



Wildlife Conservation Society
2300 Southern Boulevard, Bronx, NY 10460 USA

September 18, 2024

WCS STATEMENT ON WILDLIFE CONSERVATION IN UGANDA (FISCAL YEAR 2023/2024) PRESENTED AT THE ANNUAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT REVIEW AND HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE ON TOURISM AND PEACE, SEPTEMBER 19, 2024, HOTEL AFRICANA

The relevance of tourism to the prosperity of Uganda has long been acknowledged and remains uncontested. In the year under review, the Tourism sector in Uganda has continued to recover steadily since the end of the COVID-19 pandemic that heavily impacted the sector negatively. The government of Uganda has provided a conducive environment, specifically the progressive policies, laws and stability of government institutions in charge of the sector such as Uganda Wildlife Authority, Uganda Tourism Board, Uganda Airlines, Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities that have allowed the sector to grow. Equally, the Civil Society Organizations and conservation Non-Governmental Organizations have provided timely and relevant technical and financial support to the mandated institutions of government continuously initiate active conservation efforts to help maintain the ecological balance and preserve the unique ecosystems found in Uganda's wildlife parks, wildlife reserves, forest reserves, wetlands, and other Key Biodiversity Areas and ecosystems. As a result, the collective effort of the government of Uganda and its partners helped to strengthen the private sector companies, donors and development partners confidence to unlock financing for the sector. Evidently, the nature enthusiasts and ecotourists, tourists and other travelers seeking to experience and appreciate the rich biodiversity and natural beauty of Uganda have greatly increased in the past one year.

During this annual reporting period (2023/2024), Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) supported the government of Uganda in the following strategic areas:

1. Combating Wildlife Crime in Uganda:

- a. WCS supported the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities to operationalize the CITES e-permitting system to monitor and regulate legal trade in wildlife and wildlife products,
- b. Supported UWA to develop internal capacity in conducting financial investigations to combat illicit financial flows related to illegal wildlife trade and wildlife trafficking
- c. Supported UWA to upgrade and rollout the Online Wildlife Offenders Database (OWODAT) in all conservation areas to improve wildlife case management and monitoring of wildlife crime in the country
- d. Support UWA and NFA to increase use of conservation technologies such as Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART) in combating poaching inside the national parks and wildlife reserves through provision of SMART equipment and UWA staff training, increased collection, storage, analysis, reporting and utilization of data in wildlife crime mitigation.
- e. Supported UWA and the MTWA to actively engage the private sector, specifically the commercial banks through the Uganda Bankers Association to strengthen the compliance mechanisms in detection of illicit financial flows related to wildlife crime in Uganda. As such, on March 15, 2024, the European Union (EU) boosted Uganda's financial integrity by deleting the country from its Anti-Money Laundering (AML) Blacklist. Uganda was delisted from the grey list by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) on February 23, in Paris, France.



Wildlife Conservation Society
2300 Southern Boulevard, Bronx, NY 10460 USA

2. **Human Wildlife Conflict Mitigation:** WCS Supported UWA to implement Human wildlife conflict mitigation measures around QENP and MFNP, hence building community tolerance to, and coexistence with wildlife.
3. **Development of frameworks and plans for species and landscape management and protection:** WCS supported UWA and the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities together with their partners to develop the National Chimpanzee Conservation Strategy (2023-2032) for Uganda, and the National Large Carnivore Strategic Action Plan (2024-2033) for Uganda. Supported Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration (GVTC) Secretariat to develop the Transboundary Strategic Plan for Greater Virunga Landscape (GVL).
4. **Chimpanzee Habitat Restoration:** Supported NFA to restore and maintain 131 ha in Bugoma Central Forest Reserve.
5. **Mitigation of negative impacts and risks to biodiversity and people:** Building capacity of government staff, district local government, private sector companies, academia, Environmental and Social Impact Assessment Practitioners, and Civil Society Organizations in environmental management, including the application of the mitigation hierarchy
6. **Research and Monitoring tools development:** WCS supported National Environment Management Authority to develop the a) measurement metrics for implementing biodiversity offsets, b) development of the sensitivity atlases for EACOP routing and Albertine Graben, c) support to Petroleum Authority Uganda and UWA to monitor wildlife species movement, behavior and stress levels with respect to oil and gas activities inside MFNP, d) sponsored professional training of three Ugandans at graduate level (2 PhDs and 01 Masters) in the application of mitigation hierarchy and wildlife management. These tools have benefited the following institutions namely UNRA, UWA, UETCL, Joint Venture Partners of Oil and Gas, Makerere University.
7. **Legal and policy framework:** Contributed to the development National Development Plan Four (NDPIV) for Uganda, supported NEMA to align the National Biodiversity Strategic Action Plan (NBSAP III) to the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), Supported NEMA to translate the National Environment Act Cap 181 in three native languages namely Ateso, Luganda and Runyoro as well as publication of the popular version for the act.

The estimated direct financial contribution to the government of Uganda is US\$2.346 Million.

We congratulate the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities for its leadership and policy guidance in protecting the wildlife in Uganda. Special thanks to the central government for creating the enabling environment and political will to enable the Civil Society Organizations to operate and support it to implement its vision and economic development programs.

Simon Takozekibi Nampindo, PhD.
Country Director, WCS Uganda Program