
CO-CHAIR REPORT: AFRICAN ELEPHANT SPECIALIST GROUP

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The African Elephant Specialist Group (AESG) held a meeting in Mombasa, Kenya from 27th May, 1994 to 1st June, 1994. This meeting was the first to be held since the one at Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, in November 1992. The Mombasa meeting, which was better than previous meetings, was not only well attended by representatives of African elephant range states, but owes its success to the use of two international languages, French and English, thanks to the provision of simultaneous interpretation services.

The following countries were represented:

West Africa:

Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Ghana and Togo

Central Africa:

Cameroon, Congo, Gabon, C.A.R. and Zaire

East Africa:

Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda

Southern Africa:

Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Republic of South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe

The Mombasa meeting enabled various delegates to deliberate in depth on the important issues of the day concerning management of African elephant populations throughout their range. One particular issue discussed was that of conflict between man and elephant, the common consequences being: degradation of culture, destruction of property, killing of elephants

and even loss of human life. Issues related to trade in elephant products and illegal hunting (poaching) were also discussed.

If the meeting succeeded in tackling problems associated with elephant conservation, it also drew attention to the differences between having a relatively good knowledge about elephant populations in East and Southern African countries, and lacking sufficient survey data in Central and West African countries. In particular, the humid tropical forests of Central Africa are a major handicap to elephant census work and present a significant challenge in the region.

This is why the AESG would like to examine sustainable financial and scientific solutions to improve methods of updating data at the continental level and to enable, wherever necessary, rapid elephant survey work in forest zones.

With the passing of years, wildlife researchers and planners have realized that knowledge about the elephant can neither be limited to its numbers nor to the study of its behaviour, vis-à-vis its fellow creatures. There still remains much to be done and to be discovered, both in relation to man-elephant interaction and to the conservation and rational use of this pachyderm.

Finally, to support the Group's secretariat and to implement elephant conservation projects, participants at the meeting sent a passionate plea to donors, soliciting the necessary finances for the Group.