

## TWIX: ENHANCING GLOBAL WILDLIFE LAW ENFORCEMENT

*The TWIXes—EU-, AFRICA-, SADC- and now Eastern Africa-TWIX (Trade in Wildlife Information eXchange)—continue to go from strength to strength: EU-TWIX will soon be celebrating 15 years of supporting European law enforcement, and over 1,200 enforcement officers are now engaged with the platform; in Central Africa, AFRICA-TWIX has expanded its geographical scope in the last year to include Chad, Rwanda, and Burundi, and in Southern Africa, the SADC- (Southern African Development Community) TWIX website was launched in early 2020 providing access to resources on combating illegal wildlife trade to the 12 SADC countries that have joined SADC-TWIX: nearly 450 law enforcement officials have signed up to the mailing list and three international investigations have been facilitated by the TWIX system. In Eastern Africa, TRAFFIC has conducted scoping missions to Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania with positive responses, and a TWIX awareness workshop was held in early 2020 for agencies from those countries.*

*As well as strong progress with existing TWIXes, several other regions have also expressed interest in joining a TWIX or development of their own TWIX. TWIX was presented to the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Member States of the Horn of Africa Wildlife Enforcement Network (HAWEN) Executive meeting where strong support for TWIX was articulated, and scoping studies were undertaken in Ethiopia with a possible view to the country joining Eastern Africa-TWIX in the near future. Interest has been forthcoming from West Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, Central Asia and Southeast Asia, and discussions are under way to support improved communication and collaboration opportunities in those regions, including the possibility of further TWIX development. Progress made on three of the TWIX platforms is reported in more detail below:*

**AFRICA-TWIX:** The AFRICA-TWIX platform was established in Central Africa in 2016 based on the successful EU-TWIX model, operational since 2005. At the time of the launch in 2016, only four of the ten Central African Forests Commission (COMIFAC) countries were enrolled in the initiative, namely Cameroon, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Gabon, followed by the Central African Republic in 2017, and Chad and Rwanda in 2019. Burundi, who applied to join in 2020, brings to eight the total number of COMIFAC member States to be part of the platform. Even though application of the tool is ongoing through capacity building sessions for agencies at the national level, it is worth noting that the platform has connected, via a mailing list, up to 190 law enforcement officials from various government agencies, wildlife administration, environment, Customs, police, justice, and gendarmerie, all committed to curbing the rising trend of wildlife crime in Central Africa. Further, AFRICA-TWIX's website provides users with invaluable resources such as seizure records of wildlife species (currently 392 cases), 93 wildlife laws and regulations of AFRICA-TWIX country members,

131 wildlife identification tools, 75 training materials for capacity building, 67 links, the exchange of around 1,200 archived messages, as well as seven laboratories and 47 rescue centres for seized specimens. As a result, no fewer than 1,182 messages have been exchanged in respect of wildlife seizures, arrests, court decisions, and new dissimulation techniques used by criminal networks to escape detection, among other issues. One example of collaboration involves a seizure of ivory items in January 2020 at Maya Maya International Airport in the Congo, which demonstrated the ever-changing nature of methods used by criminal networks. In this case, two Chinese nationals working for a logging company were arrested with worked ivory jewellery concealed in cigarette packs. This new concealment method disclosed on the AFRICA-TWIX platform will keep alert other enforcement officials in the region.

AFRICA-TWIX participants have also triggered eight international investigations involving Central African countries, including one in October 2019 involving the seizure of 82 ivory tusks and 37 elephant tails by officials of Gabon's national parks agency (ANPN) on the border between Cameroon and Gabon in the TRIDOM landscape. The items were in the hands of Cameroonian poachers who fled, leaving behind their identification cards, when the patrol team infiltrated their forest base. This information was shared on the AFRICA-TWIX mailing list and alerted the prosecutor of the court at Djoum and the conservator of the Dja Biosphere Reserve who were put in contact with each other by the AFRICA-TWIX manager to enable further investigations to be conducted and details of the traffickers involved to be shared.

