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Costa Rica and Gabon lead the way in calling for a new global agreement to combat wildlife crime

Hong Kong, May 17 - The presidents of Costa Rica and Gabon today jointly [called](#) for an international agreement to combat the scourge of wildlife crime, an illicit industry with impacts estimated at between \$1-2 trillion a year, one that threatens biodiversity globally, exacerbates climate change, and exposes people to the risk of future pandemics, according to The Global Initiative to End Wildlife Crime (EWC).

The EWC congratulated President Ali Bongo Ondimba of Gabon and Carlos Alvarado Quesada of Costa Rica on their exceptional environmental leadership, in calling for a Fourth Protocol under the UN Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime (UNTOC), amidst a growing biodiversity crisis, with scientists warning that one million species are at risk of extinction over coming decades, and of the links between how we interrelate to wild animals and the risk of future pandemics.

Sitting under the international criminal law framework, alongside agreements against human trafficking, migrant smuggling, and illicit manufacturing and trafficking in firearms, the proposed Protocol against wildlife trafficking would signify global recognition of the devastating scale, nature and consequences of wildlife crime. This is an illicit industry that is estimated to cost Governments in source countries between \$7-12 billion each year in lost fiscal revenues.

In its 2020 World Wildlife Crime [report](#), the UNODC recorded 180,000 seizures from 149 countries involving almost 6,000 protected species from 1999 to 2018, indicating that few if any countries are immune to the scourge of wildlife trafficking.

In response to the President's joint statement, John Scanlon AO, Chair of EWC, commended the presidents' leadership.

"We warmly welcome the farsighted leadership of the Presidents of Costa Rica and Gabon. Any new international agreement is always a heavy lift, but the time has clearly come to recognise the deadly consequences of wildlife trafficking, and to embed preventing and combating it into the international criminal law framework. EWC stands ready to support Costa Rica and Gabon in their visionary endeavour, and encourages all States to heed their call" said Scanlon.

Lisa Genasci CEO of ADM Capital Foundation, host of EWC welcomed the presidents' announcement, highlighting that, "While our planet's wildlife have increasingly been commoditised and traded illegally, the world has lost 80% of its forest elephants in ten years, 90% of black rhino since the

seventies, global abundance of sharks has declined 70% and recent research indicates a quarter of all terrestrial vertebrates are in trade”.

“I urge all those in positions of leadership to join hands in this endeavour. Quite simply, it could not be more important” said Will Travers OBE, President of the Born Free Foundation.

“Our economies, societies and livelihoods all rely on a healthy and functioning planet. This a timely and urgently-needed response from these two pioneering countries.” Said Douglas Flynn, Biodiversity Lead at SYSTEMIQ.

“Today's joint announcement from the Presidents of Costa Rica and Gabon further demonstrates their countries' strong national traditions of conservation leadership.” said Susan Herman Lylis, International Conservation Caucus Foundation, adding that the need for a global response to conserve biodiversity and to end wildlife crime is as clear now as ever.

Costa Rica and Gabon are global leaders in promoting nature conservation and recognising its centrality to protecting biodiversity, combating climate change, enhancing security, preventing future pandemics, and generating decent jobs.

The President’s call is being conveyed to the Opening Plenary of the [Thirtieth Session](#) of the UN Commission against Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, meeting in Vienna from 17-21 May, 2021.

Read today's joint statement [here](#) and a video highlighting the statement and impact of wildlife crimes [here](#).

EWC, is an initiative of organizations working on wildlife crime and trade related issues and is hosted by the Hong Kong based [ADM Capital Foundation](#), chaired by [John Scanlon AO](#) and with a Steering Group comprising the [Born Free Foundation](#), the [Global Environmental Institute](#) the [International Conservation Caucus Foundation Group](#), [SYSTEMIQ](#) and [The Food and Land Use Coalition](#). More information on the Initiative, including its Steering Group, the organizations that have signed up as Champions of the Initiative, and its Special Advisers and Supporters, can be found on the [EWC website](#).



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