

## **Report from IUCN/SSC and TRAFFIC to the CITES Standing Committee**

**March 1998**

### **Re: CITES Decisions 10.1 and 10.2 and Resolution Conf. 10.10 Monitoring systems for the illegal killing of elephants and for trade in ivory and other elephant products**

#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

At the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES (COP 10), a decision was made to transfer the African elephant populations of Botswana, Namibia, and Zimbabwe from CITES Appendix I to Appendix II, and to allow limited commercial trade in raw ivory from these countries to Japan in 1999, subject to certain conditions. These conditions include the agreement of international monitoring systems to track and assess the illegal killing of elephants and the legal and illegal trade in ivory and other elephant products. The Parties specifically called for the participation and advice of two specialist groups of the IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC) - the African Elephant Specialist Group (AfESG) and the Asian Elephant Specialist Group (AsESG) - and the TRAFFIC Network in the development and implementation of these systems.

CITES Resolution Conf 10.10 requests development of systems for "measuring and recording current levels and trends of illegal hunting and trade in ivory in African and Asian range States, and in trade entrepôts" as well as "assessing whether and to what extent observed trends are a result of changes in the listing of elephant populations in the CITES appendices and/or the resumption of legal international trade in ivory". In other words, the Resolution requests that not only is measurement of levels and trends required, but also that the causes of any changes in these levels and trends be assessed. For this issue of causality to be addressed, additional information is needed to help determine whether or not changes in these levels and trends are the result of decisions taken by the Parties to CITES, or due to other factors.

In December 1997, IUCN/SSC and TRAFFIC convened a workshop in Nairobi, of experts in elephant biology, management and conservation, experts in the ivory trade and wildlife law enforcement and experts in population modelling and statistics to begin technical work on these issues. The advice and recommendations provided by these experts facilitated IUCN/SSC and TRAFFIC efforts in preparing this report to the CITES Secretariat for submission to the Standing Committee in March 1998. Input was sought from the TRAFFIC Network and both the AfESG and AsESG memberships regarding specific technical issues on data collection, site selection and analysis that were raised during the workshop.

#### **2. MONITORING SYSTEMS FOR TRADE IN ELEPHANT PRODUCTS AND ILLEGAL KILLING OF ELEPHANTS**

The details of the monitoring systems for trade in elephant products and illegal killing of elephants are set out in detail in the December 1997 workshop report (attached as Annex II of this report). IUCN/SSC and TRAFFIC believe that in order to meet the challenges set by the Parties, the monitoring systems on illegal trade would need to be based on detailed data on trade in elephant products including seizure records, law enforcement effort and related supplementary information (Resolution Conf. 10.10, Annex 1). Similarly, the monitoring system for illegal killing of elephants in the Range States would need to use data on elephant population and trends, incidence and patterns of illegal hunting and measures of the effort and resources employed in detection and prevention of illegal killing (Resolution Conf. 10.10, Annex 2). It will also be necessary to collect information on external factors that could affect these levels and trends including economic indicators, civil strife and other subsidiary factors. Consideration of subsidiary data would assist integrated analysis of links between illegal killing trends, trade trends and the timing and nature of CITES decisions regarding the African elephant.

The proposed systems will draw on data from a variety of sources (see Annex I). While data collection and initial analysis for these systems will happen separately, the ultimate analysis and interpretation should be carried out by IUCN/SSC and TRAFFIC working together in support of, and in collaboration with, the CITES Secretariat. Technical input by members of the IUCN/SSC AfESG and AsESG and the TRAFFIC Network as well as additional analytical expertise will be called upon to complete interpretation of the data. The CITES Standing Committee would be responsible to ensure an acceptable level of quality of any outputs provided to it through the proposed systems.

### ***2.1 Elephant Trade Information System (ETIS)***

The COP 10 Decisions and Resolution recognise TRAFFIC's Bad Ivory Database System (BIDS) "as the appropriate instrument for monitoring the pattern and measuring the scale" of trade in ivory and other elephant products. To meet the tasks set out in Resolution Conf. 10.10 effectively, particularly any assessment of the key issue of causality, it would be necessary to expand the present capabilities of BIDS and move towards the development of an integrated trade monitoring information system for all elephant products in addition to ivory; this would be named the Elephant Trade Information System (ETIS), details of which are to be found in Annex II of this report.

