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# CHAIRMAN'S REPORT: AFRICAN ELEPHANT SPECIALIST GROUP

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On behalf of the AfESG

This past year, 1994, has been an important and active one for the African Elephant Specialist Group (AfESG), both as a whole and for many of its members in their individual capacities. With an AfESG meeting and a CITES meeting in the same year, the African elephant featured prominently in international conservation debates and on meeting agendas.

This issue of *Pachyderm* contains several papers which emanate from our last meeting in Mombasa, where the Group focused on describing and objectively examining the subject of human-elephant conflict. Together these articles present an excellent introduction to the topic for both "old hands" and relative "newcomers" to the field. Kangwana gives an overview of human-elephant conflict, highlighting the problems and proposing areas for future focus. Kiiru describes the general situation in Kenya while the papers by Barnes, Tchamba, Ngure, and Smith present specific conflict situations under different circumstances in individual countries. Lindeque puts the human-elephant issue in the context of a national management policy in Namibia. Hoare outlines the options for controlling elephants in conflict with people, using Zimbabwe's experience to provide examples of various methods being applied.

While these papers and our discussions at the meeting provided a firm basis to share experiences and work towards finding possible solutions, there is still much to be done. I believe that we can expect these problems to intensify in many range states before we see any improvement. The work of the AfESG in both predicting the occurrence of human-elephant conflict and in mitigating its effects, through innovative and practical solutions, will continue. At present, the AfESG is helping to finance research work in conflict areas and is encouraging other donors to work with members to develop techniques for evaluating and assessing damage, as well as for resolving the problems related to human-elephant competition for land and resources.

In early 1995, the AfESG will be releasing two

important documents which are the product of extensive input from the membership as well as collaboration with many range state governments. The first is a report by Dublin, Milliken and Barnes entitled, "*Four Years After the CITES Ban: illegal Killing of Elephants, Ivory Trade and Stockpiles*". This document summarises a comparison of elephant poaching, ivory trade and the accumulation of stockpiles in nine target countries covering all four regions of the species' range (Cameroon, Gabon, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe). The second document is an updated version of the African Elephant Database (AED), compiled by Said and Chunge, containing all survey results provided to the AfESG since 1992. The AED has been extensively revised. Maps have been redigitised, rivers, roads and major cities have been added and a new system of data quality categorisation and summation of numbers across data categories have been introduced. All members should expect to receive their own copies of these documents and we look forward to critical and constructive feedback.

In September 1994, several members of the AfESG took part in a technical meeting, sponsored by the European Union, to promote dialogue between the range states on the issue of the African elephant in the context of CITES. The meeting, held in Chobe National Park in northeastern Botswana, provided an excellent opportunity for range states to openly air their fears and share their concerns for the future of the species in national, regional and international contexts. AfESG members made several contributions to the meeting, by providing an overview on elephant numbers and distribution, summarising current levels of illegal killing, giving updates on human-elephant conflict in several regions of the continent, and explaining our current understanding of ivory trade volumes and dynamics.

The Botswana meeting was followed closely by the Ninth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES in Ft. Lauderdale, U.S.A.. As expected, elephants

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featured prominently in the debate with two formal proposals on the agenda. The first was a proposal from Sudan for the downlisting of its elephant populations to Appendix II, in order to dispose of a 48-tonne stockpile of ivory in 1995 followed by a zero quota thereafter. The second was South Africa's proposal for the downlisting of its elephants, which was annotated for a limited trade in hides and meat only, not ivory. Following many closed-door deliberations between the range states, both countries agreed to withdraw their proposals on the understanding that intersessional dialogue would continue in Africa. It was agreed that over the next three years, a series of meetings would be organised by the range states to cover topics of shared concern, such as the problems of growing ivory stockpiles, increasing human-elephant conflict and law enforcement issues. Overall, the spirit of the debate was positive and constructive. In accordance with its terms-of-reference, the AfESG will continue to provide information as required or requested in order to actively facilitate this dialogue.

Finally, I would like to bring you up-to-date on some

business matters. A number of our funding requests have met with success and I am very pleased to report that the AfESG seems to be on firm financial footing for the next couple of years. This provides a tremendous sense of relief and allows us to go forward with some exciting planning for the future. For example, over the next 12 to 18 months, the AfESG intends to make a concerted effort to more actively support elephant work and the development of professional capacity in west and central Africa.

We have just undergone an extensive revision of the AfESG membership. We would like to take this opportunity to welcome all new members, request the continued collaboration of long-standing members and thank those of you who have served on the AfESG for your hard work and support over the years. We look forward to keeping in close contact with all of you and working together on behalf of the conservation and management of the African elephant. We will also, of course, be making plans for our next meeting of "the

## RAPPORT DE LA PRESIDENTE: GROUPE DE SPECIALISTES DE L'ELEPHANT AFRICAIN

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Au nom du GSEAF

clan" and will look forward to seeing you all then. Cette année 1994 a été une année importante et active pour le Groupe de Spécialistes de l'Eléphant Africain (GSEAF), qu'il soit pris dans son ensemble ou considéré au niveau des capacités individuelles de chacun de ses membres. Avec une réunion du GSEAF et une réunion CITES au cours de la même année, l'éléphant africain a tenu la vedette des débats internationaux sur la conservation et dans les agendas de réunions.

Ce numéro de *Pachyderm* contient plusieurs articles qui font suite à notre dernière réunion, à Mombasa, où le Groupe s'est attaché à décrire et à examiner objectivement le phénomène de conflit homme/éléphant. Pris ensemble, ces articles fournissent une excellente introduction sur le sujet, tant pour les experts que pour les nouveaux venus en la matière. Kangwana y donne une vue globale du conflit homme/éléphant qui met en lumière les problèmes et propose des aspects à examiner à l'avenir. Kiiru décrit la situation générale

qui prévaut au Kenya tandis que les articles de Barnes, Tchamba, Ngure et Smith présentent des situations actuelles de conflit, spécifiques dans des circonstances diverses et des pays bien précis. Lindeque replace le sujet homme/éléphant dans le contexte d'une politique de gestion nationale, en Namibie. Hoare souligne les différentes options possibles pour le contrôle des éléphants lors de conflits avec des hommes, puisant dans l'expérience du Zimbabwe pour fournir des exemples des différentes méthodes qu'on y applique.

Si ces articles et les discussions que nous avons eues lors de la réunion ont constitué une base solide sur laquelle on peut partager des expériences et le travail pour trouver des solutions possibles, il reste encore beaucoup à faire. Je crois que nous pouvons nous attendre à voir encore ces problèmes s'intensifier dans de nombreux pays de distribution avant de constater une amélioration. Le travail du GSEAF continuera à chercher à prévoir l'occurrence des conflits homme/