



# ABIDJAN CONVENTION CONVENTION D'ABIDJAN

## Abidjan Aquatic Wildlife Partnership<sup>1</sup> Partnership Document

This partnership document presents the proposed non-binding, multi-stakeholder partnership to combat trade, illegal logging, direct consumption and other uses of endangered, threatened or protected coastal and marine species across West and Central Africa, facilitated by the Abidjan Convention Secretariat. The name *Abidjan Aquatic Wildlife Partnership (AAWP)* be used as the working, public-facing name for the Partnership.

### 1) Background

Increased trade (local and international) in, and consumption of, aquatic wildlife is a significant and immediate threat to aquatic species, including Aquatic Endangered, Threatened or Protected (A-ETP) species in many regions around the world.

There are a number of species that may not be acknowledged as A-ETP through national or regional legal instruments, but might be locally threatened as well. Key international agreements including the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), the Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) and the International Whaling Commission (IWC), all recognise terminology to describe the meat of such species as *wild meat* or *bushmeat*. When applied to aquatic species can be defined as the products derived from aquatic mammals, reptiles and birds that are used for subsistence and traditional uses, including shells, bones and organs, and also bait for fisheries. It is obtained through unregulated, and sometimes illegal, hunts as well as from stranded (dead or alive) and/or bycaught animals.

For the purposes of this document the term *aquatic wild meat* will be used when referring to this practice, and *A-ETP* will be used when referring to the species, noting that a generous interpretation of which species are included should be understood.

In West and Central Africa there is evidence of most countries consuming or using small cetaceans as food or shark bait. Sixteen cetacean species and over a thousand animals are landed each year in Ghana alone, but recent records show this activity also taking place in many other countries including Togo, Benin, Cameroon and Nigeria. At least twenty countries across West and Central Africa also record trade in manatees and marine turtles are regularly intentionally caught in local fisheries with meat sold in markets in Mauritania, Cabo Verde, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea. In some places the harvest of marine turtle eggs and nesting females takes place and in the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Togo and Benin, marine turtles are hunted for consumption at home or body parts to be used in traditional medicine. The sale of turtle shells to tourists also takes place across the region are known to trade or consume aquatic wildlife, includ-

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<sup>1</sup> Working public facing name of the Partnership. The 'Non-binding multi-stakeholder partnership to combat trade, illegal logging, direct consumption and other uses of endangered, threatened or protected coastal and marine species' name that was agreed via Decision at Abidjan CoP12 remains the official name .

ing manatees and cetaceans<sup>2</sup>. Seabird harvest is also an issue of importance with anecdotal information suggesting a significant problem in some regions<sup>3</sup>.

Whilst there are high-level policy discussions on terrestrial bushmeat providing overarching guidance, including the Collaborative Partnership on Sustainable Wildlife Management (CPW), coordinated by the CBD and FAO, with the involvement of CITES, CMS and other key stakeholders, there is no specific focus on managing aquatic wild meat harvest<sup>4</sup>.

The following recent decisions taken within international fora are relevant to the formation of the proposed Partnership.

