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## MEDIA RELEASE

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### UN Must Embrace Africa in Wildlife Decisions

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- CITES Secretary-General John Scanlon's decision to step down (effective 6 April 2018) creates the golden opportunity for CITES to give Africa the leading voice in wildlife conservation.
- While big cats require public support, less photogenic and less obviously appealing species deserve equal attention and protection.

**Lausanne, Switzerland 2 March 2018** - World Conservation Trust today urged the United Nations to appoint a new Secretary General for the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) who comes from the African continent. While much of CITES' work is focused on Sub Saharan Africa, its committees and meetings continue to be dominated by officials and non-Governmental Organizations from the West. In the 43-year history of CITES, it has never hired an African Secretary-General.

Commenting on UN Wildlife Day, Eugène Lapointe, former CITES Secretary-General (1982 to 1990) and current IWMC President, welcomes the promotion of "Big cats: predators under threat". Yet he warns conservation campaigners about the dangers of running beauty contests. The promotion of the most photogenic species, he says, risks eclipsing the interests of equally worthy but less glamorous wildlife.

Over the past few years, CITES has focused intensely on the global ramifications of the conservation of elephants, rhinos, pangolins, lions, leopards and cheetahs, most of which are found in East and Sub Saharan Africa. Yet there has been a transparent imbalance between the regional focus of CITES' work and those who make its decisions. This has proved to be divisive. Hence, in the interests of forging consensus, IWMC urges CITES to embrace and engage Africa and Africans fully. And it calls on CITES to put the interests of all the world's endangered wild flora and fauna on a level playing field. Lapointe says:

For too long, Western animal rights groups and other Western NGOs have pursued policy-making at the expense of African livelihoods and viewpoints. CITES has also spent a disproportionate amount of time and resources on elephants, rhinos and big cats to the detriment of other equally endangered species. Now CITES needs a leader from Sub-Saharan Africa who understands the conservation, economic and cultural value deriving from the carefully managed use of wildlife. Then Africans can take their wildlife's destiny back into their own hands.

**Note to editors:** 3rd March 1973 is the day the CITES Convention was signed in Washington D.C. And 1 July 1975 is the date CITES entered into force and its first Secretary-General was put in place. To date CITES Secretary-Generals have come from European countries, Canada and Australia.

A photo image of Mr. Lapointe can be provided on request.

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The International Wildlife Management Consortium (IWMC) World Conservation Trust is an international organization that promotes Sustainable Use as a conservation mechanism, for the protection of the sovereign rights of independent nations and for the respect of diverse cultures and traditions.

Eugene Lapointe, President of IWMC World Conservation Trust was Secretary General of CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) from 1982 to 1990.

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