



## PRESS RELEASE

### Faced with “Empty Forests”, experts urge better regulation of bushmeat trade

*International gathering identifies innovative solutions for resolving the bushmeat crisis, for the benefit of indigenous peoples and local communities.*

Nairobi, Montreal, Geneva, 10 June 2011 – A growing and lucrative illegal international commercial trade in the meat and other parts of wild mammals, birds and reptiles (“bushmeat”) is causing widespread loss of biodiversity, imperilling the livelihoods of communities around the world, and destabilizing fragile tropical forest ecosystems.

There is also a growing domestic trade in bushmeat between rural areas and urban markets, mostly for food. The resulting “empty-forest syndrome” is increasingly threatening food security, in particular in Central Africa. Stemming the loss of forest fauna will require coordinated action between international actors working on forest and wildlife management, conservation of biodiversity, wildlife trade regulation, law enforcement and health officials, concluded a meeting of experts on the bushmeat trade.

In the Congo Basin, for example, increasing population and trade from rural to urban areas compounded with the lack of any sizeable domestic meat sector are the main causes of unsustainable levels of hunting. If bushmeat consumption was to be replaced by local beef, as much as 80 per cent of the Democratic Republic of the Congo would have to be pastures. Therefore, there is no alternative to making the use of wildlife for food more sustainable.

Some 55 experts from 43 Governments and United Nations agencies, international and national organizations and indigenous and local community organizations meeting in Nairobi from 7 to 10 June 2011 recognized with alarm that classic approaches and international efforts are not reversing this growing trend, and adopted a set of recommendations to the international community and to concerned national Governments and stakeholders. Key recommendations include:

- Implement community wildlife management, and other improved wildlife management approaches, such as game ranching, and hunting tourism;



Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity  
United Nations Environment Programme  
413 Saint-Jacques Street, Suite 800, Montreal, QC, H2Y 1N9, Canada  
Tel : +1 514 288 2220, Fax : +1 514 288 6588  
[secretariat@cbd.int](mailto:secretariat@cbd.int) [www.cbd.int](http://www.cbd.int)



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- Increase the raising of “mini-livestock” (wild animals such as cane rats raised in small farms);
- Support the sustainable harvesting of non-timber forest products, such as bee-keeping.

The meeting also recognized the need to clarify and define land tenure and access rights, improve monitoring of bushmeat-harvesting and trade, and enhance bushmeat-related law enforcement.

Over-hunting of tropical and sub-tropical wildlife also jeopardizes the livelihoods of local and indigenous people as well as the long-term stability of forest ecosystem services and their economic utilization, including timber production and carbon storage. For example, up to 75 per cent of tropical tree species depend on animal seed dispersal. Many tree species will no longer be able to reproduce with their seed dispersers hunted to local extinction.

National economies and governments lose significant revenue if the wildlife as a key resource is managed poorly, and depleted irreversibly. For example, in the Central African Republic, it is estimated that the unregulated bushmeat trade is worth US\$ 72 million per year.

“We see legitimate subsistence hunting being replaced by commercial hunting and trade of often endangered species in tropical forests, including elephants and primates,” said Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Noting that the secretariats of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) co-organized the meeting, Mr. Djoghlaif went on say: “The collaboration between the CBD and CITES is leading the way for a stronger push to stem this tide. A global partnership to tackle illegal wildlife trade and unsustainable hunting for bushmeat is urgently required.”

John E. Scanlon, Secretary-General of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), said: “Tackling the impact of unsustainable and illegal trade in bushmeat is critical for protecting the livelihoods of rural people and conserving wildlife in biodiversity-rich areas. It requires to redouble collaborative efforts from international to the local level. The CBD and CITES Secretariats are committed to work together with indigenous and local communities and other stakeholders to address this problem and promote sustainable solutions.”

“Multidisciplinary approaches are needed as are the strengthening of legal frameworks, the provision of food and livelihood alternatives and the sustainable use of wildlife. None of these alone appear to be able to solve the so-called ‘bushmeat crisis’, but combined and incorporated into solid national and regional strategies, there is potential to achieve a more sustainable use of wildlife for food in the Congo Basin,” said Robert Nasi, Program Director of the Forests and Environment Program at the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR).

The meeting was convened at the headquarters of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), and the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) and was made possible with funding from the European Commission.

