

Combating Wildlife Poaching and Insecurity in Africa

Testimony of African Parks
Jean Marc Froment Conservation Director

Introduction

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, thank you for giving the opportunity to APN to testify today on this subject. My name is Jean Marc Froment. I am a biologist and I am working for conservation in Africa since forty years.

My message is relatively simple and touches 2 points.

The first: Africa faces an unprecedented complex conservation crisis

The second: A message of hope, which I believe, can be part of the solution

Two examples

But before developing these two points, I would start with the examples of two parks that were thought lost:

Majete National Park in Malawi and Zakouma National Park in Chad.

- *Ten years ago Majete was a forgotten little park, 700 km², under strong demographic pressure. All wildlife had been exterminated in the 70's and 80's. The trees were exploited for construction and charcoal, the limits were not respected and there were no more visitors. Today it is a protected area completely repopulated with Black Rhinos, 280 elephants, lions and leopards and all other species. The park's infrastructure has been rebuilt and a community conservation plan including education, health, and tours in the park, is implemented.*

3 lodges have been established and welcome 7000 visitors a year that generate 400,000 us \$ / year.

- *Zakouma National Park, 3000 km² in Chad, is located not far from the border with Darfur and northern Central African Republic.*

It has experienced an unprecedented wave of poaching.

Between 2004 and 2010, the elephant population has decreased from 4,500 to about 450 elephants.

This genocide was mainly due to the rebellion organized from Darfur and the period of insecurity that ensued in the region.

Late 2010, APN has taken over the total management of the Park with a very strong support of the Government of Chad.

This allowed us to address the first problem - security.

In two years, after restructuring the guard team, establishing a collaboration with the local armed forces and having set up an intelligence system all around the park, we have not only stopped the poaching but have succeeded to secure a region of about 20,000 km² around the park.

For the local communities, securing the area was the first benefit and has opened a new economic and social perspective.

With these two examples, I hope to have shown extreme demographic and security contexts in which a large number of parks in Africa are today.

But, that good management is able address the real problems and can also quickly turn the dramatic situation in success carrying hope and pride.

1. Africa faces a conservation crisis.

The conservation crisis is deep.

It exposes the life and the specificity of the continent to extremely rapid degradation with all its consequences on biodiversity, the

loss of ecological services, the vulnerability of rural communities, economic, global warming, etc ...

Two major factors lead the pressures:

- Firstly, the demands related to global markets
- Secondly, the demands related to population growth on the continent

The demands related to global markets

By observing the conservation status of only 1 emblematic species of the continent one can realize one dimension of the threats.

In 1950, there were probably more than two million elephants. In 2000 the population was estimated at about 600,000.

Currently, it is considered that Africa loses 35,000 elephants each year (9% of the total population).

The Central African Countries have lost 66% of their forest elephants in 10 years.

The increase of price and demand is the only reason of these trends.

Who is benefiting from these markets??

Certainly not the States, but a huge range of people from the authorities and army people, to communities and local poachers, to local and international traders and even in some cases armed groups.

They are all linked, part of networks that are providing ivory, rhino horns to the market.

Most certainly, armed groups, rebel and terrorist benefit from these particular markets to dispose of weapons and ammunition. In Central Africa, that I know well, the Janjawees and their connections with North Sudan army played a major role in the extermination of elephants but also in terms of insecurity and the spread of weapons in Chad, Central African Republic, southern Sudan and northern DRC.

Ditto for the Lord Resistance Army.

But these are not the only ones that must be pointed at.

The armed forces or more precisely elements of the armed forces in different countries are involved directly and indirectly in the killing of elephants and trafficking of ivory.

Where do the weapons in the hands of these rebels and poachers come from?

Where do the military helicopters that slaughter elephants in Garamba National Park last year come from?

Again these are not the only ones. Many authorities supposed to help preserving the wildlife benefit from this trafficking.

How many export licenses are issued each year illegally by those authorities?

Examples are numerous.

So many public sector failures, including concerned armed forces, failure in the control and management of vast and rich territories, failure in law enforcement, failure in controlling trades.

For species affected by high-value amenities that involve regional and international networks for example ivory or rhino horn, the problem must be addressed at 3 different levels:

- **By stopping their slaughter** through better management of parks and if needed by addressing the security questions.
- **By stopping the local trade** by understanding the networks and arresting those involved.
- **By stopping the demand** through consumer awareness, but this will take time

The question is “how to do that”?

How to support some States to preserve their resources?

How to support some States to identify the networks and to arrest those involved?

Is Public-Private Partnership part of the solution?

