

WCC-2016-Res-014-EN

Combatting the illegal poisoning of wildlife

MINDFUL of existing Resolutions which refer to pesticide issues, including General Assembly Resolutions 8.12 *Limitation of use of pesticides in National Parks* (Nairobi, 1963), 10.27 *Pesticides* (New Delhi, 1969), 16.5 *International trade in pesticides and other biocides* (Madrid, 1984) and World Conservation Congress Resolutions 3.079 *Conservation of Gyps species of Vultures in South and Southeast Asia* (Bangkok, 2004), and specifically 5.137 *Support for a comprehensive scientific review of the impact on global biodiversity of systemic pesticides by the joint task force of the IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC) and the IUCN Commission on Ecosystem Management (CEM)* (Jeju, 2012);

CONSIDERING that despite these existing Resolutions, a stronger statement is now needed from IUCN Members focusing in particular on intentional poisoning of wildlife in Africa, the poisoning of migratory birds, and the illegal use of poison baits in the European Union;

AWARE of the need for medical and veterinary medicines, and accepting the essential role of chemicals in maintaining world health, including responsible pesticide use to support sustainable food production and security;

ALSO AWARE that abuses in the use of such chemicals decimates wildlife resources and contaminates the environment and water resources, thus negatively affecting human livelihoods and economies;

NOTING that the chemical industry internationally is subject to legislative controls which regulate use, transboundary movements, disposal and other actions;

NOTING that despite such national legislative controls on the chemical industry, pesticides are still extensively abused in Africa to kill and harvest wildlife as food, and to eliminate predators and other animals that are the focus of human-wildlife conflicts;

ALARMED that toxic chemicals being used to poison wildlife are widely available in several African countries and that the current legislative framework has allowed the escalation of incidents to increase due to weak law enforcement and control;

AWARE that species are being deliberately poisoned to facilitate poaching, as retaliation for human-wildlife conflict incidents and as a means to kill animals for human consumption;

RECOGNISING that a dramatic increase in the incidence and scale of the use of poison is causing catastrophic declines in wildlife populations (e.g. vultures, elephants, lion, wild dogs) across Africa, which may precipitate a biodiversity crisis and have potential consequences for human health;

CONCERNED that, despite evidence of severe wildlife die-offs, systematic tracking of poisoning incidents across Africa is extremely limited;

RECOGNISING that poisons are used for fishing in Africa and globally, but knowledge of the potential impacts of these in freshwater ecosystems is limited and urgently needed;

NOTING that although poisoning is often targeted at particular species (many of which are listed as Threatened on the IUCN Red List), the consequences are frequently unintentional and affect any species scavenging on poisoned carcasses;

RECOGNISING the need for more focused and specific recommendations and work to ensure adequate control and enforcement in relation to the production, sale and use of pesticides that pose hazards to wildlife and the environment in Africa;

ENCOURAGING, as appropriate, the need for collaboration between INTERPOL, the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the UN Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Global Legislators Organization for a Balanced Environment (GLOBE) International, the International Network for Environmental

Compliance and Enforcement (INECE), and others, to combat this form of environmental crime;

ACKNOWLEDGING that the IUCN Species Survival Commission released a position statement in 2014, *The threat posed by unregulated use of poison to Africa's biodiversity, ecosystems and human health*, to raise the profile of this critical issue and to seek effective strategies to address the root causes of the poisoning problem;

DEEPLY CONCERNED that many affected species have vital roles in maintaining ecosystem health and that their removal, or depletion of their populations, will have significant negative ecological and economic impacts;

NOTING the 2014 global review of the ecological effects of poisoning on migratory birds (UNEP/CMS/COP11/Inf.34) prepared by the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) Preventing Poisoning Working Group, which identified the following types of poisoning as causing extensive mortality of migratory birds: agricultural insecticides and rodenticides; poison baits; veterinary pharmaceuticals; and lead used for hunting and fishing;

RECALLING UNEP/CMS/Resolution 11.15 *Preventing Poisoning of Migratory Birds* adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the CMS at its 11th Meeting (Quito, 4-9 November 2014) which adopted 'Guidelines to Prevent the Risk of Poisoning to Migratory Birds' and called for the continuation of the CMS Preventing Poisoning Working Group to facilitate concerted efforts, actions and procedures to prevent poisoning of migratory birds globally;

CONCERNED that the categories of poisoning with greatest impacts on migratory birds are also a significant cause of mortality for a wide range of other taxa;

WELCOMING initiatives to implement the CMS guidance via regionalised guidance and action plans including by BirdLife International in the Red Sea-Rift Valley, by the European Union (EU), and by CMS and the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) in southern Africa;

CONCERNED that in the EU the illegal poisoning of wildlife in the countryside using poisoned-baits is one of the most widely used predator eradication methods and is a significant threat to biodiversity, causing population declines and/or regional/national extirpations of some highly threatened bird species and some species of mammals;

RECALLING that the above-mentioned UNEP/CMS/Resolution 11.15 recommends the adoption of action plans to eradicate the use of poisoned baits;

RECALLING ALSO IUCN Resolution 4.021 *Elimination of the illegal use of poisoned bait as a method for controlling predators in the EU* (Barcelona, 2008), which urges the EU and its Member States to promote national action plans to prevent the illegal use of poisoned baits;