Two key elements are recognised as integral for effective monitoring and analysis of trade, to indicate trends, changes in trends and to infer causality. The seizure information would provide the first key element but seizure data alone do not provide a true measure of illegal trade flows. There is an intimate link between the rates and scale of seizures, and the second key element, enforcement effort/resources and effectiveness. Data on enforcement effort/ resources and effectiveness are fundamental to any analysis of seizures data. A detailed explanation of the protocol for collecting these data are included in Annex II Section 2. Other factors which may influence illegal trade should also be measured in order to supplement these key elements, to enable assessment of the total volumes of illegal products in trade and trends in trade flows and related dynamics of supply and demand. These would include: economic indicators, legal trade, domestic markets, intelligence data and data quality assessments. These components of the information system would be managed by TRAFFIC, working in co-operation with the CITES Secretariat (which will call on the advice of Interpol, and the World Customs Organisation (WCO) as needed). It is proposed that the primary mechanism for data collection be carried out by the CITES Secretariat, which would forward necessary information to TRAFFIC under agreed procedures. In addition, TRAFFIC would also collect complementary information.

While it is currently impossible to determine total volumes of the illegal trade in ivory, if ETIS evolves and data are forthcoming, new statistical methods such as Bayesian Networks could possibly make reasonable extrapolations of trade volumes at given points in time in the past. Once these reasonable estimates of trade are achieved, they could be used as a predictive tool to estimate future levels of, and trends in, trade.

Successful implementation of this system requires full co-operation of enforcement agencies in all CITES Parties. In addition, if TRAFFIC is to take on formal responsibilities for management of this enhanced information system, increased resources in its regional offices in Africa and Asia would be necessary.

### ***2.2 Monitoring of illegal killing of elephants (MIKE)***

Currently, there is no international monitoring system for illegal killing of elephants. Yet, the development of a long-term monitoring system for illegal killing of elephants is crucial to providing the information that should help guide future CITES' decisions regarding listing changes of the African and Asian elephant as directed in Resolution Conf. 10.10 and Decision 10.1.

A practical monitoring system based on a broadly representative sample of sites within the Range

States of the African and Asian elephants should be established to answer the questions posed by Resolution Conf. 10.10. The details of such a system are presented in Annex II of this report. Data for this monitoring system on illegal killing of elephants would come from several sources including official government reports from a national level to CITES, as well as additional government reports on specific sites and data from non-governmental organisations working in co-operation with governments at selected sites. Data collection must include not only information relating to elephants but also to other factors affecting their fate such as economic indicators, civil strife, and large-scale development activities. A proposed monitoring system is described in detail in Annex II, section 3. Although IUCN/SSC and TRAFFIC are aware of concerns regarding the feasibility of implementing this system, the proposed system is the minimum required to determine whether or not there is a continent-wide impact on levels of illegal killing resulting from COP 10 decisions. Development of the long-term system will require increased capacity in the chosen sites to monitor and report illegal off-take.

A procedure is required for handling unofficial, independent reports of elephant mortality. The CITES Secretariat should be called upon to assist in seeking verification of these reports with range states.

If IUCN/SSC is to undertake management and co-ordination of this long-term monitoring system, an increase in resources will be needed in addition to covering the initial costs for establishing a training programme and central data compilation and repository unit.

### ***2.3 Integration of the Information from the two Systems***

Independent analytical experts would be identified by IUCN/SCC and TRAFFIC to undertake separate analyses of the systems. The results of the analyses would be interpreted together by IUCN/SSC and TRAFFIC to determine trends in elephant populations, illegal killing and trade over time. The methodologies developed would ensure that each stage of analysis and interpretation benefits as much as possible from shared understanding of the data and problems within each system. Any formal reports to the CITES Standing Committee or future COPs should include integration of the systems at the joint interpretation stage.

To ensure the integration, and most efficient operation of the two systems, the responsibility for oversight, and for joint analysis and interpretation should rest with the Secretariats of IUCN/SSC and TRAFFIC, working in collaboration with, and in support of, the CITES Secretariat. Since TRAFFIC is formally a part of IUCN's Global Programme and there is an existing close working relationship between the Secretariats on matters relating to CITES, this integration should be efficient and effective.

