



Global Problems Need Global Solutions

“Rolling out an electronic permit system [within CITES] would have an immediate, positive benefit in driving down the illegal trade. It hasn’t been done to-date because too many countries want to maintain plausible deniability about the abuses of the legal trade and the laundering of illegal items the paper system allows.”

Transnational Crime Investigator, 2019.



Active For Animals

The President
The White House,
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.,
Washington, DC 20500.

Sept 16, 2024

Implementing CITES Electronic Permitting To Tackle Illegal Trade In Wild Species

Dear Mr. President:

Firstly, I want to thank you for your service to our country and I want you to know how grateful I am that you have been our President for the past four years. As I watch the difficulties we face as a nation, I take some comfort that we can overcome the current political wranglings when I see that some issues still bring Democrats and Republicans together. Wildlife conservation appears, in the main, to be one of those areas where our country is still willing to work in unison, to ensure our children and grandchildren get to experience the wonders of nature that we have had the privilege to encounter.

In May 2023 I wrote to you with a special request (I have attached that letter for your reference). The request was that the U.S. Government covers the cost of implementing the ASYCUDA eCITES in all remaining 49 CITES signatory countries in continental Africa who still use CITES 1970s paper-permits to manage their commercial trade in endangered, wild species. **This donation would cost the American people less than \$12 Million and help ensure good regulatory practice and reduce corruption in trade and customs processes.**

I know that you have a strong commitment to the African continent and had been planning a visit in 2025. In 2022, you hosted 49 African leaders in Washington DC, the first such gathering, focusing on continental Africa, hosted by Washington for eight years. At that meeting you reaffirmed, **"The United States is all in on Africa's future"**, and continued, **"when Africa succeeds, the United States succeeds. Quite frankly, the whole world succeeds as well."** I note that you also committed to backing the African Union's admission as a permanent member of the



G20 major economies, which came to fruition in 2023.

As President, I thank you for building on our commitments to the African continent, given all too often the region is left behind as the rest of the world prospers. In expanding the Power Africa initiative, and extending the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act, you have provided two-way trade opportunities, ensuring regional development. Certainly, continental Africa has a fast-growing economy. By providing a \$12 Million donation to complete the modernization of the CITES Management Authorities throughout continental Africa, this would **ensure that the regions unique and endangered wild species cannot be overexploited for trade purposes**. Of the CITES signatory countries based in continental Africa, 12 list the USA as their primary trading partner and 22 countries list the USA in their top 3 trading partners.

Following my letter to you in May 2023, later that year I was in Washington DC to meet with a number of political representatives, departments and agencies, including USTR, OES, the Bureau of African Affairs, USAid, USFWS and the World Bank. While there is certainly a commitment to deal with wildlife crime, the opportunity to tackle this by modernizing the CITES Management Authorities throughout the continent has been overlooked and appears currently to be a missed foreign policy opportunity.

In the coming months, I appreciate your focus will need to be the conflict in the Middle East and Eastern Europe, together with immigration from Latin America. I ask that you consider this cost effective and pragmatic foreign policy opportunity, which certainly fits your “power of our example” politics of compassion, collaboration, and respect. As China and Russia are seeking an ever greater influence on the African continent, including with their BRICS+ agenda, one way to mitigate the risks associated with this is to modernize CITES for a multipolar world; digitization of all CITES Management Authorities would be a powerful place to start.

During my October 2023 Washington DC meetings, it became apparent that such an Africa wide approach was difficult for USAid to facilitate. Representatives of The World Bank said they couldn’t administer a large number of small amounts (namely, 49 countries x US\$190,000 for the ASYCUDA eCITES system). The CITES Secretariat can manage these types of donations. By donating US\$12 Million to the CITES External Trust Fund, stipulating these funds can only be used to implement a modern CITES electronic trade permit system in the countries of continental Africa, the CITES Secretariat can facilitate this project. It can also be overseen by our own USFWS CITES representatives.

In completing your term in January 2025 Mr. President, it is significant to note that 2025 is the 50th Anniversary of CITES (initially known as the Washington Convention) coming into force. Just three years after you first entered the Senate, in 1972. Yet, most CITES signatories, including 49 countries in continental Africa still use the 1970s paper permits system created when it was launched.

In closing. Mr. President, thank you for taking the time to explore our proposed solution to correct a glaring problem in managing the legal wildlife trade between the African nations and the USA. **A \$12 Million investment will be the best \$12 Million you have spent on behalf of your own grandchildren; and the world’s children and grandchildren.** One of your final acts as President will send a message globally that a principled and ambitious approach is needed to tackle biodiversity loss. Just like us, future generations must have the opportunity to be awed and inspired by the natural world. Time spent in nature drives the creativity

and innovation we need for economic growth, and, more importantly, builds the moral compass to build a better world for all.

As you close out an amazing five-decade political career dedicated to this beautiful country of ours, I hope that you will consider providing this \$12 million to continental Africa. If they were chiseling a new Mt. Rushmore, I would like to see you on it.

Yours sincerely,

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C.C: Collaborative partner, Dr. Lynn Johnson, Nature Needs More Ltd, Australia

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