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Agenda Item 29.4

ENDORSEMENT OF THE AFRICAN ELEPHANT ACTION PLAN

(Prepared by Cameroon and Zimbabwe)

Summary:

This document contains a proposal for the amendment of Resolution 12.19 for the endorsement of the revised and updated African Elephant Action Plan (2023).

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ENDORSEMENT OF THE AFRICAN ELEPHANT ACTION PLAN

Background

1. The African Elephant Action Plan (AEAP (2010)) was first developed by the African Elephant Range States pursuant to instructions agreed to at the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in the Netherlands in 2007. The AEAP (2010) was finalized and approved as a consensus document by all 37 Range States in the margins of the CITES COP15 (Doha, 2010).
2. The AEAP (2010) was endorsed by CMS COP12 (Manila, 2017) as the principal strategy for the conservation of African Elephants under CMS through Resolution 12.19 *Endorsement of the African Elephant Action Plan*.
3. The 4th Meeting of the Signatories of the CMS Memorandum of Understanding concerning Conservation Measures for the West African Populations of the African Elephant (Online, 2021) agreed that the AEAP should replace the Medium-Term International Work Programme concerning Conservation Measures for the West African Populations of the African Elephant (*Loxodonta africana*) 2012-2014 and that they would implement the AEAP as it applies to West African elephants under the African Elephant Fund structure. They further agreed that if the AEAP was updated, it would automatically be used by the Signatories in its updated version.
4. Building on the experience of the first 12 years of implementing the AEAP (2010) and drawing on the collective expertise of the Range States as well as technical support from members of the IUCN/SSC African Elephant Specialist Group (AfESG) the revised and updated AEAP (2023) was developed through two workshop sessions in Pretoria (July 2019) and Nairobi (November 2019). Progress in the revision was then delayed in 2020 due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Revisions to the Action Plan resumed in the latter half of 2021 and over the course of 2022 until the final version was agreed in 2023.

Discussion and analysis

5. The AEAP (2023) presents a contemporary framework of continental priorities and objectives for the conservation of the African elephant in light of recent developments and remains a document that has been developed, owned and managed by the Range States, and as such, represents the issues identified and experienced by Africans and the objectives that need to be addressed in order to effectively conserve elephants in Africa across their range.
6. An important development that the AEAP (2023) considers is the separation by the AfESG of the mono-specific African elephant (*Loxodonta africana*) into two species *L. africana* (Savanna elephant) and *L. cyclotis* (Forest elephant).
7. New in the AEAP (2023) is the ranking of the Priority Objectives to reflect the continental consensus that conflict between humans and elephants is a priority that needs to be addressed with considerable urgency. There is also increased recognition of the need to understand and address the impacts of climate change in management planning for African elephant conservation.

8. The AEAP (2023) recognizes that there is a continually changing context for elephant management and that some new developments may not be in this version of the plan but may be better understood and included in future versions.
9. The AEAP (2023) continues to represent the views of the Range States and as such is a document that reflects a consensus of the broad objectives and activities identified as being most urgently required by Range States to protect and conserve elephants of both species across their range in Africa.
10. The AEAP (2023) forms a basis by which Range States can submit proposals for funding to the African Elephant Fund and other funding sources.
11. The AEAP (2023) should serve as a guide for any donor wishing to contribute funding towards the conservation of either species of elephant in Africa.

Recommended actions

12. The Conference of the Parties is recommended to:
 - a) discuss and adopt the proposed amendments to Resolution 12.19 contained in Annex 1 of this document; and
 - b) endorse as part of the draft amendments to Resolution 12.19 the African Elephant Action Plan (2023) in Annex 2 of this document.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO RESOLUTION 12.19

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Noting Resolution Conf. 16.9 of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) inviting other biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements, and in particular the contribution that CMS can make, to support the implementation of the African Elephant Action Plan through effective partnerships with African Elephant Range States,

Also noting Activity B13 of the Joint Work Programme of CITES and CMS 2015-2020 approved by CITES and CMS, requesting the CITES and CMS Secretariats to ensure connectivity with the African Elephant Action Plan and the associated African Elephant Fund,

Acknowledging Strategy 6.2 of the African Elephant Action Plan to use existing frameworks to promote cooperation on elephant conservation and management, and Strategy 6.2.3 to effectively implement the provisions of CMS and other multilateral environmental agreements relevant to elephant conservation and management,

Further acknowledging that the African Elephant Action Plan contains many conservation provisions that align with the purpose and goals of the Convention and about 75 per cent of African Elephants are part of transboundary populations, requiring a cooperative approach to their management, restoration, and maintenance,

Recalling the Memorandum of Understanding concerning Conservation Measures for the West African Populations of the African Elephant (*Loxodonta africana*) agreed to in 2005,

*The Conference of the Parties to the
Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals*

1. *Endorses* the African Elephant Action Plan (2023), contained in the Annex to this Resolution as the principal strategy adopted by the African Elephant Range States under the aegis of CITES for the conservation of African Elephants including on matters relevant to the CMS;
2. *Instructs* the Secretariat to actively exercise its role as an *ex officio* member of the ~~liaise with the~~ Steering Committee of the African Elephant Fund ~~in order to become an *ex officio* member,~~ and to:
 - a) cooperate with the CITES Secretariat and the United Nations Environment Programme to promote fundraising for the implementation of the African Elephant Action Plan as part of overall fundraising initiatives;
 - b) explore opportunities for partnerships with ongoing projects and programmes of CITES and the United Nations Environment Programme to support the African Elephant Range States in the implementation of the African Elephant Action Plan to achieve CMS objectives;
 - c) support the implementation of the African Elephant Action Plan through collaboration with African Elephant Range States to achieve CMS objectives;

- d) At the request of the African Elephant Fund Steering Committee, invite the Scientific Council (subject to its terms of reference) to provide advice on specific activities relating to the African Elephant Action Plan;
 - e) report to the Conference of the Parties at each meeting on relevant actions taken to implement this resolution;
3. *Urges* African Elephant Range States to make full use of the funding opportunities provided through the African Elephant Fund;
4. *Encourages* Parties, donors, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders to support the implementation of the African Elephant Action Plan and invites them to provide financial contributions to the African Elephant Fund for the implementation of CMS relevant activities under the African Elephant Action Plan.