The demands related to population growth on the continent

However, we cannot dissociate/forget the loss of habitat and fauna related to demographics, from this crisis:

- In 1950, Africa had 250 million inhabitants, in 2000 it reached 1 billion and in 2050 it will be 2.5 billion!!!
In addition to that growth is the increased needs related to education, health, etc.
50% of the population lives on less than us \$ 2 / day!
The repercussions on land requirements for both small farmers and for large farms and on markets are enormous.
- 60% of deforestation is related to the demographic factor and 20 to 30% to commercial holdings (logging and agricultural purposes).
The demand for firewood or charcoal is one of the most important causes.
Over 80% of the African population relies on wood as energy. Its impact is massive.
- The need in protein.
In the Congo Basin it is estimated that 5 million tons of bush meat are extracted, traded and consumed annually.
African gigantic areas were completely depopulated from their wildlife.
Domestic livestock replaced wildlife with overgrazing.
- The rapid evolution of the Human Foot Print and the poverty question is the essence of this crisis.

It is essential that the international community understands that:

- If the demand for high value products has to be avoided at all costs, this is not the only action to be undertaken.
Solutions to other 'requests' more related to population growth must **also** be found.
- There is urgency and simple and pragmatic solutions must be implemented quickly to allow the states to take control of their resources.

The weakness of the capability not only of public administrations but also of the security forces in a number of countries is the main cause of the difficulty that the states meet to mitigate the effects of these two factors – Demography and International Demand

The consequences of the conservation crisis are obvious:

- *The natural areas and wildlife will continue to melt. With this scarcity, their value will increase.*
- *Although the importance of the network of Protected Areas in Africa, many of the 1,200 of them will be lost if solutions are not found quickly for their protection and management.*
- *The states that are now investing in a pragmatic solution for the preservation of their protected areas will benefit from the increase in their value.*

Given the size and complexity of the crisis but also the urgency to intervene, it is important to fix it some priority.

It is widely accepted that the establishment of a truly protected area network is an essential element in the continental conservation strategy.

The current protected areas are a good representation of the biological diversity of the continent and have legal statutes that allow their protection.

Giving priority to the Protected Areas is certainly the establishment of a foundation for a pragmatic conservation strategy at the continental level that will snowball and will address more broadly the general problem of the environment.

2. How to support the African states?

Natural resources, Protected Areas, are not the only sectors suffering from the deficiencies of the Public Service.

Other sectors such as education, health or communications could find solutions by delegating part of their responsibilities to other actors - businesses, NGOs, etc.-

Yet in many countries, management of natural areas, protected areas and wildlife has remained the prerogative of state institutions.

If the underlying problem is the failure of the public sector, it is important to look for solutions elsewhere.

As in other sectors, the Public-Private Partnerships through which states can delegate and or share some of their responsibilities to civil society, NGOs, private, may be solutions.

African Parks has certainly been a pioneer in this area for the management of protected areas.

Central to the concept of a public-private partnership is a separation of responsibilities between the State and African Parks. The State is the owner of the park and is responsible for legislation and policy.

African Parks is responsible for execution of management functions and is accountable to the State for its performance. This separation of functions is essential for accountability of both partners – a largely alien concept in traditional conservation circles.

African Parks is an African solution to Africa's conservation challenges.

By entering into a long term agreement (25 years) with Governments, we assume the total responsibility for one or more of a country's national parks.

We put in place the governance structures, the management skills and funding solutions **that are all so desperately needed.**

- *We become responsible for all the Law Enforcement staff that are seconded to APN, make sure they are properly equipped and properly trained to face the challenges of the Protected Area including security of an entire region.*

We develop relations with army, tribunal, and authorities to bring them on board.

- *We reintroduce species and put in place all infrastructures to manage a park.*
- *We become responsible for implementing community programs to ensure that local people benefit from the existence of a national park and understand its value. They become very supportive of our action and a key element in the intelligence systems that we put in place*

When our Government partners give us a mandate to manage, one that empowers us to manage and take responsibility, the results are formidable and all parks that we are managing, are making progress.

I opened with two such examples, Majete and Zakouma, but there are numerous others among which:

- *In Liuwa Plain in Zambia the wildebeest migration has grown by 300% in 10 years and species such as eland, lion and buffalo have been reintroduced and are thriving.
At the same time, the murder rate in the area has dropped from 52 per annum to just 1.*
- *In Rwanda, park income, a proxy for economic activity, has grown fourfold in four years generating income for the sustainability of the park as well as much needed income for community initiatives.*

The benefits of good management are not just restricted to wildlife – it benefits an entire region and the people living in it. The conditions necessary for elephants to thrive, are the same conditions that are necessary for people to thrive. A conservation solution is in fact a governance, safety and security, economic development and poverty alleviation solution.

As African Parks, we manage 8 such areas totaling nearly 6 m hectares.

By 2020 we will manage 20, covering 10 m hectares.

Managing a single park will typically cost between \$1m and \$3m per annum depending on scale and complexity.

By doing so, it is possible to not only bring about peace and stability in otherwise often forgotten areas, a pre-requisite for any form of economic and social development, but it preserves the wildlife and the ecosystem services on which we as mankind are dependent.