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*Community-Based Natural Resource Management
and Sustainable Agriculture*

REPORT ON THE ZAMBIA WILDLIFE AUTHORITY MEETING TO
MOBILISE STAKEHOLDER SUPPORT IN ITS APPLICATION TO
RECLASSIFY ZAMBIA'S ELEPHANT POPULATION FROM
APPENDIX I TO APPENDIX II OF THE CITES LISTING

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Report on the Zambia Wildlife Authority (ZAWA) meeting to Mobilise Stakeholder Support in its Application to reclassify Zambia's Elephant Population from Appendix I to Appendix II of CITES Listing¹

INTRODUCTION

The Zambia Wildlife Authority called a meeting on 8th May 2002 to solicit for the Zambian stakeholder support in their effort have the elephant population reclassified from Appendix I to II of the Convention on International Trade and Endangered Species (CITES) of wild fauna and flora. The deadline for such an application is 12th June 2002. The twelfth CITES Conference of Parties (COP12) will be held in Chile, November 2002.

CITES regulates international trade in specimens of wild fauna and flora based on a permit certification system. It began in 1960 when the seventh General Assembly of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) discussed problems in international trade in fauna and flora, that led to the draft of the first convention in 1964. However, CITES came into force in 1975 at the tenth ratification. Zambia became a member in 1981, and the African elephant was listed under Appendix I in 1989. The Conventions expire whenever a new one is convened, although provisions remain in force unless they have been repealed. CITES has a secretariat, and there are 140 contracting parties. A number of committees have been established, and CITES holds the biannual conferences referred to as Conference Of Parties (COP).

There used to be some 200,000 elephants in Zambia in 1972. By the end of 1989 only about 25,000 elephants were left in the wild because of widespread poaching. The African elephant was placed under Appendix I of CITES in 1981. In 1996 the elephant survey indicated that there between 22,000 and 25,000 animals in Zambia. The annual hunting quota of 100 elephants ceased in 1982. In the Luangwa Valley, the country's elephant stronghold, the elephant population dropped from 35,000 to 5,000 over this period. In Africa as a whole the population dropped from 1.3 million in 1979 to 609,000 in 1990. Most of the poaching was being driven by economic hardships in most African countries (Oil shock of 1973, unemployment, rising poverty levels,) and in the face of exorbitant ivory prices in the Middle East as a result of the huge foreign exchange incomes they were earning from oil exports – the petrol dollars.

Of the 26 Mt of ivory that Zambia had accumulated by 1992, almost 9 Mt were burnt. Although ZAWA officials did not mention that Government was compensated for these losses, the arrangement/mechanism that was entered into for delivering that compensation was not good enough, and received considerable criticism. The David Shepherd Foundation received such compensation on behalf of Zambia, and the Zambian Government could only spend the money on elephant conservation by going through this organisation. There are seemed to be a lot of misgivings with this arrangement, even now.

Through the ZAWA DG presentation ZAWA argued that the down-listing of the elephant population on the CITES List will enable Zambia:

¹ Report prepared by Ernest Mwape, Policy Component Manager - CONASA following the 26th May 2002 stakeholder meeting called by ZAWA to discuss the application to down list elephants on CITES listing.

- To trade in the current ivory stockpiles on the international market and realise money equivalent to the commercial value of the ivory.
- The elephants will also be available for use in tourism-related activities like back rides, etc – as is the case in Zimbabwe.
- Raise money for conservation of elephants, and improve the livelihoods of people that live with these animals according to CBNRM principles – provide income as compensation for their input in conservation efforts.
- Reduce conflicts with humans through capture, culling and compensate victims of the human-wildlife conflicts.