*Notes to Editors*

### **The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**

Opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and entering into force in December 1993, the Convention on Biological Diversity is an international treaty for the conservation of biodiversity, the sustainable use of the components of biodiversity and the

equitable sharing of the benefits derived from the use of genetic resources. With 193 Parties, the Convention has near universal participation among countries. The Convention seeks to address all threats to biodiversity and ecosystem services, including threats from climate change, through scientific assessments, the development of tools, incentives and processes, the transfer of technologies and good practices and the full and active involvement of relevant stakeholders including indigenous and local communities, youth, NGOs, women and the business community. The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety is a subsidiary agreement to the Convention. It seeks to protect biological diversity from the potential risks posed by living modified organisms resulting from modern biotechnology. To date, 159 countries plus the European Union have ratified the Cartagena Protocol. The Secretariat of the Convention and its Cartagena Protocol is located in Montreal. For more information visit: [www.cbd.int](http://www.cbd.int).

### **The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora**

Thousands of species of wild fauna and flora are used by people in their daily lives for food, housing, health care, cosmetics or fashion. CITES recognizes that commercial trade in these plants and animals may be beneficial both to conservation and to the livelihoods of local people.

However, unregulated wildlife trade can seriously affect species populations, especially those that are already vulnerable as a result of other factors, such as habitat loss. Governments responded to this concern by adopting CITES in 1973 to regulate international wildlife trade and ensure that it remains at a sustainable level. With 175 Parties, CITES remains one of the world's most powerful tools for biodiversity conservation through the regulation of trade in wild fauna and flora.

CITES provides three regulatory options in the form of Appendices. CITES requires each member State to adopt the necessary national legislation and to designate a Management Authority that issues permits to trade. Governments must also designate a Scientific Authority to provide scientific advice on imports and exports. These national authorities are responsible for implementing CITES in close cooperation with Customs, wildlife enforcement, police or similar agencies.

### **Center for International Forestry Research**

The Center for International Forestry Research is a non-profit, global facility dedicated to advancing human well-being, environmental conservation and equity. It conducts research that enables more informed and equitable decision-making about the use and management of forests in less developed countries. The research helps policymakers and practitioners shape effective policy, improve the management of tropical forests and address the needs and perspectives of people who depend on forests for their livelihoods. The Center's multidisciplinary approach considers the underlying drivers of deforestation and forest degradation which often lie outside the forestry sector: forces such as agriculture, infrastructure development, trade and investment policies and law enforcement.

### **The CBD Liaison Group on Bushmeat**

In 2008, the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) identified the unsustainable hunting of bushmeat, and its effect on non-target species, as a priority to be addressed by Parties (decision IX/5). In October 2009, the CBD Liaison Group on Bushmeat held its first meeting and developed *National and International Recommendations towards the Sustainable Use of Bushmeat*<sup>1</sup> ([www.cbd.int/ts](http://www.cbd.int/ts)), based on information contained in CBD Technical Series No. 33, "Conservation and Use of Wildlife-Based Resources: The

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<sup>1</sup> The full report of the Bushmeat Liaison Group meeting is available at [www.cbd.int/doc/?meeting=LGB-01](http://www.cbd.int/doc/?meeting=LGB-01).

Bushmeat Crisis”.<sup>2</sup> The meeting was convened in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) as well as the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) and the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (CIC). The second meeting of the Liaison Group on Bushmeat was convened jointly with the CITES Central Africa Bushmeat Working Group in Nairobi from 7 to 10 June 2011. The group consists of more than 50 experts from 20 countries, and more than 20 international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and indigenous and local-community representatives.

The CBD Liaison Group on Bushmeat defines bushmeat (or wild meat) hunting as the harvesting of wild animals in tropical and sub-tropical countries for food and for non-food purposes, including for medicinal use.

**Contact:**

David Ainsworth, Information Officer, Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Tel. +1 514 561 2720 or email: [david.ainsworth@cbd.int](mailto:david.ainsworth@cbd.int)

Juan Carlos Vasquez, Communications and Outreach Officer, CITES Secretariat, Tel. +4122 917 8156 or email: [juan.vasquez@cites.org](mailto:juan.vasquez@cites.org)

Daniel Cooney, Media Liaison and Outreach Manager, CIFOR, Tel. +62 251 862 2622 or email: [d.cooney@cgiar.org](mailto:d.cooney@cgiar.org)

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<sup>2</sup> CBD Technical Series No. 33 “Conservation and Sustainable Use of Wildlife-based Resources: The Bushmeat Crisis” (2008) is available in Spanish, French, and English at [www.cbd.int/ts](http://www.cbd.int/ts).