1. In 2014 the African Union, concerned by the unsustainable use of African wild fauna and flora, and increase of illegal trade in wild flora and fauna in recent years, adopted the Executive Council Decision EX.CL/Dec/832 (XXV) during its 23rd Ordinary Session held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea. The Decision, specifically targets the illicit trade in African wild fauna and flora and called upon the Commission in collaboration with the relevant partners to develop an [African Common Strategy on Combatting Illegal Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora](#)<sup>5</sup>. The Strategy itself, an outcome of the International Conference on Illegal Exploitation and Illegal Trade of Wild Flora and Fauna in Africa held in Brazzaville in the Republic of Congo in May 2015, was agreed later in 2015 with the overall objective being *to prevent and reduce, with a view to eliminating the illegal exploitation and illegal trade in wild fauna and flora in Africa through an Africa wide strategic framework*.
2. In 2015, the Small Cetacean Sub-Committee of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) prioritized the issue of aquatic wild meat, due to concern that localized takes of small cetaceans were escalating and that some populations were being subject to unsustainable pressure. Three regional workshops were proposed, to take place between 2016 and 2018, in Asia, South American and Africa.
3. In 2016, at the second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-2) resolution UNEP/EA.2/Res.14 on Illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife products was adopted which recognises the importance of conservation and sustainable use of wildlife for achieving the goals of the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
4. At the twelfth Conference of the Parties to the Abidjan Convention (ABC COP12) in March 2017, Parties considered the direct consumption and other uses of A-ETP species as well as the African Strategy to Combat Illegal and Unlawful Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora in Africa. ABC COP12 adopted Decision CP 12/14<sup>6</sup> which invited the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) and the Collaborative Partnership on Sustainable Wildlife Management, the CMS Memorandum of Understanding concerning Conservation Measures for Marine Turtles of the Atlantic Coast of Africa, the CMS Memorandum of Understanding Concerning the Conservation of the Manatee and Small Cetaceans of Western Africa and Macaronesia, World Bank, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), West Africa Biodiversity and Climate Change (WA-BiCC), OceanCare, Born Free and other potential partners to form a partnership, lead by the Abidjan Secretariat, to develop an action plan to combat trade, direct consumption,

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<sup>2</sup> UNEP/CMS/COP12/Doc.24.2.3/Rev.1

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>5</sup> African Strategy on Combatting Illegal Exploitation and Illegal Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora in Africa (May 2015) <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/20825/African%20Strategy%20Strategy%20Africaine%20AU.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

<sup>6</sup> <http://cop12.abidjanconvention.org/images/Fichiers/Working%20Documents/ABC%20-%20WA-CAF%20-%20COP12%20-%206%20Eng%2025%20March.pdf>

illegal logging, and other uses of endangered, threatened or protected coastal and marine species. The development of a programme to assess wild meat harvest of aquatic mammal, reptile and amphibian species on sale in markets, the origins of the meat, and which species are traditionally caught and consumed was also strongly supported.

## 2) Overview of The Abidjan Aquatic Wildlife Partnership

Acting on the Decision passed at ABC COP12, the formation of a non-binding Partnership (hereafter referred to as *The Abidjan Aquatic Wildlife Partnership or The Partnership*), facilitated by the Abidjan Convention Secretariat is proposed. The proposed Partnership will develop an action plan and support the implementation of the African Common Strategy on Combatting Illegal Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora<sup>7</sup> in the specific focal issue of A-ETP species.

The necessity of The Abidjan Aquatic Wildlife Partnership comes from the existing insufficient implementation of relevant regionally agreed actions, including the CMS Memorandum's of Understanding (MoUs) concerning Conservation Measures for Marine Turtles of the Atlantic Coast of Africa, and concerning the Conservation of the Manatee and the Small Cetaceans of Western Africa and Macaronesia. Direct consumption and other uses of endangered, threatened or protected coastal and marine species currently 'falls between the cracks' of environment and fisheries Ministries, agencies and international processes which has meant that existing conventions, agreements and local regulations lack implementation and enforcement.

As outlined in Decision CP12/14, is envisioned that The Partnership could involve organizations including (but not limited to): CITES, CMS, CBD, FAO and the Collaborative Partnership on Sustainable Wildlife Management, World Bank, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), IWC, West Africa Biodiversity and Climate Change project (WA-BiCC), West Africa MPAs Network (RAMPAO), OceanCare, the MAVA Foundation and Born Free.

Participation of relevant representatives from national governments will also be critical to the effectiveness of The Partnership.

The development and implementation of an Action Plan will be a central focus of The Partnership. The Partnership may form Working Groups which have focus and responsibility for different parts of the Action Plan (corresponding with the agreed strategic approaches for The Partnership) and

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<sup>7</sup>The Strategic Framework of the African Common Strategy on Combatting Illegal Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora is built around seven core objectives to which the proposed Abidjan Aquatic Wildlife Partnership could contribute to and align its work.

