

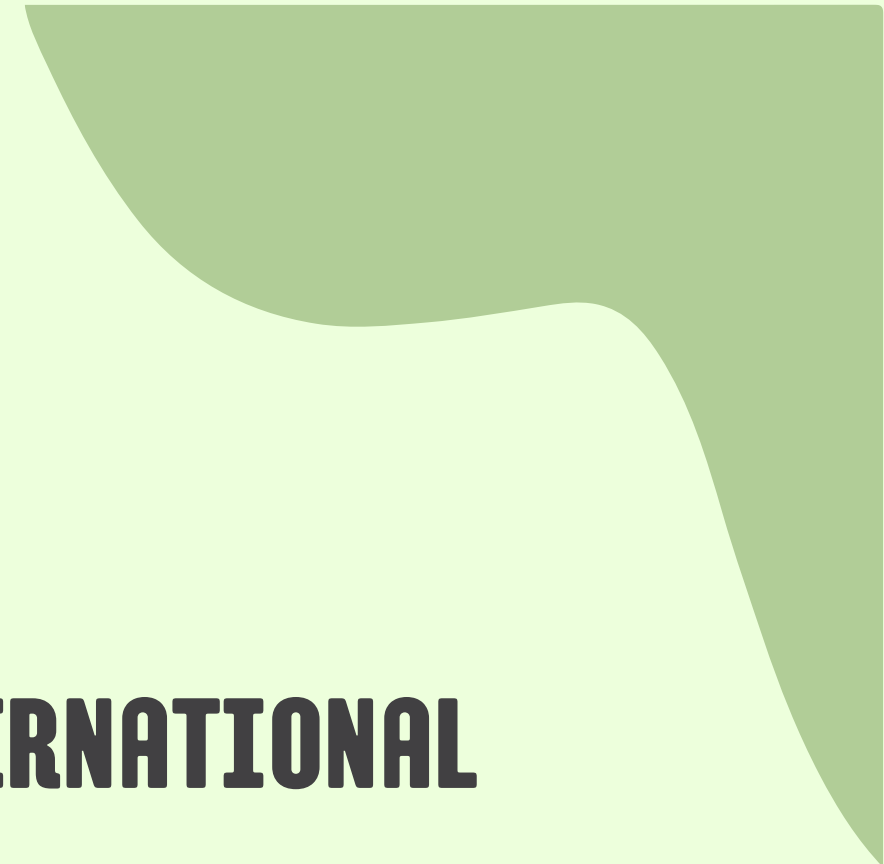


YOUTH DAY – JULY 10TH, 2025



**Regional Consultative Meeting of the UNEP Major Groups
and Stakeholders, Africa ahead of the 20th Ordinary
Session of the African Ministerial Conference on the
Environment (AMCEN-20).**





RAMSAR CONVENTION ON WETLANDS, CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA, AND CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF MIGRATORY SPECIES OF WILD ANIMALS

