



Federal Republic of Nigeria

Statement

By

Mrs. Laurentia L. Mallam

Honourable Minister of Environment

At

Ministerial Dialogue on Illegal Trade in Wildlife

A special Event of the

First Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly

UNEP, Nairobi

26 June 2014

Madam President, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates

1. Madam President, Let me commend you on your able leadership since your election as the President of this first and unique session of the United Nations Environment Assembly. Be assured of Nigeria's full support and cooperation. We also want to commend UNEP and the international community for making this Assembly a reality and for creating this dialogue on Wildlife Crime at this maiden session.

2. As a country rich in biodiversity, and concerned over the rapid rate of biodiversity depletion, especially through international trafficking, Nigeria pays high premium on matters of biodiversity conservation in general and on the protection of endangered fauna and flora in particular. We have a highly effective National Park Service, with 7 National Parks, where substantial sample of our wildlife is conserved.

3. Nigeria is signatory to virtually all global agreements on biodiversity. We ratified CITES in 1974, and our first national legislation evolved 30 years ago has been reviewed with inputs from CITES Secretariat, and the new legislation has been rated first category by CITES.

4. Notably, Nigeria has benefitted from training workshop conducted by the CITES Secretariat in Nigeria, and this has served as a veritable launch pad for concerted enforcement action in the country. We have put in place institutional framework and strategies that has given impetus to wildlife crime control in our country. These include:

a) The designation of the National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA) as CITES enforcement authority.

b) The establishment of the National Inter-agency Committee on CITES Enforcement, and through its synergistic efforts, seizures of illicit wildlife products were made and we were able to achieve for the first time, a number of wildlife crime convictions in our Law Courts.

- c) In line with INTERPOL guidelines, we are expanding the membership of our Inter-agency committee on CITES to upgrade it to the National Environmental Security Taskforce (NEST).
- d) Nigeria is participating with 4 other countries in the Barcode of Wildlife Project, supported by Google, to explore the application of DNA barcoding in wildlife Forensics.
- e) We are working with others in the West African sub-region to integrate wildlife matters into the recently launched West African Network for Environmental Compliance and Enforcement, which Nigeria hosts.
- f) We are involving the youths in our schools and National Youth Service Corps out-reach programmes comprising young university graduates, and enlisting them as vanguards for wildlife protection.

5. We leverage on international partnership and cooperation to improve wildlife crime control. We cooperate appropriately with CITES Secretariat, World Customs Organisation, Interpol, INECE, etc. We draw maximally from the highly beneficial outcomes of the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC), including the wildlife crime analytical toolkit. We also benefit from our participation in some of the capacity building workshops and joint global environmental crime control operations organised by members of the Consortium.

Madam President,

6. We have to continue pursuing the three-pronged strategy for handling the poaching and illegal wildlife crisis and this entails community empowerment, improving wildlife governance and discouraging demand for wildlife products.

7. Indeed no component of global biodiversity is in greater danger, than the endangered flora and fauna and therefore requires immediate conservation. We applaud the establishment of the African Elephant Fund, and appeal for even greater international cooperation. We

therefore call for the creation of a special window under the Global Environment Facility (GEF) for endangered species protection.

I thank you.