Another equally important reason was advanced – TBNRM aspect. ZAWA argued that when elephants are in Zambia they are not put to any use because of the CITES Appendix I listing, but when they cross into neighbouring countries with Appendix II listing they are used for all tourism activities that are allowable. Zambia does not benefit from these same animals, while the other neighbouring countries are raising money not only for the benefit of their local communities, but also for the conservation of the same animals. Zambia's local communities do not get anything tangible to be convinced to help conserve elephants. Whenever a problem animal becomes a nuisance the communities are more inclined to harvest it, if the authorities don't intervene quickly enough.

The other objectives of the meeting were to set up a CITES secretariat whose composition was not discussed. That secretariat will draft a CITES policy and strategic action plan and the necessary legal instruments. Implementation of CITES is reinforced by the Zambia National Plant and Genetic resources committee comprised of the University of Zambia, and Ministries in charge of Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources. *[N.B. Although ZAWA prepared the proposal to be submitted to CITES before 12th June 2002, it was without participation of the stakeholders that attended the 26th May 2002 meeting. The proposal may not have been widely circulated for stakeholder input].*

PRESENTATIONS

Apart from the opening remarks by the ZAWA Director General there were ten other (paper) presentations, two of which were made non-ZAWA resource persons. The content of most of the papers did not contain statistics, and therefore did not help much in the decision making process of most participants. In fact, most participants wanted to have more time devoted to the issue to comprehend the issue and appreciate the consequences of down-listing.

The elephants in Zambia are concentrated in the Luangwa Valley and Kafue ecosystems. During the transformation of ZAWA the village scouts status was not properly dealt with, and their absence led to increased poaching of wildlife. Arrests of poachers have therefore increased over the years. Although law enforcement support has been rendered by the following organisations: NORAD, Frankfurt, Kantipo, USAID, and CARE International, it is still inadequate. ZAWA can not adequately deploy wildlife police officers or village scouts for effective patrols.

Security personnel is inadequate. There are currently 900 riflemen in the field spread all over the country. ZAWA will need to re-equip the field staff (camping gear, GPS, riflemen, uniforms, etc). Some emergency support is being worked out with support from NORAD. A number of factors contributed to the drastic fall in elephant population:

- Inadequate legislation (1998 Wildlife Act tries to make amends)
- Inadequate resources for protection of wildlife

- Liberalisation and civil wars in the region led to increase in illegal arms.

ZAWA proposed too many exit and entry ports. This worried most participants, in that it will be virtually impossible to monitor trade with so many outlets – most of whom are remote and can not handle sophisticated, ruthless individuals.

Unreliable information on population dynamics for authorities to make proper management decisions, resulted in excess quotas being issued and utilised. ZAWA runs a programme called Monitoring of Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE) under the auspices of CITES. MIKE came into being at the COP11 in 1999, and before that there was no mechanism of monitoring and detecting changes in elephant population, illegal ivory trade and poaching in Zambia. The programme is meant to build capacity for managing elephant ranges, provide relevant information for decision-making re: status, welfare of elephants, and use such information to establish causes of certain wildlife and human behaviour. MIKE has been in operation since November 2000, and operations have been limited to Kafue National Park, Sioma-Ngwezi and Lower Zambezi systems. A budget of about US\$ 130,000 was presented to get the MIKE programme going. It was not clear this was an annual budget, but can only assume it was.

Although local community participants wanted the elephants to be reclassified, it was for entirely different reasons compared to those of ZAWA. ZAWA reasons that:

- It will get rid of the 17 Mt of ivory on the international market and realise the commercial value (instead of burning it being conditionally compensated for such an act)
- The ivory stock pile is quickly losing its value as time goes on, and therefore loss of potential value.
- ZAWA is short of finances to pay for storage and security costs associated with keeping this ivory in its custody
- ZAWA can also realise the much-needed money to carry out conservation activities.

The ensuing discussion led to some of the following issues coming out. CITES reclassification will lead to establishment of official markets. Using CBNRNM principles, it is expected that food security will improve as people's incomes improve.