Introduction to the Conventions

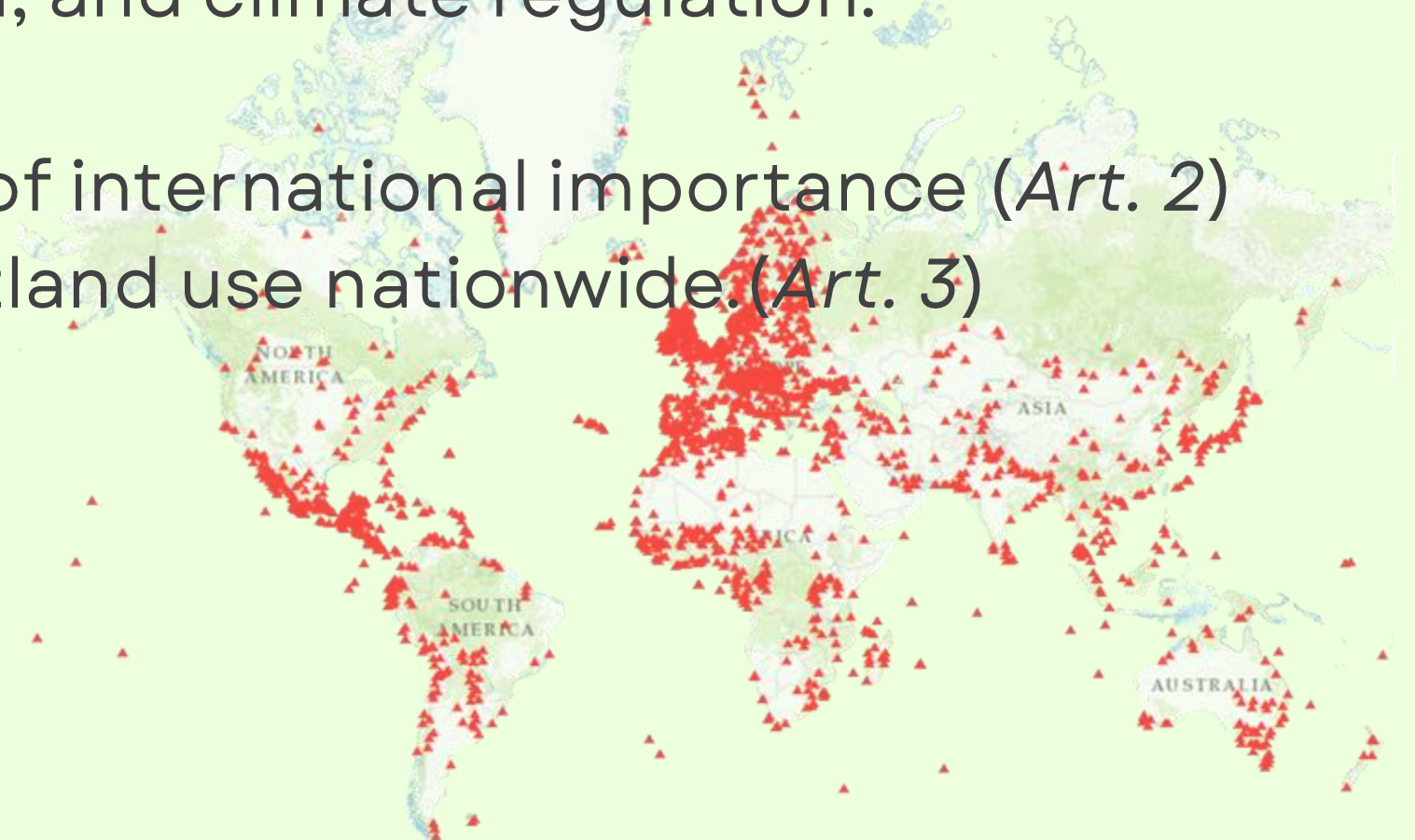
Presented by : Nancy Barisoa, 2025 AWF-
Wall Policy Fellow



RAMSAR CONVENTION ON WETLANDS



- **Adopted in** 2 February 1971 in Ramsar, Iran (World Wetlands Day)
- **Entered into Force in** 21 December 1975
- A global treaty for the conservation and wise use of wetlands(over 2,500 Ramsar Sites worldwide)
- Recognizes wetlands as ecosystems critical for biodiversity, water security, flood control, and climate regulation.
- Requires Parties to:
 - Designate Ramsar Sites of international importance (*Art. 2*)
 - Promote sustainable wetland use nationwide. (*Art. 3*)
- Currently: 172 Parties



CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA (CITES)

- **Adopted in** 3 March 1973 in Washington, D.C., USA (World Wildlife Day)
- **Entered into Force in** 1 July 1975
- A legally binding international treaty regulating international trade in wild animals and plants.
- **Aim:** Ensure trade does not threaten species' survival.
- Covers both fauna and flora (Around 25,000 plant species and 5,000 animal species)
- Operates through three Appendices:
 - **Appendix I:** Species threatened with extinction - trade is mostly prohibited. (Gorillas, sea turtles, black rhino,..)
 - **Appendix II:** Species not necessarily threatened, but trade must be controlled. (Penguins, corals,..)
 - **Appendix III:** Species protected in at least one party asking others to help control trade(Jaguar, African Elephants,...)

