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WILDLIFE

CRIME

WILDLIFE TRADE AND ZONOTIC DISEASES: GLOBAL INITIATIVE TO END WILDLIFE CRIME, THE ICCF GROUP AND LEGAL ATLAS HOST BRIEFING ON LEGAL BEST PRACTICE IN WASHINGTON D.C.

On **17 April 2024**, the Global Initiative to End Wildlife Crime (EWC), the [ICCF Group](#) and [Legal Atlas](#) hosted an in-person briefing on **legal best practices in the prevention and control of zoonotic diseases**, which brought together members of parliament from eight African States: **Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Malawi, Mozambique, Republic of the Congo, Tanzania and Zambia**. The event took place on the sidelines of the International Conference on the Miombo Forest Initiative, in Washington D.C.

The briefing session was moderated by Susan Lylis, Executive Vice President of the ICCF Group, and opened by Alice Giulia Brandt from the International Alliance against Health Risks in Wildlife Trade. The project's preliminary findings were presented by James Wingard, Founder and President of Legal Atlas, and Alice Pasqualato, Policy Officer at EWC.

THE PROJECT - The legal best practices presented during the briefing session were developed as a part of the project "Preventing Future Zoonotic Pandemics: Strengthening National Legal Frameworks and International Cooperation", funded by the GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit) through the [International Alliance against Health Risks in Wildlife Trade](#).

The overarching goal of the project, jointly implemented by EWC, the ICCF Group and Legal Atlas, is to **identify and address potential legal loopholes in national legislation dealing with zoonotic disease prevention and control in the context of wildlife trade**. The legal analysis produced throughout the project is meant to serve as a tool for policymakers in the three target jurisdictions – Angola, Botswana, and Zambia - who may wish to draft or amend legislation targeting the prevention and control of zoonotic diseases.

ZONOTIC DISEASES - It is estimated that, globally, about one billion cases of illness and millions of deaths occur every year from zoonotic diseases. Most human infectious diseases (**60-75%**) are derived from pathogens of zoonotic nature. Examples include Ebola, HIV, Rift Valley Fever, SARS, pandemic influenza H1N1 2009, Yellow Fever, H7N9, West Nile virus, Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV), and COVID-19 - all reported in recent times. Worryingly, in 2020, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) warned that an estimated **1.7 million currently undiscovered viruses** are thought to exist in mammal and avian hosts – half of which could have the ability to infect humans. Wildlife trade and related markets, particularly of certain high-risk species, can play a dangerous role in the emergence and re-emergence of zoonotic diseases.

LEGAL BEST PRACTICES – To uncover potential legal gaps within the target jurisdictions, Legal Atlas first focused on compiling, across 51 jurisdictions worldwide, a comprehensive set of best legal practices for preventing and controlling zoonotic diseases. These are statements that propose what content a law could have to achieve the desired outcome, e.g., minimise the risk of zoonotic disease emergence or effectively respond to one once it has already emerged.

The final report on legal best practices is currently undergoing a rigorous peer review and **is set to be released in the coming months**. It will be followed by a final 'gap analysis' report, which analyses the legal frameworks of Angola, Botswana, and Zambia, highlighting both strengths and opportunities to strengthen the legal responses to managing zoonotic disease in the context of wildlife trade.

The Global Initiative to End Wildlife Crime and its partners would like to, once again, thank the honourable members of parliament who attended the briefing session for their kind participation and active interest in the project.