### ***2.4 Training and Capacity Building***

CITES Resolution Conf. 10.10 recognises that capacity building is crucial to implementation of effective monitoring procedures. Training in data collection and compilation techniques for both systems is needed to ensure accuracy and reliability of the information going into the systems. Expertise in computer use and information management skills will enhance the abilities of Parties' to participate in these systems. Training is important to provide encouragement to the Parties that will be collecting data. Ideally, this training would be conducted on a regional basis or as part of existing capacity building programmes in the regions.

### ***2.5 Resource requirements***

The success of these monitoring systems would be dependent upon the total commitment and participation by the Parties and all organisations involved in the processes outlined. There would be significant resource implications to consider in meeting this commitment, particularly with regard to

the capacity building needs noted above. In addition, without adequate resources for IUCN/SSC, TRAFFIC, the CITES Secretariat and other co-operating agencies, the proposed information systems outlined here will not be possible.

Some elements of ETIS are already ongoing, principally the TRAFFIC BIDS initiative. TRAFFIC is actively seeking funds to enhance the seizures/confiscation database, but other elements of ETIS would require investment in development and implementation costs. A preliminary assessment of the resource requirements to establish ETIS includes: staffing; hardware acquisition; operational costs/maintenance; analysis; communications; training. TRAFFIC will develop a full cost estimate in collaboration with the CITES Secretariat.

The monitoring system for illegal killing of elephants, on the other hand, will require capital start-up costs as well as increased manpower and recurrent cost support. A full cost estimate of implementing the new system, MIKE, will only be possible once a definition has been made of the number of sites that would be necessary and sufficient to provide information to address the question of causality. This definition will require technical assistance from statisticians.

In considering resource implications it is important to recognise that operation of these monitoring systems would provide other conservation benefits, particularly for wider national elephant conservation initiatives.

### ***2.6 1999 Standing Committee Decisions***

In early 1999, the CITES Standing Committee will need to make a decision on the resumption of trade in African elephant ivory based on conditions outlined in CITES Decision 10.1. These conditions include agreement of the relevant Range States, the CITES Secretariat, TRAFFIC International and any other approved party, to international systems for reporting and monitoring legal and illegal trade in elephant products and illegal hunting within elephant Range States. If the systems proposed in this report are agreed to by the parties involved, the conditions set out in CITES Decision 10.1 relating to such reporting and monitoring will be met.

IUCN/SSC and TRAFFIC consider that unverified reports of illegal trade in elephant products or illegal killing of elephants may confuse the decision-making process at the 1999 CITES Standing Committee. CITES Decision 10.1 does not require evaluation of illegal killing or trade trends prior to the 1999 Standing Committee decisions. Nevertheless, the Standing Committee, in March 1998, could direct the CITES Secretariat to establish an interim verification and reporting process (as outlined in the attached workshop report). The Standing Committee must, however, be aware that any such interim reporting system is unlikely to be able to provide significant insights as to the causes of any illegal trade in elephant products or of illegal killing of elephants.

### **3. CONCLUSIONS**

Two parallel information systems are proposed to monitor trade in elephant products and illegal killing of elephants, implemented by IUCN/SSC and TRAFFIC, to greatly improve the ability of the CITES Parties to monitor the effect of their decisions on elephant populations and to implement the actions called for in the elephant-related Resolution and Decisions of COP10. The outputs of these systems could be used by the CITES process to make informed decisions in future.

