

Statement by Gabonese Republic – Draft #1

Prof. Lee White CBE, Minister for Environment, Forest and Oceans

CCPCJ Thirtieth Session

Opening Plenary 17 May, 2021

Thank you Chair,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Gabon thanks all involved in the organisation of this meeting, we congratulate the chair on his election and associate ourselves with the statements of the G77 and the Africa groups and of the Norwegian Minister and I would like to congratulate France on their proposed resolution on environmental crime.

Wildlife crime poses a serious threat to human and animal health. It is driving countless species towards extinction, degrading ecosystems and their ability to sequester carbon, depriving governments of much needed revenue, and exacerbating corruption, insecurity, and poverty.

Yet, despite the deadly consequences of illicit trafficking in wildlife, we have no global agreement on tackling this serious crime.

We have for far too long treated it as a trade-related rather than a crime-related issue.

Gabon and Costa Rica have some of the most unique biodiversity on the planet. We have led efforts to combat illicit trafficking of wildlife. But organised criminal gangs continue to illicitly exploit our wildlife in pursuit of personal profit, just as they do in other biodiverse rich countries, thereby undermining our concerted efforts to achieve sustainability. In their wake they leave our people and ecosystems impoverished.

We must ensure that the benefits of wildlife flow to local communities, legitimate investors, and the national budgets of source countries, and not to transnational criminal gangs.

If we aspire to meet our global commitments to tackle biodiversity loss and climate change, as well as emerging efforts to prevent future wildlife-related pandemics, then all countries must step up and treat wildlife crime as the serious and highly destructive crime that it is.

It is for these reasons, that earlier today President Ali Bongo Ondimba of Gabon, and President Carlos Alvarado Quesada of Costa Rica, released a joint statement calling for the fight against wildlife crime to be embedded into the international criminal law framework, by developing a Fourth Protocol focussing on the illicit trafficking in wild fauna and flora, under the UN Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime.

Now is the time to act. If we can collectively agree to end the scourge of wildlife trafficking, we will leave an enduring legacy for generations to come.

We will seek to advance our President's call at this Thirtieth session, and when it resumes in December of this year, and today, we are reaching out to all States to join us in this important endeavour.

Thank you