

THE VOICE OF CONSERVATION IN EAST AFRICA

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SWARA



SAVING LAMU

DEFENDING RESIDENTS' RIGHTS

ANGOLA'S GIANT SABLE

A TRIUMPHANT COMEBACK

AMBOSELI DROUGHT

TIPPING OR TURNING POINT?



East African Wildlife Society

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CITIES Conference in session.

CONTROVERSY AT CITES CONFERENCE IN QATAR

BY ESMOND BRADLEY MARTIN AND LUCY VIGNE

The 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) took place from March 13-25, 2010 in Doha, Qatar. This small country has the highest per capita income in the world and the economy is expected to increase at a faster rate in 2010 than even China's, mostly due to gas exports. There were 1,500 or so people registered at this meeting, mostly staying in lavishly tall, new hotel buildings situated dramatically on the fringe of the Arabian desert. Delegates took buses along the expensively landscaped corniche to the conference centre at the luxurious Sheraton Hotel. During the two-week conference, delegates took breaks to visit the city and its large, traditional-style market called Souk al Waqif, which has been totally rebuilt with small shops and stalls selling everything from Peregrine Falcons to household goods to souvenirs such as old Arab daggers and swords with ivory handles, and even cat skins.

African countries and the media were most interested in the three

proposals concerning the African elephant put forward by Tanzania, Zambia and Kenya. The first proposal, put forward by Tanzanian officials, advocated the downlisting of the African elephant in their country from Appendix I of the Convention to Appendix II to allow them to export live elephants, hides, and trophies, and most controversially, 90 tonnes of ivory stockpiles to Japan and China. Later, on the floor, Tanzanian officials split the proposal so that the ivory sales would be voted for separately. The Kenyan delegation and the East African Wild Life Society opposed Tanzania, partly because the country has been a major route for tonnes of illegal tusks moving through to Asia. Work carried out by the Elephant Trade Information System (ETIS), some NGOs, and the CITES Panel of Experts supported this concern. In any event, Tanzania did not obtain the necessary two-thirds vote and the proposals failed.

Zambia had a similar proposal to downlist its elephants to Appendix II, also to permit the sale abroad of live elephants, hides and trophies as well as the sale of 22 tonnes of ivory from government stocks to China and Japan. Again, on the floor, Zambia split its

proposal to have a separate vote on ivory sales. The CITES Panel of Experts reported that "poaching, however, remains a big problem in several protected areas, notably in Lower Zambezi". The Panel also noted "annual expenditure on patrols in Zambia is currently about USD 50 per km² which is far lower than the generally accepted norm of USD 200 per km² required to provide adequate patrol of protected areas across southern and eastern Africa". Partly due to these apparent problems and intense lobbying, led by Kenya and some other countries, the proposals did not receive enough votes to succeed.

The final elephant proposal was submitted by Kenya, joined by the Republic of Congo, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Rwanda and Sierra Leone – countries where poaching has been severe or whose elephants have virtually disappeared. It proposed that CITES prohibit all international government sales of ivory for all of Africa's countries for 20 years. At the previous CITES conference, it had been agreed that no ivory sales should be allowed from Botswana,



Esmond Bradley Martin and Mangel Man Shrivastava of Wildlife Watch Group Nepal talking at a news conference in Doha.

Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe - countries on Appendix II - for nine years following ivory auctions held in 2008. After much discussion, lobbying and emotional speeches, Kenya submitted a draft decision accepting the original nine year moratorium, but requesting this to be applied to all African countries and not just the four southern African countries. This amended draft decision did not receive enough support and therefore Kenya withdrew it.

The Parties, NGOs, conservationists and media provided information to support and oppose these various proposals. Some of their statements gave incorrectly high prices for ivory and the CITES Secretariat expressed concern publicly that this could encourage more poaching. A wholesale figure quoted of USD 1,800 a kg for a typical tusk of just less than five kg being sold in Asia was way above the true figure. According to published statistics collected by ivory trade expert and author Dan Stiles, in 2008 in Thailand, traders and craftsmen were in fact paying USD 286 to 429 per kg for such a tusk. In 2009 we were in

Japan obtaining information for the CITES conference, and traders in Tokyo and Osaka said they paid from USD 200 to 284 per kg for a five kg tusk and between USD 284 and 340 per kg for a 10 kg tusk. Regrettably, figures on prices for ivory in China are not available, although China has been importing large quantities of illegal African tusks recently and is the biggest ivory market for new ivory in the world. These figures could easily be collected in a few days in China if NGOs put a higher priority on this work. African and Asian governments need to know if prices for ivory are rising in the world's markets and if anti-poaching efforts need to be strengthened; in some markets in Africa, Thailand and Japan, the US dollar price for tusks has been rising over the last few years.