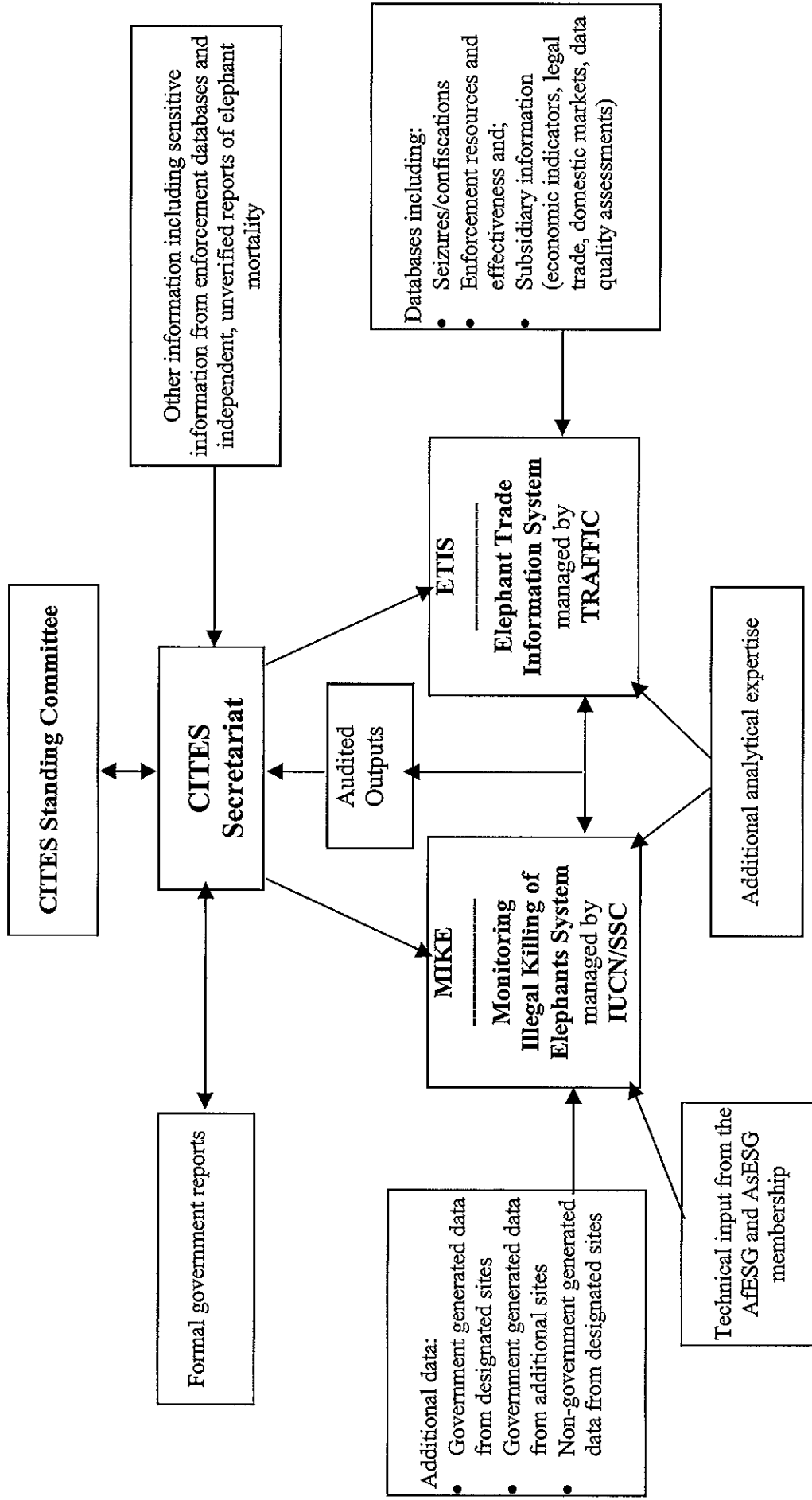
In the long term, implementation of these systems, with ongoing data collection and analysis, will be essential to any assessment of causality between changes in the status of elephants within CITES and observed trends in illegal killing and trade.