Currently: 185 Parties, *including all 54 African countries*



CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF MIGRATORY SPECIES OF WILD ANIMALS (CMS OR BONN CONVENTION)



- **Adopted in** 23 June 1979 in Bonn, Germany
- **Entered into Force in** 1 November 1983
- An international treaty aimed at conserving migratory species across their entire migratory range.
- Focuses on wild animals that move between countries or continents.(1,189 migratory animal species)
- Operates through two Appendices:
 - **Appendix I:** Endangered migratory species – full protection required.(Green Turtle, Steppe Eagle,..)
 - **Appendix II:** Species needing international cooperation.(African elephant, Spinner Dolphin,...)
- Currently: 133 Parties

AFRICA'S PROGRESS ON ENVIRONMENTAL CONVENTIONS

**CITES, Ramsar, CMS
Status, Challenges & Recommendations**

Presented by : Khouloud HAMROUNI,
2025 AWF-Wall Policy Fellow



CITES – PROGRESS IN AFRICA

- All 54 African countries are CITES parties.
- **African Carnivores Initiative (ACI)** : launched formally in 2018 as a joint initiative of CITES and CMS. Its goal is to conserve four iconic African carnivores:

*Acinonyx
jubatus*



*Lycaon
pictus*



*Panthera
leo*



*Panthera
pardus*



CITES – PROGRESS IN AFRICA

- **The African Group of Negotiators on Wildlife (AGN-Wildlife)** created by AMCEN in September 2022 to unify Africa's CITES positions.

This was a strategic move to ensure unified African voices ahead of CITES COP19.

RAMSAR – PROGRESS IN AFRICA

- Over 400 Ramsar sites designated (~112 million ha).
- **SARRI* (Southern Africa Region Ramsar Initiative)** launched at COP14 (2022): one of the significant achievement.

* SARRI operates under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands **to enhance the implementation of the Convention's objectives and strategic plans**. Recognizing the critical importance of wetlands in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, a proposal to establish the SARRI was submitted and adopted at the Ramsar COP14 in November 2022.

- Several countries have integrated wetlands into climate and biodiversity strategies (e.g., Mali, Kenya, Uganda).

CMS – PROGRESS IN AFRICA

- 46 African countries are CMS signatories – Highest global representation.
- Development and implementation of Single Species Action Plans (SSAPs):
 - For marine turtles, dolphins, African elephants, and sharks.
 - Marine Megafauna Week (Senegal 2023) updated action plans on turtles, sharks, dolphins.
 - Cross-border cooperation emphasized for migratory species.
- CMS integration into National Plans in Mauritania, Senegal, Tanzania, and Cameroon.



INTEGRATION OF YOUTH AND MAJOR GROUPS, INCLUDING WOMEN, INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES.

Africa has the youngest population in the world, and we are already seeing youth drive change—from conservation campaigns to participation in CoPs.

- For example, UNEP's Major Group for Children and Youth (MGCY) has supported African youth delegates to participate in Ramsar COP14 and CMS COP13, bringing forward voices often excluded from formal policy.
- EN 2022, ministers called for better youth engagement in national processes. In Tunisia, Kenya, and Ghana, we've seen young leaders co-design wetland restoration projects and advocate for sustainable species management.

THE INTEGRATION OF YOUTH AND MAJOR GROUPS, INCLUDING WOMEN, INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES.

- **Emerging global youth engagement frameworks** (e.g. CITES Global Youth Network) are shaping cross-generational governance paradigms.
- RAMSAR COP 15 will take a decision on youth engagement in the convention. The Australian government is sponsoring a motion to entrench youth engagement in the convention.
- In 2025, CITES hosted **its first-ever Youth Forum**, marking a historic step toward inclusive conservation governance.

This initiative is highly commendable, as it acknowledges the essential role of youth in biodiversity protection and decision-making.

- Ramsar is expected **to negotiate a decision on youth engagement at COP16**. (While we hope it will be adopted, its adoption is not yet guaranteed)

KEY CHALLENGES

- Africa faces one of the fastest rates of biodiversity loss globally, exacerbated by weak protected area management and resource competition.
- Biodiversity financing is fragmented, insufficient, and often externally driven, with minimal long-term alignment with African priorities.
- While the African Group of Negotiators (AGN) on Wildlife has been established, **it is not yet operational**, which limits Africa's coordinated influence and advocacy on wildlife-related matters in international negotiations.
- Limited structured inclusion of IPLCs, women, and youth undermines the legitimacy and sustainability of GBF implementation.
- Insufficient data for MEA reporting and planning.