NOTING, however, that since 2008 very few Member States of the European Union have adopted actions plans to prevent the illegal use of poisoned baits as a method of predator control;

FURTHER NOTING that some EU Member States, including Spain, have approved action plans and strategies that, if adopted and properly developed EU-wide, could effectively be used to tackle the illegal use of poison;

RECOGNISING the proposal for an EU Action Plan adopted in 2015 by the European Network against Environmental Crimes (ENEC), consisting of members from EU BirdLife partners, other EU conservation NGOs and European networks involved in the fight against environmental crimes;

CONSIDERING that the adoption of such an action plan to prevent illegal poisoning of wildlife in the EU would increase the actions taken by Member States to combat this serious risk to threatened species;

AWARE that poisoning is often the symptom of underlying conflicts of various types and that to prevent poisoning, sustainable solutions need to be found for such underlying conflicts deploying a range of tools that can be transferable across taxa and countries;

AWARE that besides illegal use of poisons, the legal use of poisons can inadvertently have adverse effects on wildlife;

NOTING that companies, as the financial beneficiaries of the agricultural chemicals they produce, should share the responsibility of addressing the damage caused to wildlife and ecosystems through their misuse as poisons;

RECOGNISING that poisons can be a valuable conservation management tool, for example in the elimination of invasive alien species, and that careful and restricted use of fish poisons can be important for scientific collections, to identify areas of biodiversity importance and conservation need (where other methods fail to account for full species diversity and hence conservation priority); and

NOTING the substantial expertise and experience among IUCN Commissions and Members regarding the impacts of poisoning on fauna, and on how to prevent these impacts;

The World Conservation Congress, at its session in Hawai'i, United States of America, 1-10 September 2016:

With regard to the overall issue of poisoning of wildlife:

1. REQUESTS the Director General, Commissions and Members to undertake a global situation analysis regarding the impacts of poisons on wild fauna, identifying priorities for conservation action in terms of threatened species, types of poisoning and geographical areas and gathering evidence of successful interventions to prevent poisoning;

With regard to the intentional poisoning of wildlife in Africa:

2. REQUESTS the Director General and Commissions to:

a. include activities on intentional, illegal poisoning in Africa in the IUCN Programme 2017-2020; and

b. establish strong collaboration with INTERPOL, ICCWC, UNEP, FAO, GEF, UNICRI, UNODC, GLOBE International, INECE, and others to combat this form of environmental crime;

3. REQUESTS the IUCN Commissions to:

a. raise awareness of the problem of intentional, illegal poisoning of wildlife in Africa at the highest political levels across relevant sectors;

b. elicit global attention to the scope and severity of this issue; and

c. assess and fill knowledge gaps relating to paragraphs 3a and 3b above;

4. CALLS ON all IUCN Members in Africa to recognise targeted illegal poisoning as a major threat to biodiversity and to implement urgent action to:

a. increase grassroots and community-based educational initiatives to develop and disseminate good practice for problem animal control and enforcement;

b. develop, adopt and enforce adequate and appropriate legal frameworks and legislation, including regulations, policies and standards, to control, ban or restrict the sale, storage, distribution, use and disposal of toxic chemicals used in the indiscriminate killing of wildlife;

c. introduce vigorous pursuit and prosecution of those contravening such laws, and enforce penalties on those found guilty of wildlife poisoning events that reflect the serious nature of the crime and act as sufficient deterrent to prevent the perpetration of such acts in future;

d. ensure that enforcement agencies are competent and appropriately funded;

- e. train and support enforcement officers and conservation staff to act swiftly and minimise the damage caused by poisoning;
- f. enhance analytical capacity and increase sampling, testing, monitoring and reporting efforts of relevant institutions across the region; and
- g. Collaborate with human and agricultural health entities to monitor toxicity threats presented by chemicals, and seek coordinated solutions to the underlying issues contributing to human- wildlife conflict driving poisoning events;

With regard to the intentional poisoning of migratory birds:

- 5. ENCOURAGES the Director General, Commissions and Members, as appropriate, to promote the implementation of the CMS Preventing Poisoning Guidelines, including through support or engagement as appropriate with the CMS Preventing Poisoning Working Group, and to ensure synergies with work to prevent poisoning of other taxa besides migratory birds;
- 6. ENCOURAGES governments, as appropriate, to implement the CMS Preventing Poisoning Guidelines and to support or engage as appropriate with the CMS Preventing Poisoning Working Group;

With regard to the intentional use of poison baits in the European Union:

- 7. ENCOURAGES IUCN Members and Commissions, international organisations, and the EU and its Member States to use all available means to eliminate the illegal use of poisoned baits in the countryside; and
- 8. URGES the EU and its Member States to support the implementation of CMS Resolution 11.15 by adopting an Action Plan to prevent illegal poisoning of wildlife in the EU, considering the recommendations and proposals made by organisations involved in the fight against poisoned baits;

With regard to the intentional use of fish poisons in freshwater ecosystems in Africa and globally:

- 9. ENCOURAGES IUCN Members and Commissions to assimilate information on the use of fish poisons and their effects on ecosystems; and
- 10. ENCOURAGES governments to develop grassroots educational initiatives on the effects of using fish poisons, and disseminate advice on alternative good practice for fish harvesting.