Statement by CMS Executive Secretary, Bradnee Chambers to the 15th Session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), Cairo
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Honourable Ministers, one of the greatest resources that Africa has is its wildlife. It is worth billions of dollars to your tourism industries, still billions more to your agricultural industries and irreplaceable to your cultural heritage and the future prosperity of your children. Yet if current trends continue, the decline of wildlife – and particularly migratory species – will mean that this resource will be taken from you. A decline due to wildlife crime, due to the lack of implementation of the key biodiversity treaties such as CMS and due to development that does not fully take into account the interests of your natural capital - your wildlife.

We must work together to ensure that this does not happen further. The Convention on Migratory Species is the only international treaty of its kind. It is the only treaty that protects species across their range, the areas in which they move to survive, to feed and to breed. In Quito last year, CMS celebrated its 35th anniversary with its largest COP yet and for the first time held a ministerial segment that looked at ways in which countries can employ Green Economies and innovative legal approaches to protecting wildlife such as through the rights to nature.

The COP was a milestone in many other respects too. It set up key task forces to protect migratory birds from illegal trapping and poisoning and a new task force to ensure that the shift to renewable energy is done in a way that does not create more biodiversity loss by creating conflicts with migratory animals. And it took important decisions to halt wildlife crime and reduce marine debris. Countries placed their trust in the treaty by adopting 31 new diverse species, species that included 21 shark and ray listing and showed that countries see CMS to be effective in protecting not only migratory birds but also other important terrestrial and marine species that can only be safeguarded through international cooperation. Because regardless of the domestic protection one country can provide, migratory animals move between states and often between continents and across oceans and seas. There are now over 1,000 migratory wild animals under CMS protection ranging from African elephants to Blue whales and from butterflies to flamingos.

I am here in Cairo this week to meet Ministers to see how we can step up action to protect these animals and gain governments’ support to use CMS more effectively to protect our natural heritage. This would include getting African countries more involved in implementing the Convention and for African countries to make it part of their NBSAPs, their UNDAFs and poverty reduction strategies. After all, your financial assets are not your only valuable resources in the country, your natural capital is equally - and sometimes even more - valuable yet it remains outside of important national strategies. After thirty years of treaty making we have created some key biodiversity instruments that are complementary. Many countries are realizing that it is the smaller conventions such as CMS that are more focused and are the most practical to implement on the ground. I am also here this week to meet the last ten
countries in Africa that still have not signed and ratified the Convention so that CMS can boast that it has universal African membership.

Honourable ministers, wildlife is key to your development. The SDGs have shown this by including it in the goals and targets under the proposal to the General Assembly and the High Level Forum this September. Please put CMS on your radar screen as a treaty that you can work through to protect some of the most valuable natural capital that you own.