

China and Africa collaborating against illegal trade of fauna and flora

In a milestone move in early December 2015, Heads of States of 50 African countries and China collaborating under the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) committed to bold action to protect wildlife resources and to address jointly illegal trade in fauna and flora. This collaborative pledge was addressed for the first time in the FOCAC Johannesburg Action Plan (2016–2018) (FOCAC, 2015) in reaction to previously unseen levels of poaching and wildlife trafficking and to the growing global recognition—including by the African Union (African Union, 2015)—of the impact of wildlife crime on broader issues such as rule of law, national security, rural livelihoods and economic development. The Johannesburg Action Plan was issued following the Second FOCAC Summit, which was preceded by the Sixth Ministerial Conference of FOCAC. During the FOCAC Summit, the Chinese government also issued “China’s second position paper on Africa” which specifically calls for a crack down on transnational organized crimes related to endangered wildlife trafficking (Xinhua, 2015).

Within the Johannesburg Action Plan, Africa and China committed to co-operate on biodiversity protection, including on sustainable forest management. It was further agreed that both sides will enhance co-operation in preventing and combating the illegal trade of fauna and flora products, including marine products. Furthermore, they agreed to strengthen co-operation in the area of wildlife protection, with China helping African countries to build the capacity of environmental rangers, provide African countries with training opportunities on conservation, explore and fight jointly against the illegal trade of fauna and flora products, especially addressing poaching of threatened species on the African continent, in particular elephants and rhinoceroses. Whilst the two sides also agreed on addressing the root causes of piracy, namely poverty, underdevelopment and illegal fishing, China will further encourage and support Chinese enterprises to implement co-operation projects focusing on, for example, forestry and fisheries. The two sides will explore the signing of criminal judicial assistance and extradition treaties and strengthen co-operation in the fields of combating and preventing transnational crimes, including corruption and the illegal trade in fauna, flora and associated products, while strengthening *inter alia* repatriation of illicit funds, asset recovery and law enforcement capacity building. The Seventh Ministerial Conference of FOCAC will be held in China in 2018.

African Ministers meeting in April 2016 in Cairo, Egypt, stepped up their commitment to fight against wildlife crime at the sixth special session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) through adopting an implementation roadmap with an action-oriented matrix for the *African Strategy on Combating Illegal Exploitation and Illegal Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora in Africa* (TRAFFIC, 2016).

Since the FOCAC Summit, China has continued to address Africa-based members of its ethnic Chinese business communities through two consecutive workshops in Maputo, Mozambique, and Johannesburg, South Africa. Hosted by TRAFFIC and WWF, in collaboration with the Chinese government and supported by the governments of South Africa and Mozambique, awareness was raised among Chinese nationals working in the two African countries on regulations protecting wildlife and to help support international efforts to reduce the demand for products of threatened wildlife. The workshops were each attended by 70 Chinese nationals from State-owned enterprises, private businesses and local residences in Mozambique and South Africa. Representatives from China’s State Forestry Administration (SFA, the Chinese CITES Management Authority), China Customs and China’s National Forestry Police spoke about wildlife protection and management laws in China, CITES regulations and recent smuggling cases, in order to discourage local Chinese nationals from buying and carrying ivory and other endangered wildlife products to China from Africa. Both events were also supported by the Chinese embassies and the China International Contractors Association (CICA).

TRAFFIC is grateful to African governments, the African Union Commission and to the governments of China and Germany for supporting its work on Africa-China collaboration.

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