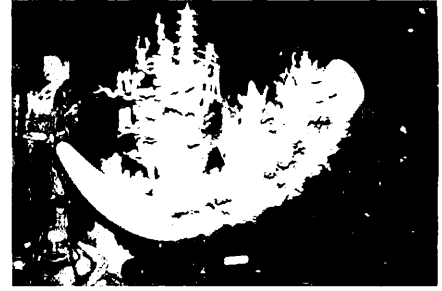
Another issue discussed at some length at the conference, and especially relevant to East and Southern Africa, was a revision offered by Kenya of resolution 9.14 (previously revised at the 14th Conference of the Parties). The old resolution urged parties "to identify, mark, register and secure rhino

THE PROBLEM OF POOR GOVERNANCE, ESPECIALLY MISMANAGEMENT AND CORRUPTION, WAS FREQUENTLY EMPHASISED AS ONE OF THE PRINCIPAL CAUSES OF THE MASSIVE ILLEGAL TRADE IN WILDLIFE PRODUCTS.

horn stocks, implement legislation to reduce the illegal trade in rhino products and evaluate the effectiveness of actions to reduce the illegal trade". Kenya's revision suggested an option for stockpile destruction or use for scientific and educational purposes - this was extremely controversial and was finally withdrawn. Before the conference, it had been announced in India that authorities in Assam would destroy their huge stockpiles of rhino horns, the largest in



ANOTHER ISSUE DISCUSSED AT SOME LENGTH AT THE CONFERENCE, ESPECIALLY RELEVANT TO EAST AND SOUTHERN AFRICA, WAS A REVISION OFFERED BY KENYA OF RESOLUTION 9.14 (PREVIOUSLY REVISED AT THE 14TH CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES).



South Asia. After the conference, some Nepalese officials stated they would do the same in the near future. Kenya further requested that the resolution strengthen the role of the Standing Committee to tackle those countries not complying with CITES regulations and to urge countries to improve their law enforcement. These revisions were adopted, along with the need for greater penalties, help from Interpol, more funding for rhino conservation and data collection, amongst other points added also to the resolution.

Kenya wished to strengthen this resolution 9.14 against rhino product trade as rhino poaching has recently increased in Africa. In 2009 in Kenya, at least 14 black and 6 white rhinos were poached, leaving populations of 635 black and 353 white rhinos needing greater protection. Four of these rhinos were

killed in Tsavo East National Park and the rest on private land, according to the Kenya Wildlife Service. In Zimbabwe, 175 to 200 rhinos were poached from the end of 2007 to mid-2009, based on the number of known rhinos at the beginning and end of this period (860 down to 730) and estimating an annual natural growth rate of a modest 5%. This is the most meaningful way to estimate poached rhinos as there has been under-reporting in state areas. Heavy poaching in these areas has not been surprising: only 3% of poachers are convicted and only USD 10 per km² is being spent on park management, according to a rhino conference report presented at the Mandel Training Centre, Harare, in October 2009.

In South Africa, at least 122 rhinos were poached out of about 1,500 black rhinos and 17,000 white rhinos in 2009.

Some of the most divisive proposals at the conference dealt with marine issues. Efforts to list the Atlantic Bluefin tuna on Appendix I failed to get the necessary support, despite an 85% decline in their numbers over the past 50 years due to both legal and illegal international trade. This is a highly prized fish in Japan for sushi. Sharks are in considerable demand by the Chinese, mainly for shark fin soup, and some species were considered to be over-exploited by the proponents of proposals to put them onto Appendix II, but these also failed. Red and pink corals, which have been heavily harvested in the Mediterranean and the Pacific for jewellery and to make ornaments, especially by the Chinese, Taiwanese and Italians, failed also to be put onto Appendix II.

LUCY VIGNE



Lucy Vigne seated with some of the delegates at the CITES meeting in Doha.

Vietnamese 'sport hunters' have bought licences to hunt White rhinos legally and to take their trophies home legally. The Vietnamese are also buying poached horns in South Africa and smuggling them into Vietnam. The driving force has been a new belief in Vietnam that rhino horns cure cancer. Some Chinese are also known to have been smuggling rhino horns from South Africa. For example, in February 2009, three Chinese men were accused in Middleburg Regional Court of smuggling out 50 rhino horns, mostly from Kruger National Park. While South Africa has had the most rhinos poached in 2009,

Zimbabwe's population has been hardest hit and has been declining in number.