The seven core objectives are:

1. Increase the level of political commitment to prevent, combat and eradicate illegal exploitation and illegal trade in wild fauna and flora as a serious crime;
2. Improve governance, integrity and enhance regional, inter-regional cooperation;
3. Enhance engagement with consumer states to reduce demand, supply and transit of illegal products of wild fauna and flora;
4. Promote the participatory approach with economic development and community livelihoods through sustainable use of wild fauna and flora;
5. Reduce, and prevent and eliminate the economic, security and stability impact of wildlife crime;
6. Increase capacity, information, advocacy and public awareness;
7. Increase the capacity of source and transit states in detecting illegal wild fauna and flora in products including in the exit and transit points

The Strategy also has seven strategic components: Political Commitment, Regional and International Cooperation, Enforcement and Compliance, Training and Capacity Development, Awareness and Advocacy, Knowledge, Information and Technology and Governance.

which report to the central Secretariat (Abidjan Convention) and Steering Committee (see proposed governance structure outlined in section 4 below).

Partners will contribute towards the development and implementation of The Partnership's activities, including the Action Plan. Contributions may be in the form of financial support, in-kind contributions and/or technical expertise.

### 3) Purpose

**Mission:** To directly support implementation of the African Common Strategy on Combatting Illegal Exploitation and Illegal Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora by addressing the issue of trade, capture, consumption and other uses of coastal and marine species, including Aquatic Endangered, Threatened or Protected (A-ETP) species, across West and Central Africa<sup>8</sup> through coordinated, collaborative and effective action at local, regional and international levels.

**Overall objective:** To achieve a significant reduction of the trade, capture, consumption and other uses of coastal and marine species, including Aquatic, Endangered, Threatened or Protected (A-ETP) species, across West and Central Africa<sup>9</sup>.

#### Specific Aims:

- To safeguard healthy populations of A-ETP species
- To identify and address the root causes of the trade, capture and consumption of A-ETP species across West and Central Africa
- To install sustainable ocean stewardship principles and practices in coastal communities across the region
- To empower local stakeholders with the tools, information and capacity to address issues threatening
- To bridge the gap between CMS, CITES, CBD and other relevant inter-governmental fora and coordinate complementary action between them
- To catalyse and guide effective action on the aquatic wild meat issue globally<sup>10</sup>

#### Strategic approaches

1. Empower stakeholders with knowledge
2. Address key driving factors
3. Build local capacity
4. Define and advocate for policy

### 4) Governance structure

Although informal and non-binding, The Partnership requires a governance structure to ensure the efficient coordination of its work and on-going functioning. The governance bodies that will make

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<sup>8</sup> As defined by the Abidjan Convention

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

<sup>10</sup> e.g. via the production of successful pilot projects from the Central and West African region that can be used as case studies to catalyse and guide effective action on similar issues in different countries and regions

up the operations of The Partnership are the Partners<sup>11</sup>, ad-hoc Working Groups, Secretariat<sup>12</sup> and Steering Committee.

It is proposed that a Steering Committee will be appointed to provide leadership and support to the Abidjan Secretariat, the ad-hoc Working Groups and the members. The Steering Committee may also approve:

- Annual budgets<sup>13</sup>
- The Action Plan
- Work plans of Working Groups
- Official reporting of the work of the Partnership
- Changes to governance approach or structure
- Dates, times, agendas for meetings

It is proposed that the Steering Group be made up of five membership seats, including one permanently reserved for the Secretariat and four which are changed on a biennial basis corresponding with the Abidjan Convention's Conference of the Parties (COP). The aim will be to have cross-representation of stakeholders within the Steering Group including at least one national government, one civil-society organisation and one intergovernmental organisation.