Right now, however the communities perceive the elephant as a liability, and not an economic resource. The various contributions from community members were pointing to that fact. They see Government as valuing wildlife much more than human life because when an individual kills an animal ZAWA is on such a person almost immediately – and usually met out instant justice. However when elephants kill people ZAWA is reluctant to do something about such cases. Crop damage is not compensated leaving the very people even more food insecure and poorer. Participants were equally concerned that the initial CITES classification of Zambian elephants to Appendix I has not led to increased numbers in elephants since poaching of elephants has not gone down significantly – as evidenced by the quick accumulation of ivory since 1992. This classification and compensation has not led to increased economic benefits for the local people who are custodians of these animals as they have been asked to help conserve them.

ZAWA argued that reclassification to Appendix II will allow for flexibility in the manner in which wildlife is sustainably managed. It was pointed out that community institutions are now more mature and appreciate conservation much more than before. Under the new policy and legal framework, ZAWA is an autonomous body and

should be able to respond to community concerns more efficiently, effectively when its operations become normal.

Although it was argued that the revenue that will be generated from existing stock of ivory will be meant for elephant conservation, participants were concerned that given the current ZAWA financial problems such monies will be diverted to other pressing needs of ZAWA like paying for staff salaries. In any case the value of 17 Mt of ivory will not be so significant for ZAWA to sustain its conservation efforts for along time. A more lasting solution needs to be put in place – specifically the safari hunting bans should be stopped so that both the communities and ZAWA generate the much needed tangible benefits.

The meeting recommended that:

- A compensation Fund be created from sales of ivory
- It was acknowledged that there is an illegal ivory market/syndicate. ZAWA needs a strong investigative unit to eradicate the illegal market
- Unregistered firearms need to be reduced through schemes like buy-back, amnesty given to voluntary surrender of illegal weapons, etc
- Need to invest in reduction and prevention of human-wildlife conflicts such as solar fencing

A presentation that brought a different perspective to the proceedings was made by Ms Marianthy Noble from the David Shepherd Foundation. She informed the audience that between 1988 and 1992 Zambia strongly campaigned against proposals by other countries to down-list of elephants from Appendix I to Appendix II of the CITES list. She argued reclassification should not be done for short-term expedience as the money that will be realised will not last long given ZAWA's financial needs. Zambia was compensated for the 8.9 Mt of ivory that was burnt by wildlife conservationists outside the country. The proposed reclassification will send wrong signals to all manner of traders and poachers. The reclassification will add to the confusion regarding what is legal and what is not legal ivory, given that there is already significant illegal trade going spurred by the strong Asian and Japanese ivory markets. Most of this trade is sustained by ivory originating from Africa's range estates.

There was no adequate explanation by ZAWA to the question raised regarding any lessons that Zambia can draw from the extinction of the rhino. The rhino was not on the CITES listing when it went into extinction. The participants just did not have descent data or reliable recollection of the extinction of the rhino and lessons that could be drawn from its extinction to provide some guidance on the subject matter at hand.

The elephant is a flagship of Zambia's wildlife. The reclassification will only enhance the wanton killing that has been going for a long time now. ZAWA is at the bottom of grant-receiving schemes in Zambia, despite the fact that it looks after 35 percent of the countries' real estate – the estate whose natural resources are heavily exploited whenever there is laxity on law enforcement as has been the case for some time now. The elephant is not only a cultural heritage and therefore a tourist attraction, but it also plays an important role in the ecosystem. It is a key species for biodiversity conservation. It has a relatively long inter-generational time period such that any reduction of acceptable off-take takes a long time to restore the balance.

Increased human settlement entailed shrinking of elephant range. The elephant has become fragmented as people settled and closed the elephant migratory routes. There was increased competition for water and land that have given rise to human-wildlife

conflicts with its associated adverse consequences. The control methods have almost always been shot to kill, even when officers can not establish/identify the specific problem animal. When such culling is delayed, the killing is done without assessing the damage that the animal caused to warrant a death sentence. The elephant is viewed as an economic burden by the community, because there is virtually no compensation given to the victims.