AFRICA'S INTERESTS/ PRIORITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Presented by : Mathieu Ayissan, 2025
AWF-Wall Policy Fellow





INTERESTS/PRIORITIES

- **Sustainable Use and Livelihoods:** ensuring that CITES decisions support the sustainable use of wildlife resources, particularly for species with healthy populations, to benefit youth and local communities and generate revenue for conservation.
- **Combating Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT):** strengthen international support and national capacity to effectively combat poaching and illegal trafficking, which decimates its valuable wildlife.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Develop CITES-aligned programs that facilitate youth participation** in sustainable wildlife value chains, including community-based conservation, ecotourism, and legal trade, ensuring fair benefit-sharing and economic empowerment
- **Commend CITES for its first Youth Forum and recommend its institutionalization** as a recurring feature within the CITES work program, establishing a clear pathway for continuous youth engagement and influence
- **Secure support for training programs** that build the capacity of young Africans in CITES implementation, wildlife management, and policy advocacy.



RAMSAR-INTERESTS/PRIORITIES

- **Wetland Restoration and Resilience:** prioritizes actively involving youth in hands-on wetland restoration and sustainable management projects, recognizing their energy and capacity for on-the-ground action.
- **Mainstreaming Wetlands into Development:** integration of wetland conservation and "wise use" into national development plans and climate change strategies to leverage their natural benefits.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Establish youth-led wetland restoration and management programs** that provide practical training, mentorship, and opportunities for youth employment in the green economy.
- **Support and advocate for the adoption of the Australian government's motion at Ramsar COP15**, ensuring the formal and robust consolidation of youth engagement as a core commitment of the convention.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Launch youth-focused innovation challenges and hackathons** to develop technology-driven solutions for wetland monitoring, sustainable use, and climate change adaptation.
- **Integrate comprehensive wetland conservation modules** into primary, secondary, and tertiary education systems across African nations, emphasizing ecological functions and sustainable practices.



INTERESTS/PRIORITIES

- **Protection of Migratory Corridors and Habitats:** identification and safeguard of the critical migratory routes, breeding, and feeding grounds that span its diverse landscapes.
- **Addressing cross-border threats:** fostering international and regional cooperation to mitigate transboundary threats, including illegal killing and the impacts of climate change, which disproportionately affect migratory species.



CMS-RECOMMENDATIONS

- Establish a dedicated CMS "**Youth for Migratory Species Fund**" to directly finance youth-led research, monitoring, and conservation projects along critical migratory routes in Africa, fostering data collection and local expertise.
- Develop and implement a CMS Africa Youth Network that facilitates formal cross-border exchanges, joint conservation projects, and policy advocacy training for young people across migratory pathways, leveraging successful models like AEWA's (**African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement, Memoranda of Understanding** (MoUs: elephant, gorilla, marine turtles, ...)) stakeholder engagement.



CMS-RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Support youth-led transboundary conservation initiatives and digital platforms** that connect young people across Range States, fostering shared understanding and collective action for migratory species protection.
- **Mobilize youth groups to advocate for the protection and restoration of critical migratory corridors**, engaging with policymakers and infrastructure developers to minimize impacts on species movement.



CMS-RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Establish dedicated training programs for young African professionals in international environmental negotiations**, focusing on legal frameworks, scientific argumentation, and strategic alliance-building, to enhance their effective participation in COPs and intersessional meetings.
- **Advocate for the creation of specific funding mechanisms within each convention's financial architecture**, or through broader environmental funds, dedicated to supporting youth-led conservation projects and initiatives in Africa



RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Scale regionally anchored negotiator training programs** such as the **AWF Policy Fellowship** and the **Conservation Leadership Fellowship** to create a pipeline of African biodiversity diplomats.
- **Invest in long-term institutional partnerships** with African universities, civil society, and youth platforms to build endogenous capacity.

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THANK YOU