The amended resolution 9.14 on rhinos and their products refers to the need for more information - gathering to reduce poaching. Virtually nothing is known about the rhino horn trade in eastern Asia, notably the main illegal markets of Vietnam and China. In Africa, a major reason for the increase in rhino poaching in Kenya, Zimbabwe and South Africa is that the trade routes are not well understood and therefore traders are able to export the horns relatively easily. In Kenya, horns may be still going

to Yemen, but nobody has been to there to study the routes since January 2008. In Zimbabwe, some conservationists believe many rhino poachers in the Hwange area cross over from Zambia and take back the horns to Zambia, but little is known about where they go from there.

Other rhino horns from Zimbabwe are thought to be taken to South Africa. Domestic routes through South Africa for rhino horns are not known, nor are the main routes for smuggling the horns out. No prices are known for rhino horns in Zimbabwe or South Africa for the last five years. The Greater One-horned rhino in Nepal and India has also suffered poaching and more information is needed on trade routes there. We do know that horns move from southern Nepal and northern India to Tibet but we do not know their final destination. In the past, people in China did not buy many Asian horns because they were so expensive compared with African horns. Has this now changed?

In Doha, there were daily side events, such as book launches, films, lectures and debates, outside the formal sessions of the conference, and they were well attended and often controversial. The problem of poor governance, especially mismanagement and corruption, was frequently emphasised as one of the principal causes of the massive illegal trade in wildlife products. One evening talk was about the atrocities and illegal activities linked to the natural resources of northeast Democratic Republic of Congo. The authors of the new United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) publication, *The Last Stand of the Gorilla, Environmental Crime and Conflict in the Congo Basin*, presented their findings, saying that rebel groups are heavily involved in the bushmeat trade which has resulted in a loss of up to 80% of large animals in the region's national parks; they also named international businesses which are directly involved in illegally exploiting the natural resources of the country.

Another presentation was on data collected by ETIS on the smuggling of African and Asian tusks, again emphasizing the issue of poor law enforcement that directly relates to CITES. Nigeria, Thailand and the DRC have been arresting very few ivory poachers or traders and have been allowing ivory to move in and out of their countries with little attempt to seize



LUCY VIGNE

A zebra skin, amongst other items, for sale in Doha's Souk al Waqif.

THE OUTCOME OF THE CITES CONFERENCE WAS POSITIVE FOR MANY SMALLER SPECIES, SUCH AS A BEETLES, SEVERAL REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS AND VARIOUS PLANTS THAT WERE GIVEN GREATER PROTECTION IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE.

these smuggled goods; they have also been permitting domestic sales of ivory items openly in markets. Several slides at the presentation showed many large illegal ivory items for sale recently in the Bikeko market (which happens to be near a police station) in Kinshasa, DRC. A senior DRC delegate who attended the lecture commented that the Congolese do not buy these illegal ivory objects, ignoring the fact that they were openly on display.

These three countries have continued to undermine CITES policy with impunity, despite having been asked at the last four Conferences of the Parties to stop the blatant illegal ivory trade in their countries. It was stressed also at this presentation that China was "the single most important country in terms of influence on the illicit trade in ivory". The growing demand for wildlife products in China was a frequently voiced concern at the side events and in the main two conference halls.

The outcome of the CITES conference was positive for many smaller species, such as a beetles, several reptiles and amphibians and various plants that were given greater protection in international trade. A proposal to move the polar bear from Appendix II to Appendix I failed because it did not meet the biological criteria needed and because it was shown that trade is not threatening the species. The Japanese and Chinese delegates were happy at the decisions not to restrict certain fish species from trade. The Japanese ivory traders attending the conference, however, were disappointed that no ivory sales were permitted from



Stuffed animals for sale in this souvenir shop in Souk al Waqif in Doha Qatar.

Tanzania and Zambia. This decision was consistent with the view of the East African Wild Life Society and the Kenyan delegation, but greatly disappointed the Tanzanian and Zambian delegates. This caused a major split among African delegates, which has been the case at most CITES meetings since 1989. However, African delegates agreed to strengthen the rhino document which demonstrates that agreement is possible among African nations.

There is an overriding need before the next Conference of the Parties in Bangkok, Thailand, in 2013 to collect more trade data so that prices and trade routes can be better understood to ascertain trends and poaching pressures. This is especially the case for ivory and rhino horns. Without knowing the entrepots and end markets, law enforcement and efforts to reduce

demand for wildlife products cannot be effective. We also need clearer facts on population numbers and trends. If the decisions at future Conferences of the Parties were based more on scientific data rather than on emotions and politics, the conservation of many endangered species would be enhanced. ●

ESMOND BRADLEY MARTIN

Member of the EAWLS Council, he has been attending CITES meetings regularly since the mid-1980s, representing IUCN, WWF and EAWLS at different times. He has been investigating the trade in illegal wildlife products for more than 30 years.

LUCY VIGNE

Has worked for IUCN and WWF and has been studying poaching and the trade in elephant ivory and rhino horn in Africa and Asia.