Organisations/bodies/governments can nominate themselves via the Secretariat for representation on the Steering Committee. Members of The Partnership will elect the Steering Group based on these nominations. Informal work may be done to ensure that all four organisations are not from the same stakeholder category. A voting mechanism will need to be in place to support this process.

The Steering Group number must remain odd, in case that a vote is required on any issue to support the functioning of The Partnership.

The Steering Committee should meet at least four times a year. The default method of meeting will be via remote communication facilitated by the Secretariat with in-person meetings planned to take place to coincide with Abidjan Convention COPs or more frequently if the Steering Committee agree is necessary on an ad-hoc basis.

Major decisions concerning The Partnership will need to be made at Abidjan Convention Conference of the Parties which take place once every two years.

## 5) Guiding Principles

- Socio-economic development of coastal countries and communities is dependent on the sustainable use of wild fauna and flora resources
- The direct consumption and other uses of A-ETP are intrinsically linked with issues of poverty, food security and human health and these synergies must be recognized and understood by stakeholders in order to tackle the aquatic wild meat issue effectively.

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<sup>11</sup>Defined as those organisations, bodies, governments or institutions who wish to join and who are applicable to join as per Abidjan Convention definitions and commit to working towards the objectives of the Partnership

<sup>12</sup>The Abidjan Secretariat may choose to mandate another organisation within the Partnership to facilitate the day-day Secretariat duties of maintaining the Partnership, leading its development and ensuring momentum of its activities.

<sup>13</sup>It is likely that there may be no dedicated budget to begin with and the Partnership may choose to operate through largely in-kind activity. However the necessity of budget for basic Secretariat running costs and some Partnership activities should be one of the first issues discussed by the Steering Committee

- Development, economic, and industrial activities including, distant water fisheries, IUU fishing, palm oil plantation and mining developments can all have a detrimental impact on local communities, limiting the access they have to natural resources and contribute to increased demand for direct consumption and other uses of endangered, threatened or protected coastal and marine species
- The cultural significance of direct consumption and other uses of A-ETP species to communities must be properly understood and used to inform the development of sustainable solutions and alternatives
- Accidental bycatch of aquatic animals is a separate fisheries issue with different solutions to aquatic wild meat. However, when accidental catch of animals develops into intentional catch it should be considered as aquatic wild meat and therefore under the mandate of The Partnership.
- Trade, consumption and other uses of fish species, including localized shark, fin-fish and shellfish fishing practices are outside the scope of The Partnership because they are generally considered under existing fisheries regulations/management regimes whereas takes of other aquatic species currently sit outside of any common regulatory framework
- The partnership will focus its work in Abidjan Convention countries and countries which are relevant to trade in A-ETP species in the West and Central African Region<sup>14</sup>.

## **6) Formation of The Partnership**

Consideration will be given to the following phases of development and ongoing areas of work to support The Partnership:

- (1) Development of The Partnership - including the engagement of all key partners and facilitation of initial meeting/s to agree on all key aspects of The Partnership and production of all supporting documents including the Concept Note, Action Plan, work plan templates and roadmap.
- (2) Governance and structure of the Partnership - agreement on the governance structure and functioning of The Partnership and roles and responsibilities of partners. There may be a need to appoint an interim Steering Committee to bridge the period leading up to the next Abidjan Convention Conference of the Parties. The Abidjan Secretariat may decide to mandate another organisation within the Partnership to facilitate the day-to-day running of the Partnership.
- (3) Acquisition of external funding such as through relevant foundations or institutions to cover the basic running costs of the Partnership including staff time, communications (web, phone), facilitation of any face-face meetings and travel if necessary.
- (4) Monitoring and Evaluation - A monitoring and evaluation mechanism will need to be agreed by partners which will work in alignment with the Action Plan which will include appropriate progress and impact indicators.
- (5) Maintenance of The Partnership - including facilitation of communications among partners, and externally

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<sup>14</sup> As defined by the Abidjan Convention