**SADC-TWIX:** In order to maintain the momentum built during country visits conducted in the SADC region during the course of 2018 and following a comprehensive consultation workshop convened in 2019, the SADC-TWIX mailing list has been operational since 21 May 2019 and the website was launched in January 2020. Close to 450 law enforcement officials from 12 Member States of SADC (Angola, Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe) are connected to the SADC-TWIX platform (mailing list and website), including officials from Customs, the police, wildlife and CITES Management Authorities, the judiciary, national security services, financial intelligence, forestry, and fisheries agencies. Between May 2019 and March 2020 close to 300 messages were exchanged via the mailing list, covering seizure alerts, the results of successful operations conducted by law enforcement agencies, and requests for assistance in species identification. The mailing list was also used by the CITES Secretariat to inform participating countries on CITES report deadlines, and on specific alerts. Although it has been operational for only a short time, SADC-TWIX has already facilitated enforcement actions in the SADC region including initiation of several ongoing investigations, including:

*1) Investigation between Madagascar and Mauritius:* A message on the seizure of six shark jaws imported from Madagascar was sent by the Customs agency in Mauritius. The goods were not covered by an export permit. Customs in Mauritius have provided their counterparts in Madagascar with the information at their disposal including detail of the exporter. This has allowed rapid identification of the individual and the company involved that is thought to be part of a larger network of traders in marine products from the region to Asia. The investigation is ongoing.

*2) Investigation between Namibia and Zambia:* Following a message sent on by the Namibian police on the arrest of a Zambian poacher with one rhino horn and one elephant ivory tusk, the Zambian enforcement authorities determined that the poacher is included in their wanted list and has previously been arrested for similar offences. The investigation to identify the possible counterparts or network continues.

The SADC-TWIX website was launched in January 2020 and is available in three languages: English, French and Portuguese. Users will shortly benefit from a Website User guide which has been developed in English and is currently being translated into French and Portuguese. The SADC-TWIX website contains a range of features including a database of seizures and an opportunity to create charts online and share documents; other resources include identification tools, training materials, legal texts that cover the 12 SADC Member States connected to the platform, and archives of the mailing list.

**Eastern Africa-TWIX:** From October 2019 to January 2020, TWIX was introduced to 23 law enforcement agencies in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, including Zanzibar. The response was positive and in early February 2020 an awareness event on TWIX was convened in Arusha, Tanzania. The event aimed to provide an overview of TWIX and its structure and to clarify questions and concerns by potential members; build the capacity of officials on TWIX implementation, and to provide an update on progress of TWIX implementation in Eastern Africa and a roadmap for the next key steps. About 35 government enforcement officials attended from Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania representing government ministries covering wildlife and forestry, as well as the police, Customs, the judiciary, public prosecution, financial intelligence, and intergovernmental organisations such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and INTERPOL. Among the updates provided were the results of scoping missions to introduce TWIX in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania (including Zanzibar), particularly among the countries' law enforcement agencies.

Due to interest in TWIX among further Horn of Africa nations (Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Sudan and Somalia), in early March 2020 TRAFFIC presented and demonstrated on TWIX at the 3rd meeting of the Executive Committee of IGAD-HAWEN Member States, together with law enforcement agencies and observer organisations in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. TRAFFIC also conducted a TWIX scoping mission to Ethiopia, involving the Ethiopian Customs Commission, Attorney General's Office, INTERPOL National Focal Office, Ministry of Federal Affairs, Centre for Criminal Investigations and Crime Prevention, and the Environment, Climate Change, and Forestry Commission.

Overall, there has been strong support from all agencies visited in Eastern Africa, seeing the platform as a means to enhance information and knowledge-sharing and initiate wildlife crime investigations. Most agencies have made a commitment to nominate users and focal points once the nomination screening process has been completed. Currently, 52 law enforcement officers have been nominated by law enforcement agencies in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania to be connected on Eastern Africa-TWIX. Developing and testing the TWIX mailing list started in April 2020.

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