crime (CEC) in West Africa;
- To support States in the process of setting up national networks for combating environmental crime
- To strengthen the capacities of specialized CEC units at the State level, especially law enforcement officers (officers from national parks/protected areas, forestry, customs, magistrates, police, Transnational Crime Unit, Airport-Anti-Trafficking Unit, INTERPOL National Central Bureaus, etc.) on topics such as the evaluation (especially economic) of damage caused by environmental crime; filling in data collection forms on environmental crime for the information system, etc. ;
- To ensure the security and confidentiality of data and information on the CEC;
- To invite the Ministries in charge of protected areas and the Central Directorates of CEC specialized units to adhere to the process and facilitate the signing of the related collaboration protocol.

##### **To the WAEMU Commission and IUCN:**

- To facilitate the accession of West African States to the Lusaka Agreement on concerted enforcement operations against illegal trade in wild fauna and flora;
- To contribute to the co-construction of a regional cooperation dynamic in the field of CEC;

##### **To the States and the Units involved in combating environmental crime:**

- To set up a functional national coordination and communication network, communication on CEC;
- To facilitate the collection and feedback of CEC data to feed the related information system;
- To contribute to the dissemination of information resulting from the processing of the said data;
- To facilitate the interface with the above-mentioned regional network.

## V. CONCLUSION AND CLOSURE OF THE WORKSHOP

The workshop of stakeholders engaged in combating environmental crime in West Africa ended after more than 4 hours of exchanges and renewed commitments to improve the effectiveness of actions, at national and regional levels, in combating environmental crime.

Mr. AKWAH NEBA expressed IUCN's thanks for the active participation and commitment of the participants in the webinar, which made it a success. He also conveyed to the European Union the recognition of the beneficiaries of the grant awarded within the framework of the implementation of the Regional Governance of Protected Areas in West Africa project.

Colonel Abba SONKO, the moderator of the workshop, for his part, expressed his satisfaction and that of the participants, with regard to the importance and topicality of the subject addressed, the quality and diversity of the participants, and the future collaborative actions planned. He urged the participants to read the draft protocol for collaboration submitted for their appreciation, then to transmit the observations to IUCN as soon as possible.

Finally, Mr. KANE, on behalf of the Director of Environment and Water Resources of the UEMOA Commission, who was unable to attend, expressed, in his closing remarks, on behalf of the UEMOA and ECOWAS Commissions, their thanks to the participants for the substantial contributions. The commitment thus observed is an important step, a first milestone in the dynamic, inclusive and participatory co-construction of this process that will make it possible to provide the region with instruments, but above all to operationalize them for the preservation of biodiversity and fragile ecosystems in West Africa.

This action is also all the more important as it will contribute to the implementation of the Strategy to fight Wildlife Crime in West Africa, developed by the ECOWAS Commission with the support of its technical and financial partners.

The representative of the UEMOA Commission reiterated the thanks of the Integration Institutions (UEMOA and ECOWAS) to the EU for its continued support to the cause of nature conservation for the well-being of communities. He concluded his remarks by stressing the need for judicious harmonization of national strategies and legal frameworks for greater efficiency and coercion in their application.

**Indicative list of participants**