Some participants were of the view that ZAWA should concentrate its efforts in addressing issues such as: Why has the ivory stockpile grown so quickly? It has taken only 7 years to amass 17Mt through recoveries from anti-poaching exercises and control of problem animals; but it took a lot more years to accumulate the 9 Mt that was burnt before 1992. One of the ZAWA papers acknowledged the fact that relaxation of the international trade restriction led to adverse effects – increase in illegal exploitation of vulnerable elephant populations. At the COP11, South Africa's elephant population was down-listed from Appendix I to II; while those of Botswana, Zimbabwe and Namibia continued to be listed on Appendix II with zero hunting quotas on ivory stockpiles.

Note that the COP10 accommodated non-commercial disposal of ivory stockpiles that could generate resources for conservation in African elephant range states. Destruction of ivory through burning to emphasise a member country's displeasure at the wanton killing of elephants has not had the desired effects since there are no tangible benefits for the local communities. The financial resources for the elephant protection never improved, and poachers continued to hunt down elephants.

The meeting felt that the community should no longer be viewed as mere recipients of alms from well-wishers that operate in their areas. The communities should be able to do the same businesses that the private sector is engaged in. In fact, with time the difference between who is private sector and who is not will be reduced to the difference in ownership structures. The community will be another "business entity", not to be pitied – but one to be engaged with in business transactions. The community should be able to aggressively sell its resource endowments, and comparative advantages, to the market by negotiating/influencing terms on how its natural resources will be used.

When Zambia applies for reclassification CITES might send a verification team. CITES should be satisfied that poaching has been reduced, the number of elephants has gone up, that there are adequate measures put in place to control the legal ivory trade and deterrent measures against illegal ivory traders are in place. None of these questions can be answered positively by ZAWA at the moment, although promises were made to address the issues.

It was learnt that the Namibian Government attached conditions to its application, and can be accessed on the website. The meeting felt that there is need for more consultation on these issues on a more regular basis. The meeting that was called to decide on such an important issue was too abrupt, and most of the people not were well-informed to be left alone with the responsibility of deciding the fate of the elephants. Although ZAWA left with the mandate to go ahead and prepare the application for reclassification of elephants from Appendix I to II in the CITES listing, the meeting requested that more details should be provided (by a small working group) to ensure that promises ZAWA made will be realised.

The DG promised to report back to meeting after November 2002 twelfth Conference of Parties (COP12) in Mexico.

CONCLUSION

Papers that were presented were short on current data that would help with the decision. Basic data like the current elephant population was not available. The last wild life census was undertaken in 1997 or thereabouts.

Community members did not comprehend the issues at hand, and did not appreciate the consequences of reclassification of elephants from Appendix I to II. They could certainly not tell the difference. There is need for more capacity building of community leaders and/or representatives. The community representatives' major concern for now seemed the curbing of destructive behaviour of elephants and lack of compensation from those who would like the elephants to be roaming around in their areas.

Zambia is a signatory to the CITES; the Cooperative Enforcement Operations Directed at Illegal Trade in Wild fauna flora (or the Lusaka Agreement), and the SADC Wildlife Protocol, which it signed in 1999 but has not yet ratified. CITES monitors international trade while the Lusaka Agreement enforces the laws against animal abuse. ZAWA promised to share relevant information with other stakeholders to improve legislation and technical knowledge. ZAWA is eager to contribute to poverty reduction and economic growth of the country.

If the non-commercial alternative of disposing the ivory stockpiles is resorted to, ZAWA needs to ensure that it is in charge of such compensation that donors and other well wishers may give, otherwise management of such resources may be contrived to adjust objectives to suit interests of those holding the purse.

It should also be recognised that there is mounting pressure to resume hunting of the elephant because of human-elephant conflicts and the rising demand by safari operators' clients within and in neighbouring range states.