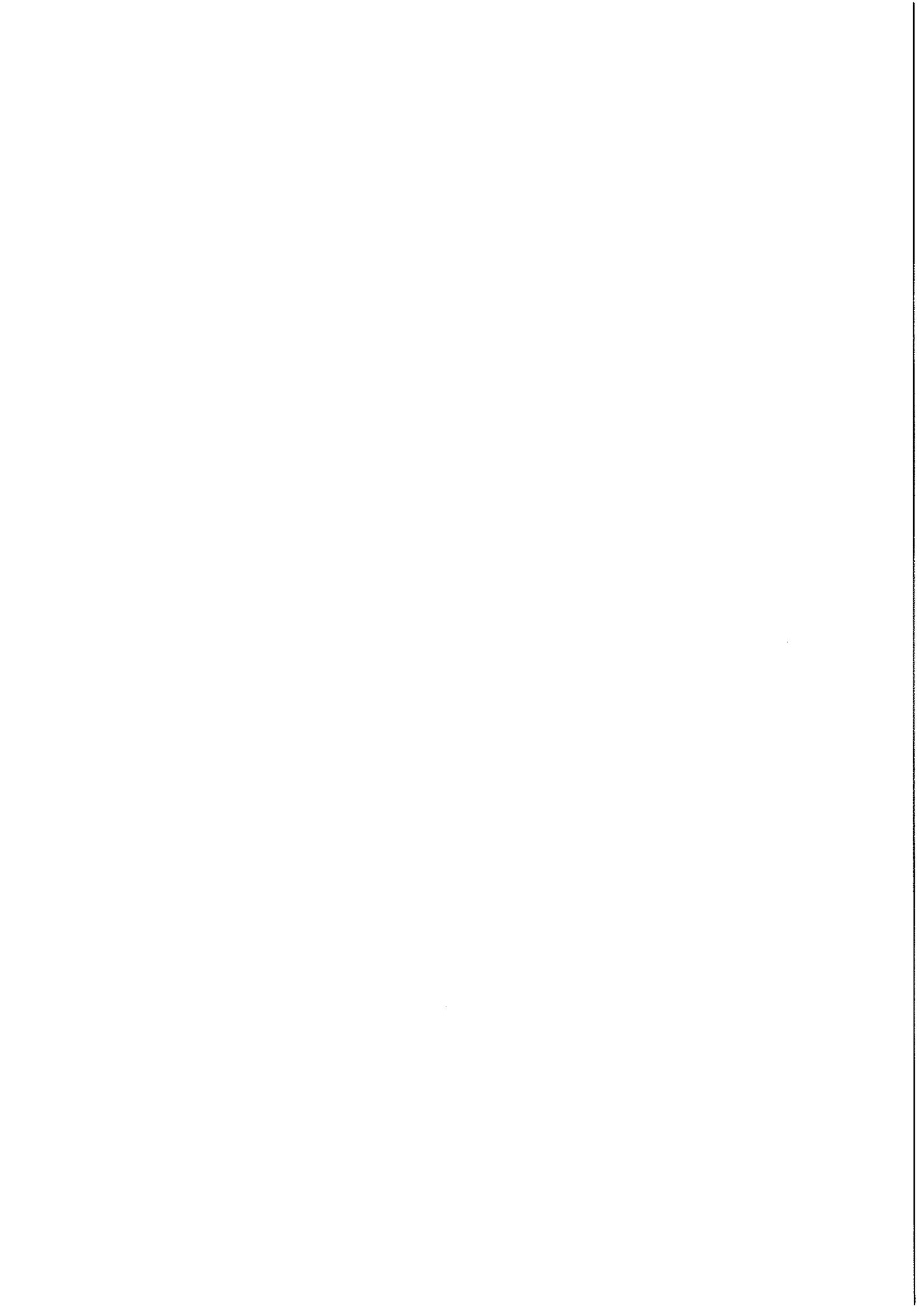
However, the systems proposed to meet the specific challenges of the COP10 Decisions have significant resource implications that should be carefully examined by the parties.

#### 4. RECOMMENDATIONS

- CITES Secretariat should encourage all Parties and other participating organisations, such as Interpol and the World Customs Organisation, to participate and contribute as much as possible to the development and maintenance of these two information systems.
- The CITES Standing Committee, CITES Secretariat, and the UNEP Elephant and Rhino Conservation Facility should seek the collaboration of TRAFFIC and IUCN/SSC in the development of a full implementation plan and funding proposal for these information systems. External funds should be sought as soon as possible.
- Parties to CITES and international donor agencies such as the GEF should consider the development of these monitoring systems as a priority for the use of funds designated for the conservation of biodiversity, including African and Asian elephants, which are an integral component of the ecosystems in which they occur. In addition, consideration should be given to application of funds accruing from the commercial or non-commercial sale of ivory under COP Decisions 10.1 and 10.2 to the development of monitoring capacity within the Range States.
- The CITES Secretariat, with input from IUCN/SSC and TRAFFIC, should establish priorities and methods for training and capacity-building in Range and significant Consumer States to facilitate the implementation of these systems.
- Analysis and interpretation of data under these monitoring systems should follow the guidelines suggested in the Elephant Monitoring Workshop Report (Annex II), and be subject to independent auditing where deemed important.
- The CITES Secretariat should develop a system for verification of unofficial, reports of incidents relating to the illegal trade and killing of elephants and a database for storing this information soon as possible.

Annex I – Information Systems Relationships





Annex II - Report from the Elephant Monitoring Workshop (19 pages total)